University of Malta
Faculty of Arts
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The Net at Home

A Sociological Inquiry into Internet Use, Family and the Domestic Space

Ph.D. Thesis
(Sociology)

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DEDICATION

To my beloved late parents Agnes and Frans

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in the dissertation entitled "The Net at Home: A Sociological Inquiry into Internet Use, family and the Domestic Space", presented to the Faculty of Arts at the University of Malta for the degree of Ph.D. in Sociology, on the 30th of September 2014, is my own original work.

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Gaetano Vella
30th September 2014

ABSTRACT

The principal aim of this study is based on the number of accounts, which various relatives and friends of the author shared with him about how they were experiencing the use of the Internet in their homes. The thought behind this research has been to explore scientifically the experience of the Maltese family in this scenario.

Although the literature reviewed shows that Internet use studies have been analysed from different angles, there are still aspects that have not been explored. There exists no deep qualitative research which can throw light on this phenomenon. An important issue which has not yet been explored enough is tied to the experience of the use of the Internet in the home and the impact it is having on the dynamics of family life.

This study is therefore the first, local, tentative qualitative research of its kind, one that is exploring the phenomenon that the Maltese family is experiencing. To reach its aims, this study had to apply a Research Design which contains all the tools necessary to collect both primary and secondary and data. It was therefore decided to apply a phenomenological approach with aspects of narrative-ethnography. This approach has three methods incorporated in one: A) interviews based on a Single Question Aimed at Inducing Narrative Approach, (SQUIN) and the Convergent Interviewing Approach, B) the use of Time Diaries (revisit) based on a Longitudinal Study Approach and C) a style of writing based on the narrative approach whereby it relates what is happening and not just convey information.

As this study is directly tied to the Maltese family, and due to the fact that nowadays it is very difficult to define a family as there are diverse opinions of what the term "family" means, it was necessary to find out the types of families existing in Malta today. Six types of families have been identified for this study, namely: The Traditional / Nuclear families (including families with members with special needs), the Joint-custody families/ Cohabiting families, the Single – parent families, (Males and Females), the Child – free families, the Blended/Step-families / Reconstituted/Re-established families, and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) families (Males and Females).

This research is composed of 3 samples: 1) The General Families Sample, composed of 36 families, made up of 90 individual members, representing the 6 types of families; 2) The 6 Key Respondents Families Sample, also representing the 6 types of families; and 3) The Professional Experts Sample, composed of experts coming from the fields of Psychology, Psychiatry, Sociology, Morality, Philosophy and Architecture. The latter interpreted how the family and information technology evolved together, in the past 20 years.

The information collected through the secondary data served as a background to the study, while the data collected during the interviews and the information from the Time Diaries produced salient proof of how the Internet at home is affecting families.

The stories related by members of participating families, the reports of the professional experts together with the data collected from the Time Diaries during the summer and winter seasons, were all analysed in a thematic way. (Thematic Analysis)

The main conclusions stemming from this research show that primarily, the use of the Internet in the home seems to be leaving an undesirable impact on family life. Accounts of participants, who look on Internet use in the home as a detriment to the family, were very salient. They mentioned particularly lack of interaction among family members, especially at times when they should be together, like at breakfast, lunch and supper, poor results in school tests and isolation.

Though a negative aspect of the use of the Internet in the home dominated the study, other positive experiences were recorded, where the Internet helped family members to interact more because of the breaking down of time and space. Teleworking, more independent life amongst persons with special needs, and studying were amongst the salient aspects mentioned as being positive regarding Internet use at home.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Research

> The Internet is the latest medium to spur the debate. The clash between Net enthusiasts and Net sceptics, carried out over the last two decades through dozens of books, articles and thousands of blog posts, video clips and podcasts, has become as polarised as ever, with the former heralding a new golden age of access and participation and the latter bemoaning a new dark age of mediocrity and narcissism. The debate has been important – content does matter – but, because it hinges on personal ideology and taste, it has gone a cul-de-sac. The views have become extreme, the attacks personal. "Luddite" sneers the enthusiast. "Philistine!" scoffs the sceptic.
>
> (Carr 2011, p.2)

Within the realm of the 20th Century's information technology revolution, the discourse of how new technology, in particular, the Internet-use phenomenon, is affecting or not, the lives of everyone and transforming society, has been the subject of much discussion for a number of years. "….we are now witnessing the true emergence of the Internet as the powerful personal and social phenomenon" (Nauret 2006, p. 1). If we take a quick look back at the past two decades, we will realise that Internet-use has been identified as one of the communication technologies that have been most used, whilst to date, it is still playing an important role in this regard, especially within the context of communication, interaction and interpersonal relationships both within and outside the home (Schmidt & Cohen 2013; Villegas 2013; Turkle 2012; Carr 2011; Castells 2011; Whitty 2014; Silva 2010; Nauert 2006).

> A powerful tool, that contemporary society uses not only to entertain but also to communicate and educate, there is an ever-present availability to media access (via Internet). However, there is an ongoing debate over whether or not the power of this influence and its ubiquitous availability yields positive or negative consequences in different aspects of our lives.

> (Villegas 2013, p.1)

I have always been fascinated by the development of information technology, especially the use of the Internet and my interest has made me reflect and think about the way the Internet is being experienced by humanity, particularly, how individual members of families are experiencing Internet use at home. It is enough to mention that according to a research conducted by the Malta Communications Authority (MCA), published in 2013, 76% of the participants revealed that they could not live without the Internet at home.

The same study showed that 10% thought that they did not feel the need of the Internet, even though it was available at home. In a similar study run by MCA in 2011, those who could not live without the Internet amounted to 66%, while 16% said that they could do without it. Undoubtedly this shows that the use of the Internet has become an integral part in the life of the Maltese, in particular, young people, as is experienced, after all, also in other countries (NSO) 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014; Eurostat 2012, 2013; 2014;World Internet Statistics (2013, 2014).

In a study run by the University of Bonn (Markowetz 2014), about 50 students were asked, over a period of 6 weeks, how many times they used their smartphones. The result was that half of the time, the students used their smartphones, to send messages and to connect to the social media. The average time employed was 12 minutes. In this study a new type of technology was used, called Menthal Application, which can be installed in the electronic devices. With this installation, one can keep record of the average time of how long the device has been used.

Notwithstanding this aspect, we have to note that this is only one side of the reality of humanity's life, as it is lived today. There is another reality to be taken into consideration: not everybody is experiencing this style of life; as a matter of fact there are individuals who do not use the Internet. 20 % of the respondents that participated in a research conducted by the MCA in 2013 declared that they do not use the Internet. The latter raises the question of the motive behind the non-users of the Internet. It may be a question of economy, illiteracy or both.

This gives rise to another interesting study about non Internet users. In addition, others may voluntarily abstain or they may not have the possibility of access to the use of the Internet. I am convinced that the result of such a study, will throw a new and different light on the way non Internet user families are living their experience in today's technological oriented world. Apart from all this, what is vital, and cannot be ignored, is that we definitely need to get a better understanding of it within the local context. This lead me as a researcher, to explore the main research question: how does Maltese society, in particular, individual members of the family, use the Internet at home? In other words, as Carr (2011) queries:

> What is the Internet doing to our brains?……the Internet has laid before us; one course after another, each juicier than the last, with hardly a moment to catch our breath between bites. As networked computers have shrunk to the size of iPhones and Blackberrys, the feast has become a movable one, available anytime, anywhere. It's in our home, our office, our car, our classroom, our purse, our pocket. Even people who are wary of the Net's ever-expanding influence rarely allow their concerns to get in the way of their use and enjoyment of the technology.
>
> (Carr 2011, p.4)

As with other issues and experiences in life, the interpretations given about the use of the Internet during the last two decades are still debatable (Carr 2011; Turkle 2011; Rheingold 2014; Silva 2010; Castells 2011; Livingstone & Bovill 2001; Hughes & Hans 2001).

> Studies provide a glimpse into the variety of ways that computers and the Internet may affect relationships in families. Whether they have a positive or negative impact on family interactions is a complicated question that requires more research and the consideration of how other household technologies, such as cell phones, video games, and television, foster or hinder family communication, conflict, and socialisation.
>
> (Hughes & Hans 2001, p.9)

As I will explain further on, there are those who assign totally negative connotations to the use of the Internet (Griffiths 2011; Young et al 2010; Stoll 1995; Hughes & Hans, 2001; Livingstone & Bovill 2001; Turkle 2011; Kraut et al 1998; Whitty 2014; Mills 2014). They say that its use could sever social contact with people outside the home; some say that excessive use of the Internet may throw the users into solitude and may lessen the interaction among members of the family: "…..computer technology will promote impoverished relationships, isolation of people within families, and distancing between families and the outside world" (Hughes & Hans, 2001, p.777). On the other hand, there are those who believe wholeheartedly in the development of information technology and therefore are on the look-out for any argument to strengthen their opinion (Rainie & Wellman 2012; Castells 2006; Luomanen & Peteri 2013).

> Studying the role of technology in everyday life reveals how human actions shape socio-technical relations and how people make technology meaningful in their lives. Instead of studying the impact, the focus shifts to understanding the innovation occurring after the technology leaves the drawing board.
>
> (Luomanen & Peteri 2013, p.6)

Many times, the latter type pushes forward an agenda that explains the importance and need of access to the Internet at home. Contrary to those who are sceptical about the Internet, its promoters insist that through it, interaction and communication are facilitated and strengthened. There are others then, who take the middle road and, either do not comment at all, or comment according to what is profitable to them (Caplan et 2011; Berger 2005; Berker et 2005; Bellia & Grima 2002). Apart from all these theories, reality shows that the use of the Internet in the home, with its pros and cons, has brought new experiences which cannot be ignored, something which I have experienced while doing this study.

Among those who are in favour of the use of the Internet, (Rainie & Wellman 2012; Shklovsk et al 2004; Chadwick and Howard 2010; Zhao 2006; Franzen 2000) criticise schools of thought that promulgate the concept that Internet minimises social circles. For instance, Franzen (2000) contests Kraut's 1998 early findings in relation to the negative traits he attributed to the relationship between Internet use and social networks.

Franzen (2000) contends that the results elicited from similar studies to Kraut's, in Switzerland, precisely found the contrary "Internet use neither decreases respondents, network size, nor the time spent with friends……electronic mail is widely used and has positive effects on people's social networks" (Franzen 2000, p.18). Moreover, in his study, Zhao (2006), reveals that, contrary to what was stated by Kraut (1998), Internet was instrumental in increasing social contact: "While non-social users of the Internet do not differ significantly from non-users in network size, social users of the Internet have more social-ties than non-users do." Shklovsk et al (2004). In addition, the latter extend their views on the positive aspect of Internet use. In fact they contend that:

> If communication dominates Internet use for a majority of its users, there is good reason to expect that the Internet will have a positive social impact, both in terms of its users' social integration in a network of family, friends and community and the benefits that flow from this integration.

(Shklovsk et al 2004, p.14)

In addition, Shklovsk et al (2004) sustain that: "there is controversy in the research literature about whether use of the Internet increases or decreases users' social participation and the psychological and health benefits people generally receive from this participation" (Shklovsk et al, 2004, p. 20). In parallel are the views of Lin 2009; Boase et al 2004; Carr 2011; Castells 2011; Turkle 2011;Kraut et al 2002; and Zhao 2006., to mention but a few Moreover, the findings of this research, are very similar to the latter's arguments. The fact remains that the use of the Internet at home has brought about new experiences and different interpretations about the effect it is having on the dynamics of family life. In other words, Internet use is truly embedded in our daily lives.

1.2 Contributing Factors to the Research

To have a clear idea of how individuals look at this phenomenon, prior to the actual commencement of my research, I have posed a key question to a number of friends of mine and close relatives, asking them about their experience of Internet use at home. Among the answers I received, which I duly noted in my Research Diary, I was struck by a number of particular experiences, different from each other, but all pointing to real experiences. These answers spurred me to carry on with this study.

Among the answers, that of a young boy impressed me. In an expressive and convincing way, he shared with me a lived experience with his family in the use of the Internet. His answer merits deep thought:

> Hello......is anybody home?....There is perfect silence; so much that I am under the impression that there is nobody at home......but that is not the case....after a while I realise that this is the usual state of affairs.....my father is in his study den going through his emails, my mother is on the Internet and my sister, as usual in her room on Facebook. After a while, my mum says… "Hello dear....are you home?....I will soon come to give you something to eat…. in the meantime, go and change"…..This is what I experience mostly every time I go home from school or at the weekend. To tell you the truth, this is what comes to my mind when I am asked; what does the use of Internet at home means to me. I have also to admit, that I use it extensively also…..
>
> (Carlo, 13 year old boy - Research Diary 2010)

This boy's experience is significant and opens up many points for discussion. I had never before asked a direct question about the way Internet is being experienced by the family, though I had heard plenty about it. Now I had the answer from the horse's mouth. I did not stop here. I needed more answers to motivate me. I read many more answers. One of them was different from the others. For instance, a fifty year old woman, called Fransina, said that she cannot imagine life without the Internet. It was vital to her, because she kept in continual contact with her children who were studying abroad:

> I cannot imagine living without the Internet. It is and will be the best way of minimising the trauma I went through when both my children expressed their wish to go and study abroad to advance in their studies. What would I have done, had I not this powerful tool to keep such close contact with my children, while they were away from me studying abroad? Still I believe that one has to balance the use of Internet at home with family life…...
>
> (Fransina, 50 years old, working mother - Research Diary 2010)

I want to credit the way Carlo and Fransina recounted their stories. The non-verbals were very eloquent in the facial expression and in the tone of their voices. Both these aspects lent credibility to their respective versions. They were very enthusiastic to share their experience. Though these two stories are different, yet both of them give a clear picture of the realities experienced in Maltese homes.

What was missing, from both accounts, were the lived experiences of the other members of the family. In the case of Carlo, there was the father, mother and his sister, in the case of Fransina, the experiences of her children, who normally share the home with her, were missing. The latters' answers are similar to each other, that Internet use is an integral part of their daily activities.

Through this study I wanted to understand what is happening in Maltese families with regard to the use of the Internet at home. To put it simply, I wanted to know what is being experienced through the use of the Internet behind "closed doors", during breakfast, during meal times, in individual rooms, and in the common areas of the home. In other words, I wanted to know if the use of the Internet is part and parcel of meal times, sleeping times, or even if it is used in the bathroom. Basically, this study's main aim was to explore the family life of the Maltese family vis-à-vis the use of the Internet. The findings of this research explicitly manifest that these practices are being experienced by most of the participants.

In fact, following are some of the salient shared experiences that I have collected in my Research Diary (2010) ever since I thought of doing this study. I felt that it was appropriate to refer to the following quotations at this early stage of the research for two reasons: 1) because they manifest authentic and diverse experiences, and 2) because they also give a clear indication of how the family dynamics vis-à-vis the use of the Internet in the home, is being lived. These reactions speak for themselves, and they were instrumental in pushing me to carry on with this research.

> As soon as we eat, they do not stop to remove their plates from the table…they rush to their rooms and go on Facebook……we know how much the Internet has changed our lives…..

> (Clive, father of 3 adolescent children – Research Diary 2010)

> I always keep my ipad near me at table and every now and then, I check whether someone has entered Facebook… my mother complains about this….
>
> (Chantelle, a 23 year old female, university student - Research Diary 2010)
>
> Facebook is a time-waster, especially during my studies. It is very difficult for me to stop completely from using the Internet during study time….
>
> (Massimo, a 20 year old young male, university student - Research Diary 2010)

In Massimo's words it was very difficult for him to find a balance between studying and using the Internet. He was not a multitasking person. In fact, he had to make a direct measure on him so that he does not spend too much time on the Internet. He planned a schedule of when and at what time he would see the Interent.

Besides these, another friend "lost" her husband to an extramarital relationship that flourished, according to her, due to Internet in the home. She is now separated and hence, there is no doubt that her perception of the Internet is rather sceptic. These experiences, coupled with the literature I have referred to, suggest that the Internet had made significant changes in the style of living of the family. Suffice it to say, as I explain later on in the analysis of this study, in certain cases, it was found necessary for some participants to reach a compromise with each other about the times the Internet could be used in the home. I met families who were very sceptic about their experience of the use of the Internet in the home. Some went so far as to say that they were considering ending their relationship with their partners. Still, there were other families who maintained that the Internet caused absolutely no problems. They considered it an asset for it created more communication.

The fact that the Internet is giving a different dimension to lived experiences has made it possible for the Maltese to eventually adapt to new realities. Although this study focuses principally on the lived experiences of the Internet use at home, I felt that I also had to refer to other related experiences of this phenomenon I met with, outside the home. These occasions also kept leading me to the topic, while I saw them as good biases for similar studies. Some of these experiences occurred during my regular social encounters with family and friends at restaurants or cafeterias, with work colleagues at the place of work, and during lectures at University.

1.3 Social Networking When in Company of Others

Literature shows that the use of the Internet widened the dimensions in people's lives. As can be seen even in Malta, the use of the Internet has become an integral part of everyday life: at home, at work, in education, in health, at entertainment places etc. Without even noticing it, I began observing individuals, accompanied by others, using digital devices in public places. Such people kept their head down, talking to nobody and swiping the screen of their ipad / smartphone (whatever the device might be) up and down or tapping on the device they kept in their hand or on the table. Although I did not find all this surprising, I felt I had to share these occurrences in this study.

Many times, I noted that, similar to the above scenes, most of my friends resort to social networking even when in company. I also noted this reality through my observations of nearby tables. This brings to light the point raised previously: is this dependence on social networking, even when in company, the stark reality within today's family? I was not very much surprised at what I observed, because for a long time, I had been listening, informally, from those close to me who went through the same situations informally. However, not all experiences about the use of the Internet were derogatory. There are those who are in favour and those who are against.

Nevertheless, another experience, from the local scene, that consolidated my urge to proceed with this study, ironically revolves around my University colleagues (students) and their use of laptops, IPads, NET pads, smartphone and other related equipment. It is appropriate to mention, at this stage, that as part of my studies at the current level, I decided, out of my own free will, to regularly attend a number of modules relevant to my research. These lectures were well attended by a number of students, out of whom a substantial number would be accessing Facebook, Twitter and other social networks during lectures rather than take down notes or participate actively in any class conversation.

My preference was to sit in the back row during lectures, and I was most of the time, in a position to observe these proceedings. I was intrigued by the fact that most students would be online for a considerable portion of the two hours' lecture time. Similar practices have been experienced by Dr. Peter Muscat, during his lectures (P. Muscat 2014, pers. comm., 12th September). I have in fact taken note of these observations, and although my study focuses on interaction and Internet use within the family, I felt that such findings also need to be addressed. In fact, I mentioned them in my recommendations for further research in this field. As I shall refer to in the next section, during my early University days, when I was doing a B.A. and later reading for an MA, I was already mulling over what topic I would explore in the eventuality I would carry my studies at Ph.D. level. My personal experiences and these observations compelled me finally to start the study.

1.4 Purpose of the Research

1.4.1 Introduction

As I have already mentioned, the development of information technology has moved at such a pace, that we often hear of new inventions and others which are updated and include the use of the Internet.

These technological advancements might lead a person to believe that they are indispensable. At least, that is how I interpret adverts promoting them and this has been noted as well by quite a number of academics: (Lenhart et al 2010; Rheingold 2000; Kelemen & Smith 2001; Taylor et 1997). Young people and adults alike, and up to a certain extent, even pre-teens, today tend to keep updated with programmes and the latest software which appear on the market from time to time so that they will upgrade their programmes and gadgets. Most of my friends and relatives shared this fact with me.

With such a background, I ought to explore how Maltese society, in particular the family, is responding to this technological process. The aim of this research is to evaluate the experiences of a number of Maltese families in the context of the use of the Internet in domestic space. Besides, I wanted to find out how members of the chosen families are living their family dynamics in this context. Indeed, in this study I wanted to find answers to see how and why Internet use is being digested by families at such a pace. In other words, to what extent does society expect its members to conform with technological changes? How significant and important is information technology in the midst of everyday life of Maltese families?

1.4.2 .Process of Globalisation

Among the literature I referred to, aimed at exploring this subject in more detail, there is that of Carr 2011; Castells 2011; Giddens 2000; Silva 2010 Mesch 2006; Whitty 2014, Mills 2014 and Miller and Slater 2000. In particular, the latter sustain that "The Internet has both produced new freedoms - of information and of speech - and come to stand as a symbol of potential freedoms" (Miller and Slater 2000, p.16). This opinion is also true of Mills 2014; and Giddens, albeit in a wider dimension. In his book *Runaway World*, Giddens (2000) analyses and questions how the process of globalisation is changing humanity's lifestyle.

He searches deeply into the milestones and risks that change is imposing upon humanity: on traditions, democracy and, in particular, the family. This is directly relevant to my present studies on how today's family is living side by side with technological advances. As Giddens states: "Among all the changes going on in the world, none is more important than those happening in our personal lives – in sexuality, relationships, marriage and the family" (Giddens 2000, p.51).

Nevertheless, there are schools of thought who hold that there is a difference between those who are born in the era of the Internet and those who were born before. I do not totally agree with this notion; anybody can learn and keep up with or even outdistance those who are born into this epoch of the Internet use. For instance, according to Prensky (2001) young people are 'natives' who were born into a changing world and have lived with information technology all their lives. According to him, this is in contrast to persons of my generation, and therefore, the parents of these young people, who were born and have lived in total oblivion of Information Technology, and are thus termed 'digital immigrants':

> Our students today are all 'native speakers' of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet. So what does that make the rest of us? Those of us, including myself, who were not born into the digital world but have, at some later point in our lives, become fascinated by and adopted many or most aspects of the new technology are, and always will be compared to them, Digital Immigrants.

> (Prensky 2001, p.1)

Yet, in this context, it is important to find out how families are responding to technological change and how they are adapting to it (Castells 2011; Giddens 2009; Silverstone & Hirsch 1992; Silva 2010; Livingstone & Bovill 2001; Abela & Walker 2014; Whitty 2014; Mills 2014). For instance, a friend of my generation, who, together with his wife, according to Presky, are 'digital immigrants', shared his concern that his family, including himself and his wife, spend excessive time on social networking.

Even though they are not so up-to-date with technological advances, they move with the times and use the same technology that is being used by their children, who are 'digital natives'. The available research suggests that Social Networks, Facebook and Twitter, in particular, have become a force to be reckoned with.

Once again I find myself asking: what is the experience of young people, husbands and wives and partners living side by side with Internet use at home? How are they responding to developments in Information Technology within their respective homes? These questions ought to be answered and precisely this was the main reason behind this research. Nevertheless, studies have explicitly elicited both positive and negative views of Internet use. In this respect, it is the following question that I aimed at answering in this study: How is the use of the Internet in the home being experienced by Maltese families? This question gives rise to secondary questions: How is Internet use being interpreted individually, and as a family-group in the domestic space? What are the priorities of the Maltese family vis-à-vis the Internet? There are various opinions about this aspect: For instance, in a global context, according to Scott et al (2007) globalisation seems to be rather contradictory to the family's main priorities contending that the latter's roles might be under threat:

> Globalisation as a phenomenon of the postmodern world seems to be diametrically the opposite of family as an institution. It is the anonymity and freedom of the World Wide Web versus the intimacy and close control of the family unit. It is the unfamiliar world of diverse and indifferent others versus the more closed networks of families and their local communities.
>
> Just as the Industrial Revolution and urbanisation were built on the breaking of extended family ties and the rise of the separate nuclear family, so too is the Information Age reliant on individual skill portfolio and freedom of the footloose worker to move as the new turbo-capitalism requires.

(Scott et al 2007, p.4)

Despite this negative perspective, as I have already mentioned earlier, one cannot ignore the divergence of opinions related to how change, particularly positive technological change, is brought about. For instance, similar to the findings of my research, Hampton (2007) maintains that thanks to the use of the Internet communication has become a daily norm.

In parallel, other studies found that the use of the Internet has both improved communication, and has been instrumental in strengthening it (Rainie and Wellman 2012; Namsu 2010; Robinson et al 2000). In addition, Kranzberg, three decades ago, depicts technology in a well-balanced scenario arguing that: "Technology is neither good, nor bad, nor is it neutral" (Kranzberg 1985, p.50). Nevertheless, DiMaggio et al (2001) question such changes in technology: "Many observers allege that the Internet is changing society. Perhaps not surprisingly, given the novelty of the new digital media, there is little agreement about what those changes are" (DiMaggio et al 2001, p.308).

Therefore, once there is an agreement with respect to digital technology and the change it brings about, the questions within the local context arise naturally: How is Maltese society adapting to, and coping with, the developments in Information Technology, in particular, Internet use? How are Maltese families, reacting to this changing scenario? What are the opinions of sceptics as opposed to those of promoters of technological change?

As I will explain in the next section, literature and the findings of this study, manifests clearly that the use of technology, through the Internet, is being experienced in different aspects of life, while reactions to this are also varied.

1.4.3 Technology and Interaction versus Space and Time

As already explained, the aim of this study is to explore how information technology, particularly the use of the Internet in the home, is being experienced. However, as this same study has revealed, the use of the Internet has also changed the aspects of both space and time, whose definitions have acquired a much wider meaning. Through the development of information technology, spaces and times have changed completely from those found around us, belonging only to our country.

As opposed to past times, when messages were transmitted either by word of mouth - face-to-face or by telephone, or via writing, today, the story is different thanks to the development of information technology. Later on I will tackle deeply this important aspect about how space and time are being experienced today. However, I felt that it is important to stress its importance at this early stage. The reason being that, technological development has been instrumental in making the concept of space and time being understood not only in the home environment or in the village square, but very far away from these areas. Space and time have acquired new dimensions, especially were communication is concerned.

While browsing and reading about the topic of space and time, I have been struck by what Tuan (1977) said nearly 30 years ago. He looked at space and time as inseparable from each other, both complementing each other; one does not exist without the other.

What is interesting is the fact, that though Tuan said this much before the use of the Internet as we know it today existed, it seems he had an enlightened vision of the way space and time were going to strengthen their bond while giving another dimension of how one can experience life:

> Time and space constitute intrinsically inseparable elements of physical reality. Time engages space and space requires time, as we have the sense of space because we can move and of time because, as biological beings we undergo recurrent phases of tension and ease….. On the other hand, space exists in time, changes through time and it is depicted differently at different temporal points in history, whereas distance often involves time length. Again, on the other hand, the sense and measurement of time are heavily dependent upon space and special distances. Consequently, time is associated with the spatial dimension of the world and vice versa, while these two structural aspects of reality coexist, intermeshes, and define each other in personal experience.

(Tuan 1977, p.118, p.130)

In this study I have experienced what Tuan (1977) said with the difference, that the use of the Internet has been the means of the concepts of space and time being given a different dimension. It is in this sense that thinkers like Castells (2006, 2011) talk about the fact that through the use of the Internet, one cannot talk of spaces one is occupying at a particular time only, but there are other spaces and other times tied to the digital world. This realty is strengthened by what other thinkers say, among whom: Harvey (1990, 1993) "Time-space compression", Roberston (1992) Compression of the world into a single place", Giddens (1994) "Stretching of social relations across distance, namely action at distance", Meyrowitz (1985) "No sense of place"and Relph (1976) "Placelessness".

An important aspect I will be exploring in this study is how the experience of space and time has had an effect on individual's interaction, particularly because of the use of Internet.

Results from this study show how, contrary to what was true before the advent of the Internet as we know it today, interaction within the home has been extended to individuals who are physically away from the home. This had led to the existence of two types of spaces and relationships: those which exist physically in the home and those which exist virtually through the use of the Internet on-line relationships. All this is tied to the element of time and space:

> It is argued that connected relationships do not substitute face-to-face communication, but constitute another communicative dimension and possibly enrich face-to face communication. Also, it is argued that connected relationships make physical absence and geographic or temporal distances increasingly less important as neither determines communications as significantly as in the past.
>
> (Tsatsou 2009, p.18)

These theoretical findings pushed me further into trying to understand better and explore how the introduction of the Internet, particularly its use in the home, is being experienced by family members. In other words, I wanted to find out to what extent the use of the Internet at home is affecting or not the family dynamics. To what extent are parents, partners, guardians, and children physically present within the home (family time) but at the same time are occupied with Internet use? (absence of communication time - Lee & Chae 2007). Or, contrary to this, is the use of the Internet at home leading to the creation of more interaction and communication among members of the family? I appraised these aspects within the local scenario and, for the very first time, thanks to this study, we now have a clear portrait of the Maltese situation (K. De Giovanni 2014, pers. comm., 18th August – Department of Family Studies – University of Malta). In general, the majority of the participants recounted that the use of the Internet, directly or indirectly, is influential in their lived experience in the home.

It is clear, after due analysis, that the way of life at home, and therefore, the dynamics of family life, are affected by the use of the Internet. The majority of participants maintained that they are connected for a long time.

This is similar to what Rainie & Wellman (2012) recount. This creates a situation in the home where, from time to time, the Internet is being used according to the exigencies of the one using it. So, today much more than in the past, it has become difficult to gauge the allocated time for the Internet in anyone's home. Nevertheless, as I have mentioned earlier, in Germany, recently scientists managed to invent an instrument which can keep a record of individuals' allocated time for Internet use.

Before the possibility of ongoing connectivity, access to the use of the Internet was more structured. Irrespective of the reasons for the use of the Internet, although the participants of this study were asked to indicate this, this information in itself sheds an important light on the study: the Internet has taken its place formally in the list of 'daily exigencies' of the Maltese families.

This situation has made it difficult to draw conclusions about the amount of time allocated daily to the use of the Internet. Though a group of participants were asked to indicate the amount of daily time they use the Internet, in my interpretation and analysis, I kept in mind the aspect of continuous connectivity

In this respect, it is a known fact that according to the National Office of Statistics, 77.5 % in 2012 and 78% in 2013 of the Maltese households respectively, registered that they have both Internet service and broadband connection. Although these figures are true, it is also true that 29.3% (2012) and 30 % (2013) of individuals aged between 16-74, have been identified as persons who have never used the Internet (NSO:2012/2013). These results are very similar to those of other European countries, in particular, United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Italy, France, Austria, and Slovenia (Eurostat:2012 / 2013). It is opportune to recall that Castells, ever since 1996 mentioned that the course of development and dissemination of this new technology era eventually is leading to a long-term presence:

> The process of the formation and diffusion of Internet, and related Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) network, in the last quarter of the century shaped forever the structure of the medium, in the architecture of the network, in the culture of the networkers and in the actual patterns of communication.

> (Castells 1996, p.356)

More recently, Castells (2011) talks how the use of the Internet has infiltrated various aspects of society, especially through the use of devices like iphones, smartphones etc. At the same time he explains that his fact should not be left unexplained without being analysed.

On the other hand, Sant (2009, p. 52), is also in agreement with Castells, wherein he states that, "…. There is no denying that new technologies are facilitating a social change at a faster pace than any other in history," whilst simultaneously, he believes that time will tell if today's changes are more significant than changes that occurred throughout humanity's successive trials and tribulations: "Time will tell whether the Internet Revolution is as significant as the Agricultural Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, pivotal in the social history of humanity" (Sant 2009, p.52).

Sant (2009) states that the Internet Revolution, which Castells (2001) refers to as the Information Technology Revolution, created circumstances which humanity used to forge ahead in various areas of life. Yet, there is the need to evaluate how, in reality, this revolution is being experienced, particularly, in the domestic environment. It is also true that this development in information technology has lowered the barriers of family boundaries. This is because, before one could see and listen to what was transmitted in one's home via the radio or TV, a one direction only, today one can see and listen to the same sources on the Internet, while with certain limitations, one can also interact / participate and share his /her views as well – interactivity.

> The Net differs from most of the mass media it replaces in an obvious and very important way: it's bidirectional. We can send messages through the network as well as receive them. That's made the system all the more useful.
>
> The ability to exchange information online, to upload as well as download, has turned the Net into a thoroughfare for business and commerce. With a few clicks, people can search virtual catalogues, place orders, track shipments, and update information in corporate database. But the Net doesn't just connect us with business; it connects us with one another.

(Carr 2011, p. 85)

For instance, some participants shared with me the fact that often they share their views on blogs, Face-book, Twitter, What's app etc., both during real time, synchronously and non-real time, asynchronously, that can be read later on (Mitchell 2002).

This means that anyone with access to the Internet can express his / her views and share his / her opinion easily in real time and in non-real time. This can be transmitted from / to the home itself without the need of travelling physically, because the thoughts and comments are shared via Internet.   This begs the question: How is this phenomenon being experienced by those who are living this reality? How are Maltese families interpreting this experience of communication and interaction, especially regarding social media?

On the other hand, is it true that we are exposing to our social media "friends" through the Internet those personal affairs which we normally keep behind the closed doors of our houses? Silva (2010) and Mersch (2006), to mention a few, shared similar views. The participants shared varied concerns regarding this issue. For instance, there were some who look on these experiences as exaggerations and waste of time. However, there were some others who shared that they did not mind sharing things online. For them there is nothing wrong with sharing personal affairs with others, as long as one is aware of what one is are doing. In this context, in particular where censorship is concerned Sant (2009) observes this development from a strong, focused perspective.

In fact he takes into account the power granted to humanity through increasing freedom of expression and choice whilst for him there is no censorship or control over what one posts or views on Internet "Along with the rest of the world, Malta is witnessing an understated revolution through a growing number of Internet users who are coming to realise that they can have their voices heard without a controlling intermediary" (Sant, 2009 cited in Borg et al 2009 p. 52).

However, with regards to the above comment, I am not in complete agreement with Sant. Although, it is true that we are witnessing a new reality, where because of the development in information technology, citizens have been given a voice, via blogs, Facebook, Twitter and other social networks, to mention but a few, it is also true that not everybody has this opportunity. As I have already remarked, the reasons for this may be various: lack of access, economic situations or downright censorship.

1.4.4 Internet and Local Research

Despite this scenario, as I have already mentioned earlier, from the limited studies carried out in Malta, to date there appear to be conflicting views. The few observations of the way Maltese families are adjusting to Internet use have, unfortunately, been rather scant. For instance, Bellia/Grima (2002), Grima (2004) and Johnson (2007), do not reveal whether frequent use of the Internet is related or not to an increase or decrease in interaction and interpersonal relationships between young people and their parents. To date, neither the social practices of the family, nor to what extent these are changing by Internet use, have been studied in depth. This has also been confirmed by the Department for Family Studies at the University of Malta. (K. De Giovanni 2014, pers. comm., 18th August).

However, in her study Attard (2008, p. 76), which is one of the very few studies that is related to this research, and in line with Silva (2010) and Silverstone & Hirsch (1992) sustains that "the domestic space, like the public space, is also transformed by technology". In parallel, Debono (2001 p.1) found evidence that the Maltese community is moving towards a new global village via the computer "…while some youth still consider computer-mediated communication as artificial and community dismantling, others are using it to initiate contact with others whom they would not be comfortable to approach personally."

Moreover, in a more recent study, although it has been elicited that young people are spending more time surfing the Internet and communicating with their peers and friends, they are diminishing their off-line social circle: "The majority of Maltese adolescents have excessive Internet use and while on line they engage mostly in chatting, emailing and browsing for information", (Spiteri 2006, p.26). In addition, the latter, similar to Kraut et al (1998), exposes a significant relationship between Internet use and social isolation.

Excessive Internet use was related to social and lifestyle changes and to Internet heavy use. (Weinstein & Lejoyeux 2010; Scoville 2009; Young et al 2011). Notwithstanding such findings, there is a lack of local qualitative research related to Internet use, family and the domestic space, hence family time and communication time (K. De Giovanni 2014, pers. comm., 18th August).

After having explained in detail why I have decided to undertake this study, I now pass on to explain how I arrived at the formulation of the key question of this research.

1.5 Foundations for the Research Question

Whilst acknowledging significant diverse quantitative local studies about the nature of Internet use, further research is needed on how families are responding and reacting to Internet use in relation to family time and communication time. As explained earlier, available research is more directly related to access to the Internet rather than to how and why families are adjusting their lifestyles to it. Hence, it was appropriate to study how Internet-use in the home is being experienced by Maltese families. My experience with families I met prior to the study and the literature I read, gave me a clear indication that families are living a new experience through the use of the Internet at home.

In the light of all this, it was imperative to seek for a particular question. My previous study (Vella 2009), along with information I gathered from friends and relatives whom I asked what the use of Internet means to them, and also from literature I read in the past 5 years, helped me to formulate the question. The formulation of questions is key; "it is crucial to move from topics to questions. It is then important to move from rough formulations of theory questions to better formulation" (Wengraf 2002, p.30).

I also had to think carefully about the best methods and methodologies to use to obtain an optimum result. As I will explain in more detail in Chapter 3, which is dedicated to methods and methodology, I applied those approaches which gave voice to the participants.   The participants themselves were the "experiential experts", as they recounted their experiences, alongside with the interpretation I collated from a group of professional experts, which their respective professions, are linked to my field of study. Eventually, I composed a key question that led me to explore how Maltese families are living side by side with Internet use at home.

1.6 Taking the Field

For obvious reasons, any research has to be conducted in a context. The title of this study, The NET at Home: A Sociological Inquiry into Internet, Family, and the Domestic Space, is a clear indication that the contexts are: the Internet, the family, and the home. The home setting is ideal for the studying of the lived-experiences of individual family members. Participants had a "leading role" in this study, in tandem with my interpretation and analysis. For quite a time, I have jotted down notes related to the subjects of the Internet use, family and the domestic space whenever I met or observed anything worthwhile. I immediately recorded them in the Research Diary. I kept a notebook and a pen in strategic places: in my bedroom, in the bathroom and in my car to be quick to make notes of any concepts / thoughts or observation and then work on the notes later.

The idea of making a deep study of this sort, took root during the period when I was doing another research at Masters' level when I focused on the "Challenges of Media Literacy and the Maltese Education System".

Although this analysis was primarily aimed at the Maltese Education System, and the way it is overcoming the challenges related to Media Literacy among primary and secondary level students, it became evident that the Internet has a vital impact, prompting the necessity of Media Studies being upgraded within the National Minimum Curriculum, Vella (2009).

This is particularly important since, although children and young people have access to the Internet, research shows that they do not necessarily have the skills or maturity to determine what is right or wrong (Livingstone 2000; Livingstone and Bovill 2001; Whitty 2014). The literature reviews and the information which resulted from the data, pointed at new areas which I could explore in another study.

It was patently clear that there was a gaping void of local research about how the Internet is being experienced in the home. I have to add that within the literature I have consulted for this research, similar to those experiences I have already mentioned, I found studies recording that, thanks to the Internet, users have kept in touch with relatives and friends: (Gatt 2012, Miller & Slater 2002, Lenhart et al 2010, Jones 2009, Putnam 2000, Attard 2008, and Mills 2014). These studies elicited that on-line contact was sometimes extended to off-line interaction. However, other studies showed that Internet-use was associated with isolation: (Griffiths 2011; Weinstein & Lejoyeux 2010; Livingstone & Bovil 2001; Kraut et al 2002; Debono 2001; Young et al 1999). This has been further confirmed during the interviews that I have conducted with the professional experts in the fields of psychology and psychiatry.

Moreover, other studies found gender and age differences with regards to the use of Internet (NSO 2010 2011, 2012, 2013; MCA 2012; Eurostat 2012; World Internet Stat 2013; Thorne 2012). These aspects show how men and women react differently to its use and how some members of the same family do not use the Internet with the same regularity as the others. In addition, Schmidt and Cohen (2013) explain and analyse the fact that information technology is affecting society around the world. They look at the development in technology, and study the way this development is breaking down the old walls which have hindered human interaction in different areas of human life. In a light vein, they invite readers to reflect on what they are experiencing today through the use of Internet:

> Think of all the websites you've ever visited, all the e-mails you've sent and stories you've read online, all the facts you've learned and fictions you've encountered and debunked.

> Think of every relationship forged, every journey planned, every job found and every dream born, nurtured and implemented through this platform….. This is the Internet, the world's largest ungoverned space.

(Schmidt and Cohen 2013, p.3)

It is clear that what Schmidt and Cohen (2013) say is true. However, there is always an element of criticism, because one has to keep in mind that not everyone uses the Internet, though in the coming years, most probably the tendency will be that most people will be using it. Nevertheless, Castells (1996) makes similar comments when he talks about what the world is experiencing in this ICT age.

> At the end of the twentieth century, we are living through one of these rare intervals in history. An interval characterised by the transformation of our material culture by the works of a new technological paradigm organised around information technologies.

(Castells 1996, p. 29)

I must say that, I, like others my age, and even older, have lived through the coming of the Internet, through its continuous and hurried process. Therefore, we were in a different position from those who have been born in this era of the Internet (Prensk 2001).

We have had to keep up with this new technology and, consequently, adapt to new systems, while getting on with our lives. This would make an interesting study were one to analyse how the introduction of the Internet processed over a period of time and how it was experienced by those, like me, who had to discover it and adapt to it, nearly without volition.

On the other hand, it is sad to report that few local studies have treated the lived experience of how today Maltese families are dealing with the use of the Internet. To find such information, a deep study within the family itself was needed. There, in the family environment, the members of the family would have the opportunity of sharing their daily lived experiences while being exposed to the use of the Internet.

Now, thanks to this study that I have conducted, a group of Maltese families had the opportunity of relating their story themselves, how they are living, through experience, the use of Internet at home.

This study attempts to explore different aspects of Maltese families, like spatial and temporal flexibility of the everyday life of each member of the family, in the context of Internet use at home. The findings expose the level of face to face interaction among members of the same family whilst exploring why the Internet is used, thereby laying bare the interests and needs of the family.

My friends' experiences of life in their families using the Internet, which they shared with me, were instrumental in pushing me to do this study. Therefore, there was nothing left for me to do but to take the bull by the horns and begin to explore, the family and the use of the Internet at home.

Having taken all this into consideration, I firmly believed that it was time to undertake a study of contemporary families and Internet use on the local scene. This would help in tracking the progress of Maltese families, vis-à-vis technological change, particularly Internet use.

Since this is the first chapter dedicated to the Introduction, I thought it would be appropriate to provide a clear picture of the three main concepts which are essential to it: the concept of family, that of a residential home and the use of the Internet. Hence in the next sections, I will briefly explain how humanity started living in a family atmosphere; I will focus on the salient developments the family went through to arrive at its present forms. This will be followed by an etymological explanation of the word "family". Then I will proceed to explain its earlier experience in the home environment and how eventually humanity adapted, itself, or not, to the use of technology.

To achieve the last aim, I focused briefly on the Technological Revolution. Later, I will go into the Information Technology and Community Transformation and the way are these being experienced. Finally I will end this section by appraising the contribution and the responsibility of the family in the socialisation process of its members with regard to the development of information technology.

1.7 Key Research Concepts

1.7.1. The Family

1.7.1.1 Introduction

Among the prominent thinkers, who studied and wrote about family experiences, particularly how these can serve as a means of power and knowledge, one finds Michel Foucault. He was brought up in an upper-middle class family in France. Foucault was a troubled young man because of his sexual orientation, that of a homosexual, which caused him trouble with his father.

These negative life experiences including a suicide attempt and a spell in a mental home, led him to develop philosophical thoughts about the family environment. He issued many books and publications which make sense, even today, among which finds: The History of Sexuality 1, 2, and 3, and Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason.

According to Duschinsky, & Rocha (2012), although Foucault did not directly address the family in his writings, one can deduct that he considered this institution as a means by which society could progress according to a pre-planned strategy of the reigning power. In this sense, according to Foucault, the role of the father in the mid Eighteenth Century, that of guiding the family, was part of the plan of the power of the State, so that there would be a continuation of a different kind of power:

> One type of power, that of sovereignty, is replaced by what could be called disciplinary power, and the effect of which is not at all to consecrate someone's power, to concentrate power in a visible and named individual, but only to produce effects on its target ….who must be rendered 'docile and submissive'.

> (Foucault in Lenoir & Duschinsky 2012, p. 20)

Foucault was of the opinion that leaders /rulers of that time, gave more importance to households and what was happening therein, than to the aspects of their sovereignty and territory. In this way, a picture emerged of what was happening in the family households, particularly, the relationships among respective members of the family. Foucault argued that this role of the family, as part of the plan of the reigning power, took on another form in the following centuries, then serving society as a whole. For him strong families form strong society. "Foucault saw it rather as a site of intervention, the place where surveillance was most dramatically visible and, far from being private, a place of intense public attention after the French Revolution" (Thom 2012, p. 159). In fact, Duschinsky, & Rocha (2012: 01), sustain that "Foucault explores the transformation of familial dynamics – most notably at the intersection between kinship, sexuality and the state – that occurred with the rise of the bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century". On the other hand, Bell (2012:40) sustains that Foucault maintains that the role of the family changed in such a way, that "the family thus becomes a 'privileged instrument' of bio politics".

> As a field of intervention the notion of population relied upon the development of the disciplines, and these worked through the family, inscribing it with concerns that operated at both poles of what Foucault came to term bio political government. That is, bio politics employs the micro, anatomical disciplinary techniques of power described throughout Discipline and Punish. But through these disciplinary techniques, truths emerge that come to be articulated in the macro or aggregate terms of governmentality, allowing forms of rationality that predict, control and create situations to which they seem merely to respond to.

> (Bell 2012, p. 40)

Moreover, according to Lenoir & Duschinsky (2012:19), Foucault was more preoccupied by the history of the family wherein he posits the element of power in the family context. He places importance on the family as it occupies a unique position in the history of humanity. According to him, the family, has made a quantum leap from the ancient regime to modernity: "The family has played a significant role in the construction of middle-class life; it has been implicated in the identification of each human subject as in possession of a 'personal identity'; it has entered into an intricate and constitutive relationship with the modern psycho-disciplines". Foucault in Lenoir & Duschinsky (2012:19).

More than this, near the eighties, Foucault carried on with his theories on the family, reflecting particularly on the family's privilege of power, as explained by Lenoir & Duschinsky (2012).

> Foucault moved to a consideration of technologies of the self as key in the formation of subjectivity within particular regimes of truth and power. In particular, he attends to the emergence of conjugality as a technology of the self, which Foucault situated as having formed 'the basic framework of modern European sexual morality'.
>
> (Lenoir & Duschinsky 2012, p.19)

Meanwhile to follow better the development and role of the family over the ages, I felt the need to understand and to define the concept of "family" in a wider sense. The various literature pieces I have referred to, make it clear that one can no longer talk of "family" but of "family diversity". As I will be explaining in more detail in this Chapter, this new definition is the result of the evolution of the family, which has led to the creation of new types of families, composed differently from the nuclear family. The literature about the family explains clearly that it is accepted that the definition is not easy to pinpoint because new realities include various types of families:

> It is essential to think of families rather than the family. This alone, however, is not enough; there are other assumptions inherent in the concept of the family that need to be questioned…..The notion of there being such a thing as the family is thus highly controversial and full of ambiguities and contradictions.

> (Gittins 1993, p.2, p.70)

In this context Morgan (2011) reiterates that it is difficult to talk about "family". He is very clear in his comments, when he says: "there is no such thing as the family" (2011:03). One of the difficulties he finds in defining the family, is the lack of distinction about what makes a "marriage", what makes a "family" and what makes a "household". In fact, when Morgan talks about the role of the family, he makes a distinction between family structure and family practices. In this sense, Morgan, as well as Finch (2007) seems to detach family from its traditional role. To Morgan, the family does not exist so that one feels part of it, but it is there to offer an environment where family practices can be executed. In other words, Morgan looks at the family as a set of family practices which have a particular meaning to respective family members, at different periods throughout their lives.

> Family practices are not simply cognitively constructed. They also have some kind of emotional dimension, some sense of personal or moral significance. Part of the process of constructing family practices, historically and individually, is not simply in terms of being able to identify such practices but also the recognition that such practices are significant in some way….. Finally we should stress that family practices do seem to provide particularly strong links between self and society.

> (Morgan 1996, p.192 p.193)

Morgan (1996) is of the opinion that family practices are small episodes in everyday life that are often taken for granted by family members. Besides, Morgan insists that the difference in social class is also instrumental in the formation of the family on which the lifestyle of the same family is respectively based. Morgan also queries the roles and responsibilities which one expects from a family.

He is conscious of the fact that the family has to be responsible for the care obligations of its members, where the norms and social values dominate. Notwithstanding this, he disagrees with those who tend to underestimate the role of the male as far as the aspect of caring work is concerned:

> In the first place men are not absent from caring work and, indeed, their involvement in such activities may have been underestimated by some previous commentators.

(Morgan 1996, p. 101)

On the same wavelength, Finch (2007) talks about the concept of display, where, among other things, she proposes the fact that nowadays, it makes more sense to talk about "doing family things than by being a family" (2007, p. 66). Along with Morgan (1996), she believes that the contemporary family is focusing more on activities and actions of family members than on its own structure. In other words, Finch gives more importance to experience and social relationships of the family members as social actors, than to the formation of the family.

> The emphasis is on social actors creatively constituting their own social world, which means that the individual understands of "my family" is subject to change over time and is deeply rooted in individual biographies.

(Finch 2007, p.66)

Finch's arguments are based on the idea that the family environment should be regarded as the suitable environment for its members. This means the environment where family members practise, have experiences and enjoy social relationships.

This makes sense to those who are living these experiences: "families need to be displayed as well as done" (Finch 2007, p 66). Simply stated this implies that the actions taken by family members are effective if they are understood by all the members. Eventually, one may say that family practices, as described also by Morgan (1996) are being articulated in that family.

Finch thinks it is important to find an element of display by all those respective family members to obtain the presence of family relationships.

> Display is the process by which individuals, and groups of individuals, convey to each other and to relevant audiences that certain of their actions do constitute "doing family things" and there by confirm that these relationships are "family" relationships.
>
> (Finch 2007, p. 66)

I find very important Finch's (2007) significant reference to the diversity of the family and the way she talks about the concept of displaying family, as she throws more light on today's family. What Finch talks about is related to the question which needs answering, of what composes a family. Finch quotes recent surveys carried out in the United Kingdom which reveal that there is a diversity of family composition while the number of households composed of nuclear families is proportionally small.

> The household in which an individual currently lives is no longer necessarily synonymous with "my family". For many people, their close relationships extend to other households formed through dissolved marriages, through cohabitation past and present, to step relationships both inside and outside their own household, to broader kin relationships, and to same sex partnerships and to friendship.
>
> (Finch 2007, p. 68)

Coupled with the notion of family displaying, one finds Hudak & Giammattei (2014), among others' concept of "doing family", rather than the "family".

Notwithstanding the fact that social changes are occurring daily, these thinkers still link marriage and family primarily to heterosexual couples. They argue that once society in general promotes marriage and heterosexual family, it follows that homosexual families are being looked at as inferior to heterosexual families.

On parallel lines, Perlesz et al (2006) argue that the notion of heteronormativity is a concept where heterosexuality is assumed to be the only lifestyle option that is viable. In this context, Perlez et al (2006) maintain the importance of using the term "doing family" rather than the word "family", because it make more sense to a contemporary family. They contend that today's society is experiencing new forms of families, among which, those composed of persons who are gay. What is important to these thinkers is what the family is doing and how it is composed, rather than what "the family" means. Putting it in another way Perlesz et al (2006) find that through the notion of "doing family", other types of families are created, which are far different from families composed of heterosexual relationships. In this atmosphere, the members can still relate to each other and are given / receive parental attention, irrespective of whether they are heterosexual or homosexual. It is interesting to note that in their study, Perlesz et al (2006) found, among other things, that in gay families there is more equality with regard to gender roles. Despite this positive aspect, they also found that non-heterosexual families are still facing numerous difficulties in leading their lives.

> Thinking of ourselves and our clients as doing families opens up a greater repertoire for flexibility, negotiated meanings, fluidity and ambiguity. It acknowledges too that families are in a social time of transition and flux. The families in our study show us that it is not always comfortable living differently. Understanding the tension that arises in attempting to do family with and beyond a heteronormative frame provides a useful starting point for tackling the everyday vicissitudes of family life that bring lesbian, gay, and straight families to therapy.

(Perlesz et al 2006, p. 197)

On their part, Hudak & Giammattei (2010) argue that decentralised heternormativity is a process which leads to the possibility of humanity being able to live in a freer world, where society will be free from all pressure, wherever it comes from, which imposes only heterosexual family structures.

In this way, the notion of the word "family" will change to "doing family" (Hudak & Giammettei 2010), enabling the celebration of diversity and the diffusion of social justice.

Scholars coming from the postmodernism camp and those who promote the Queer Theory, write about the aspect of diversity in the family context. In the forefront are Foucault (1980) and Carrington (2009). Foucault (1980), in particular, wrote in depth about the diversity in the sexual orientation of people:

> Homosexuality became a perversion but the discourse made possible the formation of a reverse discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturality' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified.

> (Foucault 1980, quoted in Bristow 1997, p. 178)

In his study conducted among gay families, Carrington (2009) revealed that inequality tends to exist within the gay families with regard to the role of the respective members. There also exists some scepticism about displaying the roles played by members of gay families, the reason being the stigma that still exists about families formed by gay couples.

In addition, Carrington's study has given another picture of family life, that which is composed of members of the same sex. In Carrington's (2009) words the lived experience of lesbigay families have come to light because of his study. Contrary to what people think, these experiences are very similar to those experienced by heterosexual families, especially where domesticity is concerned:

> In this sense, a family, any family, is a social construction, or a set of relationships, edified, and sustained through human initiative. People do family.

> (Carrington 2009, p.9)

Carrington discovered that lesbigay families are living nearly the same experiences as heterosexual families, with the difference that they are looked upon as being different. Carrington's (2009) arguments vis-à-vis the importance of diversity in families, especially with reference to the lived experiences and relationship among members, are parallel to those expressed by Morgan (1996/ 2011) and Finch (2007) respectively.

Finch (2007) maintains that her argument about the notion of displaying family is a result of the on-going social changes. She explains that the display aspect makes clear the dimension of the lived experience of the contemporary family even in the context of gay families. It is important for a person to be conscious of the elements which comprise the relationships with their respective family and that these elements are displayed. This means that family members should be conscious of the experience lived together, as these will eventually lead to the creation of family relationships.

> It seems that the successful establishment of the family-like nature of relationships is accomplished primarily through the direct social interaction with the individuals with whom one is establishing family relationships, who then respond by themselves acting within a framework of those relationships. However, this is reinforced by other participants or observers, who also acknowledge the family-life of what they see, hear or learn about.

(Finch 2007, p.74)

Just like Carrington (2009), Finch (2007) thinks that the process of social interaction among family members, whatever the form the family takes, is important and should be established by all respective members. In this way, her notion of displaying family relationships is happening, as it can be interpreted and lived by all those involved.

Carrington (2009) thinks on parallel lines and insists on the importance of lesbigay families undergoing the same lived experiences and interactions as heterosexual families.

Moreover, Carrington (2009) reiterates his opinion that through lived experiences at home, these families also go through a process of interpretation of what is happening around them, while, at the same time they make this process meaningful to them.

> Lesbigay families, like most other American families, face the struggles of balancing work and family commitments, of managing the stresses and strains of waxing and waning sexual desires, of maintaining open and honest communication, fighting over household responsibilities, and, most frequently, of simply trying to make ends meet.

(Carrington 2009, p.4)

With this in mind, I felt it important to know what literature understood by the terminology "family" or "families". To arrive at a kind of answer, besides the literature I have already referred to, I had to give importance to the history of the family as a vital social institution nearly in every society. I consulted many readings which showed the way how the family took the form we know today, over the passage of time. For this study to be complete, I felt the need to inform myself about the new types of families and make sure that they are all represented concretely in the samples taken for the study. I thought that it would also be interesting and relevant to trace the etymology of the word "family", thereby covering all areas relating to the family. I will start by giving a definition of family and the etymology of the word "family".

These are important as they demonstrate the changes the family has gone through and is still going through. I will also include aspects of change that the Maltese family went through.

1.7.1.2 Definition of Family

> In some times and places, men have had more than one wife at a time; in some times and places, married children have usually lived with the parents of one of the spouses; in many times and places, marriage partners have been selected by the parents of the marrying couple. All of these practices seemed normal and ordinary to the people who engaged in them; by looking at a wide variety of practices we can see how none of them, including our own family practices, are natural – they are all socially and historically constructed. (Maynes and Waltner 2012, p.10)

Since the aim of the research is to clarify how Internet use is being experienced by Maltese families, it was definitely important to define what one understands by the term "family". It is clear, as Steel et al (2012), Newman (2009), Corbert (2004), McCarthy & Edwards (2011), Abela & Walker (2014), Mills (2014), Tabone (1995), Smith (2008), and Giddens (1989) point out, that the structure of the family as a social institution has changed and is still developing. For many years, the traditional family has been considered as an institution providing primary socialisation. Today, as ever, one has to take into consideration the concept of time and space, before trying to define the family. On the other hand, the debate about the concept of the family is ongoing, especially when it is being studied.

> Family studies is not easy to define, not least because the core term 'family' has become a matter of considerable controversy and dispute. Although the world itself continues to be widely evident and generally unquestioned in everyday lives as well as in political debates and professional practices, researchers may ponder how to use it, or whether to us it at all.
>
> (McCarthy & Edwards 2011, p. 1)

It is imperative to consider that all that has been written about the family has been written in a context and ambit of the time of writing. For example, one has to keep this in mind to understand and interpret what Murdock, one of the pioneer sociologists, writes about the family. In fact Murdock (1949), as well, as Parsons (1955), look at the family as an institution, made up of parents and children with members co-operating for its common good:

> The family is a social group characterised by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults.

(Murdock 1949, p. 1)

With the passage of time, which inevitably brought progress, society also experienced changes, which left their own imprints, for better or for worse. It is interesting to see how society, and therefore also the family, have answered to these changes. Members of the same family, but of different ages, may react differently to changes. (Morgan 2011; Chambers 2012; Cheal 2002; Newman 2008). Today, one can find different forms of families and each type has different needs and styles of living. This is well explained by Walsh (2012):

> As families have become increasingly varied over a lengthening life course, our conceptions of normality must be examined and our very definition of family must be expanded to encompass a broad spectrum and fluid reshaping of relational and household patterns.

(Walsh 2012, p.3)

In addition, the changes that the structure of the family regularly experiences are to be appraised within a context. Abela & Walker (2014, p.05) argue that a number of circumstances are leading to the actual changes that the structure of the family is living through, which at times tend to effect its functionality "We live in a time of unprecedented diversity in household living arrangements, and of extensive social, cultural and economic change, both of which have far-reaching implications for marriage, parenting, and family life". Moreover, according to Rizzo (2000), the changes in the format of the family, have prompted one to ask about the role of the family:

"The changes that the family has undergone, both in substance and form, have not only made its definition highly problematic, but has also cast doubts about its functionality" (Rizzo 2004, p. 15). Although Rizzo's (2004) argument tends to shed doubt about the functions of the family today, it is also clear that the functions and roles of the family are and will still be important for humanity's development.

There should be absolutely no doubt about the importance of the family, simply because today there are different forms of families (Giddens 2009; Steel et al 2009; Newman 2012).

It is a reality that the different types of families can offer an ideal environment for humanity's development, regardless of their respective types. Nevertheless, like in the past, there exist families who are not exercising their roles as expected in the interest of their respective members (Morgan 1996; Finch 1989; Newman 2012; Steel et al 2009; Abela 2014). The different roles of the members of the family in today's world, should be analysed according to the times and in the context of present day living. Moreover, it would be important to evaluate how certain roles have been perpetuated over the ages, even by the same institutions, (Morgan 2011; Finch 1989; Chambers 2012; Cheal 2002; Newman 2008; Silva 2010; Camilleri-Cassar, 2005).

> The character of family relationships has been changing and continues to change and suit the particular circumstances in which individuals find themselves - often very subtly but sometimes quite visibly….. To understand the myth of the golden age in the past, we therefore need to understand family relationships and family responsibilities in the present and the circumstances in which they have to be worked out.

> (Finch 1989, p.85)

Before starting to talk about family diversity, I end this section by explaining the reason why I have opted to study families that are composed of more than one person and putting aside single person "families". According to various literature, in particular, Newman (2012), Steel (2009), Taylor et al (1997), and Fulcher and Scott (2005), to mention but a few, the family is composed of two or more members living together and who are related to each other, either by blood, or through a consensual union. In parallel, the European Union looks at and defines the nucleus of the family as a group of people of more than one person. Hence, within the context of this study the definition of family will be based on the literature I referred to and in particular, to what have been stipulated by the European Union. The Official Journal of the European Union dated 15th December 2009, Ref. L329/57 defines:

> The family nucleus is defined in the narrow sense that is, as two or more persons who belong to the same household and who are related as husband and wife, as partners in a registered partnership, as partners in a consensual union, or as parent and child. Thus a family comprises a couple without children or a couple with one or more children, or a lone parent with one or more children. This family concept limits relationships between children and adults to direct (first-degree) relationships, that are between parents and children.

> (Official Journal of the European Union 15.12.2009 L 329/57)

In the next section I will be talking more about Family Diversity leading to the types of families I identified in the literature.

1.7.1.3 Family Diversity

> The idea of "family" can no more be defined by a network of blood relations than the concept of "home" can be described as a physical building. At some level we may thing of family as a collective of partners, parents, children, grandparents and various other relations. But to stop here would be a gloss over what we really mean when we talk about being part of a family, spending time with family, or making a family home. These richer, everyday concepts point to a much more nuanced and profound idea of what a family is. When seen in these terms, it is clear that the notion of the family, is to some extent an aspiration – something we try to achieve and a goal that we aim toward. Furthermore, moving toward this goal effort – and sometimes, a great deal of effort, to maintain family, to nurture it, and to adapt domestic life to its changing needs and unfolding circumstances. In short, a family is something we do, not something that simply is. More than this the doing of family is never complete. It is always "work in progress".

<div align="right">(Neustaedter et 2013, p 2)</div>

Today the reality is that there exist different types of families and these are open to debate. Therefore, I felt it necessary to create a space for an analysis and discussion on this subject. From what I have seen during the process of this study all the types of families fit what Lamanna et al 2014 describe about the family:

> A family is any sexually expressive, parent-child, or other kin relationship in which people - usually related by ancestry, marriage or adoption - form an economic, or otherwise practical unit and care of any children or other dependents - consider their identity to be significantly attached to the group and - commit to maintaining that group over time.

<div align="right">(Lamanna et al 2014, p.4)</div>

Concisely, yet, at the same time in certain detail, Lamanna et al (2014) succeed in giving ideal descriptions of the ingredients which form the family today.

Similar to Abela & Walker 2014; Newman 2012; Steel 2009; and Giddens 1989, these descriptions manifest that society is presenting different family situations, which are all too real.

> Family structure and family value have undergone tremendous changes over the last generation. The basic structure of the family has been reshaped and family values and related attitudes have also undergone paradigmatic shifts.

<div align="right">(Smith 2008, p 1)</div>

As I shall explain further on, thanks to the literature I referred to and my encounters with different types of families, I am now in a better position to appreciate the different forms of the families existing in Malta and Gozo. Among the families I read about, the one I found many references to is the nuclear, traditional type of family. According to some writings, this type of family tends to be considered ideal as it is supposed to contain all the ingredients necessary for a person to grow, educate him/ herself, find love and a healthy environment in which they would develop both socially and psychologically. Yet, nuclear families may not offer the ideal environment to their members and yet, this does not mean that other types of families cannot offer the same opportunities to their respective members. This type of family is referred to as the married intact nuclear family, where the family consists of a married couple, father and mother and their children (McCarthy and Edwards 2011; Corbert 2004; Walsh 2012; Livingstone & Bovill 2001; Murdock 1949; Parsons 1955; Rizzo 2004; Abela & Walker 2014; Mills 2014; Whitty 2014; Steel et al 2009, Newman 2012; Cheal 2002).

Meanwhile, in his book "Social Structure" Murdock (1949) describes the family from a traditional perspective as well: "Nuclear family consists typically of a married man and woman with their offspring, although in individual cases, one or more additional persons may reside with them (Murdock 1949, p. 1).

Murdock and other functionalists, in particular Parsons & Bales (1955) tend to perpetuate the notion that the nuclear family is the only unit necessary for society to keep on functioning. According to these thinkers, and others that support this school of thought, if the nuclear family does not exist, society will crumble. We today know that this is not the case. (Dreman 2013; Coltrane & Collins 2001; Taylor et al 1998; Giddens 1989; Fulcher & Scott 2005; Steel et al 2009; Newman 2012). Apart from the traditional family, other types of families have carried on with life and society has not crumbled. On the other hand it is also true that some families go through difficult social problems. Thanks to the Welfare State, these families are helped to cope as is the case in other countries. I can vouch for the help given, as I formed part of a Public Board (Social Assistance Board – SAB) which assessed particular families with problems, who after being investigated were given the necessary help.

Besides the traditional families, one also finds those so-called joint-custody families and cohabiting families, where the couples live together and have joint custody of the children. It could be that brothers and sisters live together (Walsh 2012; Scott Loveless & Holman 2007; Lamanna et al 2014; Charlotte 1996; Steel et al 2009; Newman 2012).

Other families fall under the category known as the single-parent families (Bilton et al 2002; Nock 1992; McCarthy & Edwards 2011). Similar to their European-counterparts, locally, single parent families have been increasing at a fast pace (NSO 2011, 2012, 2013; Eurostat 2013, 2012). Moreover, there are families without children, who are also families.

There are couples who, for medical or personal reasons, do not have children. They are referred to as child-free families (Walker 2011; Keim 2011; Scott 2009; Cain 2002; Ross 1994).

Still other types of families are the blended, step-families or reconstituted families. These are the result of second or more marriages which include children coming for previous marriages of both sides (Dreman 2013; Hantrais 2004; Jeynes 2012; Hennon & Wilson 2011; Simpson 1994).

> One of the most profound changes in the pattern of family life in the western world in recent times has been the increasing number of marriages that end in divorce. Divorce rates which were marginal at the turn of the century have become central demographic features of most European countries. Statistics suggest that divorce is becoming an increasingly common part of the life-course for men and women in contemporary society and that the complex re-structuring of economic, emotional, and residential arrangements which this sets in train has now become part of the familial environment in which children grow up. Indeed, far from being isolated and anomalous incidents in a world of normal families, divorce and family reconstitution, are an increasingly distinctive weft which runs through the fabric of society.

(Simpson 1994, p. 832)

Besides, second-marriages that are followed after annulments, Malta is experiencing other types of marriages since divorce was legalised in 2011. However, such families existed locally, even before the divorce law came into effect, as ever since 1975, Malta recognised divorced couples, who obtained their divorces abroad.

Last, but not least, there is a new reality created by families in which the adults are of the same sex (Giddens 1989; Coltrane & Collins 2001; Charlotte 1996; Walsh 2012; Bilton et al 2002; Nock 1992; Weeks et al 2007; McCarthy & Edwards 2011). In recent years, there has been a lot of lobbying, discussions, and protest-marches to promote same sex marriages.

Even locally, there is the Malta Gay Rights Movement (MGRM), and Drachma, which are very active. The three main local political parties, namely: the Malta Labour Party, the Nationalist Party, and the Alternattiva Demokratika all had given space in their agenda to this new form of family and recognise couples who cohabit and have different sexual orientations. The Maltese Parliament established the Civil Union Act as of 2014.

With all the above information in hand, I planned to cover all the types of families. At this stage I reiterate the importance of interpreting the meaning of the world "family" from the start. The samples I am going to refer to in more detail in Chapter 3 will incorporate a representation of the six types of families. Hence, with a wide range of Maltese families being studied, a clear picture emerged about how these families are living their lives immersed in information technology. These "new" families are concrete proof of drastic changes from the traditional type.

Moreover, it is historically proven that during the 19th Century, precisely during the period of technological change (Industrial Revolution), the format of the family continued to develop. A particular change was a movement from the traditional family to the nuclear family (Segalen 1996, p. 377; Giddens 1989, p.387; Bilton et al 2002, p. 230; Abercrombie et al 1994, p.269 p.270; Mitterauer & Sider 1982).

After taking a look at the definition of the family and the various changes and experiences it went through over the years, I will deal with the etymology of the word "family" in the next section, while also describing briefly the history of the family as it developed in Europe.

1.7.1.4 Etymology of Family

It appears that the root and meaning of the word "family" as it is known today, originated in the English language between the 14th and 15th Centuries from the Latin word "familia" which means "household". (Williams 1983, p.131; Skeat 1958; Morgan 1851cited in Hottingen-Zurich 2000; Engels 1884 cited in Nock 1992). The same sources state that the word "family" is derived from the word "famulus" which means "servant". It is understood that there is a link between the Latin word "familia" and the group of servants who lived in the same house as its respective masters.

Often, same groups of servants were related to each other. That is why, researchers think, that this may have caused them to be referred to as "familia" which means "household". Later, round about the 15th Century, the word "familia" started to mean "house", meaning all those members related to the common ancestors, that is all those that fell under their responsibility through affinity or consanguinity (William 1983, p.132).

According to William (1983) up to the 17th Century, the word "familia" included the owners, blood relatives and even the servants. The word kept the same meaning of "household" for a long time, especially in rural areas. But the growing disparity between the social classes, necessitated a distinction between the lords of the family and their servants. So, there was a change in the meaning of "family". Only the lord, his children and others wedded to members of the lord's family started being called "family", in the way it is understood today.

It is evident that the family has gone through quite a number of phases and different forms to arrive at what it is today. Besides this process, the concept of family was tied to particular site, which later on, took the form of a residential home as we know it today.

In the home, as I will explain further on, the family created an environment where its members could grow, give and receive affection and eventually find their state in life, so that they in their turn would pass on the same process to later generations.

> The evolution of family life continues to shape, and be shaped by, historical forces. Now more than ever, these changes take place in a global framework. The deep history of family – reaching back to the earliest emergence of the human species – has left its imprint on global historical processes. Humans everywhere descend from common ancestors who evolved in the social context of domestic relationships. However, for many thousands of years, family histories have diverged as diasporas and re-encounters across cultures have created distinctive ways of living in families.
>
> (Maynes & Waltner 2012, p. 22)

In the above section, I delved deeper into the definition of the family by focusing on sociological interpretations. In addition, I have referred to the etymology of the word "family" and eventually I have given a brief history of family. I hope that this appraisal of family and change will give us a better understanding of today's family. In the next section, I will look at the concept of "home". Briefly, I will trace how society developed the definition of the concept "home" over the years.

1.7.2 The Home – The Domestic Space

1.7.2.1 Introduction

> The concept of home embraces both a physical and a social space; the house itself is home, as are the social relations contained within it. The concept of home also carries a heavy ideological burden; it can be seen as part of an ideological trinity: family, home and community.
>
> (Munro & Madigan 1993, p. 107)

This study gives the same importance to the environment in which the family, whatever type it is, lives, as it does to the family. I thought it is worthwhile, therefore, to give an explanation of the concept "home", starting from the first dwellings humanity had: the caves, and carrying on to the types of home we inhabit today. I have not gone in too much detail about this, as the focus of this study is the use of the Internet in the domestic space. But a brief study of how, over the passage of time, the home environment took different forms, as well as finding the reasons for these changes, will not impair the quality of the study.

> A home fulfils many needs: a place of self-expression, a vessel of memories, a refuge from the outside world, a cocoon where we can feel nurtured and let down our guard. A person without a fixed abode is viewed with suspicion in our society, labelled "vagrant", "hobo", and "street person". The lack of home address can be a serious impediment to someone seeking a job, renting a place to live, or trying to vote. Those of us lucky enough to have a home may rarely reflect on our good fortune.
>
> <div align="right">(Marcus 1997, p.2)</div>

A home gives a certain identity and dignity to humanity. The fact that a person lives in a home, give him/her a sense of stability, continuity and safety (Dupuis & Thorns 1998). We, ourselves, are relieved when after a day's work, or a day out, we return home. I, for example, like many others I assume, tend to quote the saying "Home Sweet Home", when I arrive home. I promptly change my shoes and clothes and put on something less formal, because I am in my home environment, where I feel comfortable and can be myself. The home gives a person all that he needs: "Ah! There is nothing like staying at home for real comfort" Jane Austen - *Emma* (1814). Although it is not always the case, the home is the ideal place to give members of family a sense of well-being, from their infancy until they branch out in life, having chosen their way of life.

> Home is both a physical space and, specifically in terms of family, a place carrying social and emotional ideals of kinship relations, such as intimacy, rootedness, belonging, solidarity, security and privacy.

<div align="right">(McCarthy & Edwards 2011, p.111)</div>

When I was younger, I used to follow a number of television series all linked directly to the home environment. Among these, in the mid- eighties, there was a favourite series called "Neighbours". The episodes were based on what was supposed to be happening daily to a group of families who were neighbours. The location was in Australia, one of the most cosmopolitan countries of all. What struck me most in this series was the sense of belonging felt in the respective families. It seemed that the producers were trying to project the "perfect" families. In other words, I felt that the producers wanted to show the importance of united families, in the environment of the home, but at the same time within the context of neighbours. I can only give a subjective interpretation of this series. I think that with life being so hectic and a sense of individualisation creeping in, the producers tried to inject a dose of an "ideal" family life in this series.

Apart from all this, one may ask, "What do we understand by the concept of "home"? How did humanity learned to distinguish between that which is private domestic space and that which is not? What are common areas and private quarters of our home? What do we understand by family boundaries? In the next section, through the literature that I have studied, I attempt to find answers to these questions.

1.7.2.2 What is a Home?

> The physical form of housing, and the ways people turn houses into homes, vary in myriad ways. Houses differ from country to country and from region to region within countries. This reality, in part, is produced by the geographical, historical and material conditions of life in those places – climate, topography, demography, degree of urbanisation, economic activity, planning/building regulations, transportation and the availability of building materials.

> (Perkins and Thorns 2012, p.75)

Thinkers, for a number of years, have been observing the idea of family environment, that is, a group of individuals who are related and who live together under one roof. According to research, it appears that the first glimmer of a home, goes back to the time when humanity still lived in caves. The first schools of taught who explored the history of humanity, theorised that it was men who went hunting, while the women stayed in the respective caves (homes), to bring up the children. Much later, thinkers contested this theory. The study of monkey/apes, which are close to humanity, showed that the women were also capable of hunting and therefore, could provide food like men. The debate is still going on (Cieraad 1999; Witold 1987; Maynes & Waltner 2012; McCarthy & Edwards 2011).

> People have always lived in families, but what that means has changed dramatically over time……Material evidence (including figures, but also dwellings and implements) for the earliest human societies continues to be uncovered, and the scientific tools to interpret that evidence are constantly being refined. As a result, historical and archaeological theories about the family and gender relations in early human society have varied over time.

> (Maynes & Waltner 2012, p.1)

According to researches of humanity's history, it appears that in the last Ice age, about 10,000 BC, a group of individuals started building structures to live in. In particular, these were built close to fertile land so that the individuals could grow their crops (Cieraad 1999; Witold 1987; Maynes & Waltner 2012; McCarthy & Edwards 2011).

> In the early agriculture settlement, human culture was based on household life and emerged out of domestic spaces. Social, political, economic, and even ritual relationships evolved in this elaborated domestic milieu and depended on the gender, generational, and kinship relations rooted in everyday life. Other early agricultural settlements vary in the particulars, but all offer evidence of the importance of household and family ties in this key transition in early human history.
>
> (Maynes & Waltner 2012, p. 10)

During Early Modern Times (1400-1750), the concept of home took on a new dimension. In those days, the family and therefore even the matrimonial home, were pushed to the forefront. It is of note to mention, that at that time the Catholic Church was dominant in Europe, and therefore Christianity was in its heyday. Consequently, the nuclear family dominated in many European states.

During the same period, circa 1517, Martin Luther opposed the Catholic Church on a number of issues and during the Council of Trent, among other things, discussed matters which affected the lives of families in Europe and other Catholic countries (Gittins 1993; Burguiere et al 1996; Maynes & Waltner 2012; Witold 1987; Sarti 2006).

Nevertheless, in the same epoch, houses began to take various shapes, according to the social class and rural or urban localities. The lower class families – the poor and the farmers / peasants – built their house in rural areas, consisting of one or two rooms made of wood, straw or mud, without any windows whatsoever.

The houses of the affluent were built in the city using stone or wood and having many more rooms. It is interesting to note that the poor families who dwelt in the city, used the ground floor, while the lords lived in the upper storey, known as "Piano Nobile". Mediterranean countries, like Malta, had an abundance of stone whilst in the middle of the 17th century, especially in England, bricks started to be used, so the houses took on another aspect (Sarti 2006; Witold 1987).

> In the early modern period the family was the basic unit of society. It was the place of residence and of the pooling and distribution of resources for consumption. For many a small farmer and craftsman it was also the basic unit of production. For most people the place of work was also the place of residence.

(Sarti 2006.p.1)

Like in other European countries, over the years, in Malta, fortified cities were erected, where, besides large houses and palaces of the nobles and the rich high society (Alta Societa'), there were even built small houses for the poor and the common people. A tour round Mdina, Valletta, and the Three Cities will bear this out. As time went by, different societies experienced fresh revolutions, which brought in their wake many changes, including changes in the family lifestyle. Apart from the Agriculture Revolution, which heralded many social changes, there was the Industrial Revolution, which had a great impact on families and their respective dwellings. While in the Agriculture epoch, the family worked in the home or its environments, the Industrial Revolution saw people moving from the home to work and this brought about a new dimension to the problem of housing (Allan and Crow 1989; Cheal 2002; Witold 1987; Maynes & Waltner 2012; McCarthy & Edwards 2011; Thornton and Fricke 1987; Burguiere et al 1996; Sarti 2006).

> The withdrawal of manufacturing productions from the home, is also associated with normative ideas about the privacy of what goes on within the walls of the home. Such privacy in many contemporary north European societies is built around a family living independently in the own household. Moving out of the parental home and into one's own accommodation is regarded as a symbolic marker for reaching the independence and autonomy of adulthood.

(McCarthy & Edwards 2011, p.110)

Technology developed over time and left its influence on social changes, which also influenced the way houses were built. Space, especially domestic space, started being used to a better advantage to accommodate the ever changing needs of the family (Morgan 1996; Finch 1989; Munro and Madigan 1991, V. Buhagiar 2013, pers. comm., 6th January, Mousu' 2007; J. Magro-Conti 2015, pers.comm 19th November).

> Ideas of what constitutes a "proper" family have shaped the ways in which individuals relate to one another in the intimacy of their domestic life, and the same ideas have influenced the physical design of the housing within which these social relationships are lived. The home thus provides an important locale within individuals negotiate their daily lives.

(Munro and Madigan 1991, p.107)

During all these changes, the word "home" came to take on different meanings. There was a period of time, and up to a certain extent there still is, when the role of the woman, was associated with the work in the home, while that of the man was tied to work outside the home. It is worth noticing that residential houses were not what we know today and there was not always the desired atmosphere. For instance, in Western countries and the United States of America, the concept of home was different and had different functions, in particular, with regard to issues concerning the patriarchal system (Cheal 2002; Witold 1987; Finch 1989; Morgan 1996).

Over the years, the roles of family members started to change especially as the woman's role was extended to include paid work outside the home. This left an impact on the family lifestyle:

> Changes in working arrangements affecting work ties are bound to have an impact upon households and, especially, upon women within the household. Giving the persisting stabilities of sexual divisions of labour within the household, it is likely that the development of flexible working hours, affecting both men and women, will put new demands upon women within the households as they attempt to juggle family responsibilities.
>
> (Morgan 1996, p 35)

The perception is that with the development of a modern society, social and gender roles would come closer to each other, even with regard to the domestic house, but this is not always correct. The modern family is being promoted as if it is living according to the principles of equality. But feminist literature testifies that in certain circumstances there are social and gender divisions in the home, especially where roles are concerned (Munro and Madigan 1993; Oberhauser & Johnston-Anumonwo 2014; Silva 2010; Holmes 2007; Camilleri-Cassar 2005; Hooyman & Gonyea 1995; Finch 1989; Morgan 1996)

> Changing divisions of labour within the household are not simply passive reflections of processes of social change taking place elsewhere: rather, they are to be seen as constituting these very processes. At the micro-level, these processes can be seen in terms of the multiple strategies and negotiations that take place between households, using the whole range of resources, material and ideal that are available to them individually and collectively.
>
> (Morgan 1996, p 34)

Another aspect related to the family experience in the home concerns the physical space. In fact with the passage of time, there was a division of the spaces in the home, between parents and their children, (Munro and Madigan 1993; Buhagiar 2013).

There was a time, even here in Malta, when families were large and so rooms had to be shared; nowadays families are smaller, with one or two children and so the probability is that parents and children have separate rooms, (NSO 2012 2013; V. Buhagiar 2013, pers. comm., 6th January, Mousu' 2007). In the latest census run by NSO (2010) it was reported that 153,000 houses in Malta were occupied, while 71,000 houses were empty. Although this is not strictly relevant to my study, it would be interesting if someone conduct a detailed study of how domestic space in Maltese occupied houses is being used by the residents.

1.7.2.3 The Postmodern Home

From what I have explained, it is evident that the home gives a man/a woman identity, while it also enables him/her to learn how to relate to others. Moreover, to many, the home is considered to be that familiar environment, where the private spaces offer the respective members a non-foreign interference refuge (Cheal 2002; Mesch 2006). Nevertheless, the idea of different spaces in the home, flourished in the post-modern era, especially with regard to common spaces used by the family and private spaces for respective members.

> The idea of home in European and New World's societies is often conceived of a physical, spatial location, but more than this, it is a conceptual or interpretative construct or symbol that informs people's understanding of who they are and their relations with others.
>
> McCarthy & Edwards 2011, p.111)

There was a growing need for the home, not only to be a structure with walls and roof, but a place to give warmth to its members, where they can find and give love and a sense of unity (Gyullestad 1995). Up to a certain extent, this was amongst the issues I have tried to explore in this research. In other words, to what extent, in the sense of unity and domestic warmth, life at home is being experienced in the context of Internet used?

"Home as the emotionalisation of domestic space is more than ever a core symbol in Western culture, one that derives its meaning not only from its opposite, the public space , but also from the practices performed on it and in it" (Cieraad 2006,p. 11).

1.7.2.4 Domestic Space and Technology- The Maltese Experience

> The discussion dealing with separation of domains and social inter-course suggests that the house cannot be seen in isolation from the settlement, but must be viewed as part of a total social and spatial system which relates the house, way of life, settlement, and even landscape. Man lives in the whole settlement of which the house is only a part, and the way in which he uses the settlement affects house form, as, for example, in areas where the meeting place is the house, and others where the meeting place is a part of the settlement, such as a street or plaza. Geography as well as architecture has usually separated study of the house from that of settlement, yet the need to look at the house as part of a larger system confirms that the house conveys little sense outside of its setting and context. Because the living pattern always extends beyond the house to some degree, the form of the house is affected by the extent to which one lives in it and the range of activities that take place in it.

(Rapoport 1969, p.69)

Parting from the quotation above, it is to be noted that Malta, has experienced changes in the houses in various contexts, over the years, due to the development brought on by the technology. Apart from the building constructions, and the way life of the Early Modern Times, during which there were also new changes in the way houses were built to meet the demands of that period of time, the past century and the one before it, remain significant because of the advances in technology.

In general, these developments leave their impact and therefore societies begin to adapt their lives according to these changes (V. Buhagiar 2013, pers. comm., 6th January, Mousu' 2007; J. Magro-Conti 2015, pers. comm., 19th November).

1.7.2.5. The Smart Home

> Smart houses technologies are being developed in order to make everyday life and repetitive chores at home easier. The main objective has been to ease daily life and, especially, give inhabitants more spare time. At least this is the case in principle.

> (Leppanen, & Jokinen, 2003, p. 208)

The 20th Century will be remembered for a number of "revolutions" that took place, both social, inspired by the fight for people's rights, as well as technological, aimed at improving and easing human life. Among the latter "revolutions" one finds the Industrial Revolutions which paved the way for the "domestic technology revolution". Both these processes could evolve thanks to the invention of electricity. As I will explain later, the advent of electricity meant the rise of factories which elevated social life to a new dimension. Subsequently, a number of labour saving devices in the home, made their appearance. According to Aldrich (2013), domestic help in the homes of the rich became difficult to find as factories absorbed a large work force. The new labour saving devices took over the work of domestics.

> In line with labour shortage, electrically powered machines such as vacuum cleaners, food processors, and sewing machines were introduced in the home for the very first time. The advertising angle was that with the help of technology, one person alone (inevitably a woman), could manage all the household chores and still have time for leisure activities.

> (Aldrich 2003, p. 19)

Despite this new development and despite the publicity lauding the domestic devices as making life easier and giving domestics more leisure time, this was far from true. The introduction of domestic technology paved the way for higher expectations, especially where cleaning was concerned (Cowan 1983; Frahlich, & Kraut 2003).

For instances, the washing machine meant more frequent washing of clothes and the vacuum cleaner instigated more frequent cleaning of floors and carpets (Hardyment 1988)

> When people first get a new technology at home, they slowly develop routines which ultimately lead to the highly regular patterns of use.

(Frahlich, & Kraut 2003 p. 141)

Meanwhile, women carried on with fighting for their rights in a masculine society. Their role took on a different form both outside the home and inside it, due to their emancipation and their position within the family. House routine changed to keep up with the new developments. Women started working outside the house creating the need for labour saving devices to keep the family comfortable. However, this view has always been contested.

> Despite a reduction of gender differences in the occupational world in recent years, one occupational role remains entirely feminine: the role of housewife. No law bans men from this occupation, but the weight of economic, social and psychological pressures is against their entry to it. The equation of femaleness with housewifery is basic to the structure of modern society.

(Oakley 1974, p. 29)

After World War II however, there was a shortage of work, especially for men. This situation caused governments to urge women to go back to their role in their homes.

Publicity campaigns pictured the women waving to their husbands on their way to work and sending their children to school, prior carrying on with her housework. There was a new perception how housework could be better planned by the use of the labour saving devices on the market (Aldrich 2003).

Nevertheless, Oakley (1974) was of the opinion that "women's domesticity is a circle of learnt deprivation and induced subjugation: a circle decisively centred on family life (Oakley 1974, p. 233). Of course, to date, the relationship between housework and family life is still debatable.

At the same time, publicity campaigns have always tried to depict that family life would be more "functional" with the incorporation of the latest "sophisticated" domestic appliances. Most publicity advertisements are aimed at encouraging consumers that home life would be definitely much better if publicised domestic appliances are consumed.

> Home design started to reflect new ways of living alongside modern technology. For example, new style of kitchen emerged to accommodate the refrigerators, the electric cookers, and washing machines that were starting to penetrate the domestic market. The concept of television lounge was introduced.

(Aldrich 2003, p. 20)

1950s advertisement: Smiling Woman Housewife Putting Stick of Butter into Electric Refrigerator in Kitchen

(H. Armstrong Roberts 1883 – 1947)

At the beginning of the Sixties, more products were advertised promoting a new lifestyle to different families. This has been going on until today. Homes have become furnished with labour saving devices like: kettles, cookers, toasters, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, dishwashers, fridges, food processors and so on and so forth (J. Magro-Conti 2015, pers.comm, 19th November; NS0 2008). These devices have become an integral part of family life. I can vouch for this from personal experience: in my childhood I witnessed people coming to my father to have their appliances repaired urgently, as they were lost with them, in particular, washing machines, spin dryers, electric kettles, toasters, food mixers, food blenders, and so and so forth.

I can say that life has come to depend on these devices, which through the process of domestication, have become indispensable. Sophisticated domestic devices have left their impact on family life. Any device, which stops functioning tend to create discomfort in the family, as these devices have become an integral part of everyday life. At the forefront of these technological developments, one finds information technology, which, as this study has shown, forms a substantial part of the life of the interviewed families who use the Internet in the home.

Before writing about how domestic space in Malta is adapting to today's needs, in particular, to Internet use at home, I felt it would be opportune to take a quick look at the history of the arrival of the water supply, the drainage system, the distribution of gas, and eventually, the distribution of electricity, to Maltese houses. Along the years these definitely have brought about significant changes in the domestic spaces and lifestyles in Maltese houses.

1.7.2.6 The Distribution of Water and the Introduction of the Drainage System to Maltese Households

Up to the 17th Century, the Maltese depended solely on the collection of rainfall from roofs and yards into wells cut from rocks at the bottom of the house, to obtain water for their daily needs. Early in the 17th Century the people living in Valletta started receiving water from the aqua duct built by Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt. This aqua duct collected water from Dingli Heights and Rabat and emptied it in public fountains, which while embellishing the public squares, also offered water to people for their needs. In fact, the water cascading into fonts quenched the thirst of beasts of burden, like horse, donkeys and mules. Flocks of sheep and goats driven into villages and towns by sellers of milk also used this water from the fountains.

Despite this new development, localities outside Valletta had to be content with well water.

Much later, towards the middle of the 19th Century, the English Authorities constructed another aqua duct which ran from Fawwara to Cottonera. It is interesting to note that people living in apartments or rented rooms in big blocks, for example in Valletta and Cottonera had at their disposition a common well in the yard or carried water in pails from fountains. Obviously, this was hard work, especially for the elderly. Water is in demand in daily life for drinking, cooking, washing clothes and the floor, doing the washing up after eating, and of course, for personal hygiene. Moreover, water is used for flushing toilet, watering plants and crops and for slaking the thirst of animals.

According to Magro-Conti (2015) medieval documents show that before the coming of the Knights, Imdina residents were warned by official regulations not to throw dirty water (drainage) from windows into the streets. This occurred because at the time there was no proper drainage system.

It was way back during the year 1879, that the Maltese Council forwarded a formal request to the British Government to introduce a drainage system within the Maltese villages and cities (Galea 1984).

Today, one can only imagine how difficult it was for a family to obtain enough water for its need, more so if it was an extended family or if there were numerous children. Carrying that amount of water for everybody was a complicated operation. During the occupancy of the island, the British realised that there was an urgent need of a water distribution system. Consequently, in 1883, the English engineer Osbert Chadwich was commissioned to plan for such a system. Eventually, he introduced the system for collecting the water from a lower water table. Later on, steam pumps, brought up soft water which was distributed through water pipes to houses (Magro-Konti 2015).

The introduction of the provision of water to houses was the trigger which radically emancipated the Maltese family in the way of comfort, efficiency, and especially hygiene. Chadwick's system meant a continuous (or nearly continuous) supply of water in the house. Gone were the days when one had to frequent the public fountains, rain or shine and carry heavy pails of water. Life, for the Maltese family, took on a new dimension.

Besides this great achievement, there was another one which offered better hygiene measures to individuals. This was the introduction of flushing in toilets, and the sewage system, which completely eliminated the need for the unpleasant business of emptying pails filled with human waste and not cesspits outside the house. Household routines became easier with a supply of tap water in the house. The washing machine, and later on, the dishwasher left family members with more time to do other things.

From the middle of the 20th Century, the Maltese housewife saw her working day become much easier, all because of the provision of water in the house. Many women found time for other things, beside housework, thus becoming more emancipated. They found time to read, consult fashion magazines, sew, do craftwork or dedicate time to help religious, social or philanthropic institutions. With time on their hands, mothers could help their children with their homework. According to Magro-Konti (2015) the bringing of water by pipes into the houses and work places, brought about collective advantages, as managing a family and working became much easier.

Late in the 20th Century, the Maltese family stopped being the traditional / extended family, or one having numerous children. Families became much smaller. In fact, families were being composed of only few members. Notwithstanding this, the new houses or apartments grew bigger, most probably as a status symbol.

It became customary for houses built in the sixties, or later, to have more than one bathroom, some even with en-suites, as a sign of the new luxury acquired by an emancipated population (Buhagiar 2013, Mousu 2012 Magro-Konti 2015).

All this luxury meant more work for the housewife and of course, more expenses. In the past 20 years, or so, as it has been mentioned earlier, Maltese families have become physically smaller as the number of children per family has become smaller. Moreover, the majority of the Maltese have a job, while the rate of women who work or who carry on studying has increased drastically (NSO 2012, 2013, 2014).

The way of life of modern Maltese families leaves little time for them to be at home. Before, Maltese housewives were very house-proud, keeping their houses spotlessly clean, as they had more time for housework. Nowadays, women go out to work and spend less time at home.

Today, families prefer to spend their leisure hours doing other things than, housework, for example using the computer and the social media, going out, practising sport, going abroad or training in different areas, among other things (Magro-Kont 2015).

1.7.2.5 The Advent of Gas and Electricity in Maltese Households

The first changes in Maltese houses started way back in 1896, with the arrival of gas. According to Enemalta Corporation (2013) the first gas-lights in the streets, and in private houses, appeared in the environs of Sliema and Hamrun. Notwithstanding this, Malta was already looking ahead for the introduction of electricity. As way back as 1882, documents record that the very first lights on the island were let at the Royal Opera House in Valletta, during the opera "Un Ballo in Maschera". During the following year, St. George's Square in Valletta boasted electric lights, while in 1894, streets and houses were supplied by electricity (Enemalta Corporation 2013).

> At the very beginning it was used for street lighting but then it ousted the town gas as an illuminate in houses and building premises, and later on in industry. The first public lighting took place at Valletta and Floriana. The same year the supply was extended to Hamrun and the three Cities.

> (Enemalta Corporation, 2013)

This change to electricity brought with it more changes to the Maltese lifestyles, especially in residential homes. This new development eventually introduced Rediffusion (cable radio), radio and at a later stage, television. The following appliances also made their appearance: cookers working with paraffin at first, as did fridges, washing machines which replaced public wash houses and manual sewing machines., to mention but a few.

Before relating how these domestic appliances were integrated in the domestic spaces of the Maltese traditional house, I am going to analyse how space was allocated before the advent of gas and electricity.

If one investigates houses in villages built one hundred years ago, circa, one realises that space was differently managed as technology was different and also the needs were different. According to V.Buhagiar 2013, pers. comm., 6th January, at that time, and even later, until the coming of electricity, the first room in the house was generally a sitting room or a dining room to welcome guests. There was then a dining room for the family, a small corridor leading to a porch (loggia) and the yard, with a water reservoir, which at times, families used to download food in it for freshness. Another room, with a toilet and another small room, used as a kitchen, were to be found close to the back yard. If it was a ground floor house, there would also be one or two bedrooms. If it contained another storey, then the bedrooms would be upstairs. To play, children and young people used the streets (playing in the street was safer than today): football, marbles, beads, or jumping ropes.

The adults gathered round the front door. This became an extension of the house, welcoming families to chat, sitting on a chair on the pavement in front of their house. When one looks at the settings of these houses and reflects the customary uses at the time, one can easily deduct what life in Malta was like, with regard to domestic space, which to a certain point reflected the technology of the time.

The timeline of the developments in technology, when compared to domestic space, shows that Maltese houses have gone through vast changes and different customs (V. Buhagiar 2013, pers. comm., 6th January, G. Baldacchino 2014, pers. comm., 3rd July). One dares to say that there is absolutely no comparison between a Maltese house then and one today. There is a reason for this. If one analyses the way domestic space is used today and compares it to how it was used in the past, one realises that the style of living has changed to such an extent that one questions how one's parents and grandparents lived in that environment.

In today's buildings, one usually finds a living/dining area (room) at the very entrance of the house. Normally, a kitchen in past years would be equipped with a paraffin stove, with two or three wicks, or a spirit burner or a valor cooking stove, not to mention an old fashioned "kenur" (stone cooker), fed by coal, paper or wood. Although, in the following years, paraffin ovens were found in most houses, food was roasted in "borma forn" – a round receptacle with a hole in the middle and placed on a stove, or taken to a bakery (V. Buhagiar 2013, pers. comm. 6th January). As time passed, the living room was designed in such a way to take a wall unit and television set. Such a room used to be called the television room (living-room) as opposed to the formal sitting-room (lounge) where most guests are entertained. Today the living /dining-room has taken on new importance as it has become the room in which families spend most of their time as a family, as it is the most comfortable room to accommodate today's needs.

One can find nearly everything in the living/dining room: the cooker, the microwave, a built-in cooker, the washing machine, and a fridge, to mention just a few appliances. To these one must add a television set, and other entertainment apparatus like, personal computers / laptops / ipad / netbooks, since most houses today have access to the Internet all around the domestic space, through Wi Fi or modem, and most probably, a Dolby music surround system, as well, which can also be adapted to the computer to enhance the quality of sound when listening to downloaded music or films.

It is to be observed that in most modern houses, the boundaries used exclusively by the family are being impinged upon. Where before there was a distinction between the sitting-room, where we welcomed guests and the family private quarters (kitchen/dining-room), now, there is only one space to serve all functions. According Van Dijk (1999, p. 156) "In households, the need for… infrastructures have grown with the development of four dimensions of privatisation":

1.   Decreasing density of housing (settlement);

2.   Increasing size of a single house with more individual rooms;

3.   Decreasing household size;

4.   A cultural process of spending more time at home and in family

        life

Meanwhile, another occurrence which brought changes to the Maltese domestic space dates back five decades. At this particular time, Malta experienced further changes in the planning of Maltese houses as more private cars came on the market (V. Buhagiar 2013, pers. comm., 6th January). Following the building boom in the 1960s, prosperity brought with it the widespread use of at least one car per family. So the concept of the family car was born (in Malta).

This brought with it the need of a garage space. Hence, a change was necessary in the plan of a dwelling to accommodate such a garage, typically a single-car garage at street level.

This was often specifically designed to be located in the side curtilage for semi and fully detached houses, while in terraced houses, and particularly in established town houses in village cores, the garage became a conversion of the front room (typically the sitting room) into a garage (V. Buhagiar 2013, pers. comm., 6th January).

In the late 1970s & 1980s car ownership grew steadily from one car to two cars per household; this brought with it the proportional increase of a garage space requirement, even though there was no real problem of parking the car in front the front door. In addition, with the onset of part-time work, the garage space grew even larger to become a garage-cum-workshop, particularly with the use of specialised, but small scale machinery (woodwork, mechanic, aluminium, etc.). This is where there is a fine cutting line that turns a hobby into a part-time 'job'.

Later the basement garage emerged where all such work was carried out at home, re-introducing in Malta the concept of the 'casa-bottega'.

Similarly, the same happened with the washroom. Today the washing machine's space is all families are concerned with rather than the whole washroom, which typically ends up as the odd family off-season storage space. Most probably, as I mentioned earlier, the washing machine might find itself incorporated in the kitchen as well.

Nevertheless, the study-room is perhaps the closest space families today allocated for a computer in the home. This is a dedicated room in the house or flat, typically the smallest, even with a minimal amount of sunlight. Occupants do not need that any more, as opposed to earlier writing days. This has today become the computer room where any IT activity is done.

Beyond that, at the beginning of this century families have seen the introduction of personal computers in individual children's rooms, albeit at the parents' fear of "God knows what they've been watching".

This is where parents have started to lose (or loosen) their control over their children's activities – even communicating has taken a different toll through SMS, Facebook, and other internet based media (Livingstone & Bovill 2001, Whitty 2014, V. Buhagiar 2013, pers. comm., 6th January, MCA 2012). In addition, over the last couple of years we have even seen mobile devices such as mobiles and tablets taking the place of individualised desktop computers, as I will explain in the next section.

1.7.3 The Internet

1.7.3.1 Introduction

Because the use of the Internet in the home is one of the three pillars of this study, I felt it is appropriate, to commence this section by taking a brief look at the history of the Internet, so as to better understand the changes occurring in society and how the Internet is embedded in the daily lives of families.

According to the official statistics of the NSO (2013), 78% of the households in Malta, have a computer, while 77.5% have access to the Internet. In addition, according to a study conducted by the Malta Communications Authority (MCA 2012), maintain that 98% of Maltese children and young people, between year 4 and form 4, have a computer or a laptop at home and they have access to the Internet. Undoubtedly, these figures, about the access and use of the Internet in the home, point to new experiences in the homes. So one may ask: what brought on this information technology to which humanity has access?

What were the first steps in technology that eventually developed in the use of the Internet as we know it today? Hence, I thought it would be interesting to have a detailed look also at the history of the Internet.

1.7.3.2 Development of the Internet

The history of humanity is likewise made up of historical events and achievements. It is embellished by artefacts and structures, many of which are still with us today, together with inventions that were largely instrumental, having served as a foundation for development and even more inventions. It is pertinent to refer to two inventions of particular importance, which are relevant to this study as they relate to interaction and relationships among individuals in different spaces through the development of communication technology.

I am referring to the discovery of 1665 where thanks to the inventions attributed to British scientist Robert Hooke, the first telephone calls were made through what was later termed the String Telephone (Winston 2000, p.19). Through this system, sound passed between two persons at 170 yards from each other.

It is interesting to note that, at the time, this telephone apparatus was very popular amongst couples, hence, its name 'Lovers' Telegraph. This apparatus was also used by children during playtime. I actually recall using it myself, in the form of two metal cans joined by a string. My friends and I used to talk into one can and the sound was received at the other end. It is evident that this technological revolution expanded further when Samuel Morse, thanks to developments in electricity, invented the Electric Telegraph in 1837, (Winston 2000, p.27; Norman 2000, p.181; Standage 1999, p. 26). It can be stated that, as described by Tom Standage (1999) in his interesting book entitled "The Victorian Internet," the invention of the Telegraph, was a primitive extension of Internet as experienced today with regards to interaction via time and space.

> Although it is now faded from view, the telegraph lives on within the communications technologies that have subsequently built upon its foundations: the telephone, the fax machine, and, more recently, the Internet. And, ironically, it is the Internet -- despite being regarded as a quintessentially modern means of communication -- that has the most in common with its telegraphic ancestor.

(Standage 1999, p.205)

Nevertheless, this phenomenon as we experience it today has been with us for the best part of twenty years; in fact, its beginning takes us back to, at least, half a century. The history of the Internet commences in the early sixties, (Norman 2005, p.41; Steve 2003, pp. 11-14; Klang 2008, p. 2457) when the Americans tried to create sophisticated technologies through the foundation of the Advances Research Planning Agency, ARPA, that later on was known as Defence Advanced Research Planning Agency, DARPA.

These were set up to monitor developments, or rather, to make an attempt at tracking any military or other manoeuvres being carried out by the Soviet Union, especially after the surprise of the latter's satellite launching in 1957. Although DARPA's role today is still related to the US military, it has expanded greatly through Network systems.

1.7.3.3 Internet Timeline

Notwithstanding all this, the development of the use of the Internet to what it is today, especially its use within the family, passed through three particular and important phases during the last quarter of a century. These phases are nicknamed Web 1.0, Web 2.0 and Web 3.0. Web 1.0 was a period connected with the 1980s that was marked with the rapid spread of the personal computer. During this period, the computer system as we know it today was still not developed enough. Users could only access information and read it. It was referred to as Read-Only Web. There was not the possibility of uploading.

Therefore, there could be no interaction between individuals or any other company that was using the Internet. This became possible later (Getting 2007, p.1).

In fact it was Tim Berners-Lee and his colleagues, during the early 1990s that created the system known as the World Wide Web which eventually was named Web 2.0 known also as Read-Write Web, where this interaction became possible.

Such a system made it possible and much easier for Internet users to provide information and share it through the Web (Getting 2007, p.1; Winston 2000, pp.333-334; Poe 2011, p.214; Norman 2005, pp.06, 44; Steve 2003, p.486). Today, the Internet has introduced new realities and challenges, and as stated by Marshall McLuhan (1960), the world has become a global village.

What had previously been considered impossible is now possible, thanks to the great strides being experienced, whilst we are experiencing a dynamic electronic epoch that is flourishing and changing at a much accelerating pace. In fact, we are in another phase, known as Web 3.0, which is divided into two sections: Semantic Mark and Web Service. Although it is still in its initial stage, the first indications show that it is going to be an extension of Web 2.0, with the difference that it is going to try to fill the vacuum of communication that exists between those who use the Internet and a system of computerised applications with the possibility of being offered a service of software to maintain interaction between computers (Getting 2007, p.1). It is apparent that, as a result of the Internet, the world operates increasingly as a global electronic information network, or, perhaps more accurately, as a global network of networks, comprised of an untold number of information networks and online communities (Norman 2005, p. 06).

With the help of this general glance at the stepping-stones that led to the invention of Internet, I have tried to follow history as it unfolded. I have searched for information from several sources and, as a result, I have achieved a sound background for this study.

Despite this, I have refrained from supplying excessive technical details, since this would not be relevant to the study. I have limited myself to providing information on the course of events and the persons who brought about change over the years. After the brief look at how the Internet developed, in the next sections I am going to find out how this development is being experienced by society.

1.8 Adaption to Technological Change

1.8.1 Introduction

Technology development has always been aimed at enabling the quality of life whilst it has constantly been part of social change. This necessitated humanity's struggle in adapting to technological change. If one were to take a look at the vast development that took place in the last century, it is evident that it was a century of unparalleled importance, especially in the sphere of Information Technology. This has led to increasing awareness of the global village, a concept that was introduced by Marshall McLuhan (1962) wherein time and distance are no longer relevant as a barrier between remote locations.

> Social change in any society could be explained through the changes in the methods of doing things such as methods of dealing with the material means of life. The industrial arts or the technologies of a society determined the nature of adaptation of human beings to their natural environment. It also determined their adjustment to the social environment.

(Veblen, 2016 p.1)

Along the years, humanity adapted, resisted and contested new technology, sometimes successfully. In fact, this study has revealed, though at a limited level, that some participants refused to use the Internet. It is quite ironic to find that the ages of those participants who do not use the Internet are different, yet, the reasons given for their choice are similar.

For instance, according to Agius couple (2013), 49 years old and without children, the Internet does not exist, as they can live without it and consider it of no importance. More than this, they look at the Internet as an instrument which causes polarisation among family members. Among other participants, 13 year old Carlo (Research Diary 2010), as well as Kerry (2013), a 70 year old woman, maintains that the Internet is robbing its users of precious time as well as interaction time with other members of the family – and this despite the disparity in their ages.

Carlo added that the Internet has interfered with his relationship with his older brother, who is addicted to the use of the Internet as he is constantly connected to it. Kerry, on the other hand, complained that her daughter and grandchildren are more interested in Facebook than doing other things. She ruefully added that she honestly did not know what they found so interesting in the Internet.

In this regard, it is worth observing that 29.3% and 30 % of individuals aged between 16 – 74, have been identified as persons who have never used the Internet (NSO, 2012; 2013). These results are very similar to those of other European countries, in particular, United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Italy, France, Austria, and Slovenia (Eurostat:2012 / 2013). Similar studies were conducted in the United States of America (Pew Research 2013).

Reasons for the non-use of the Internet ranged from lack of interest to lack of the necessary expense to lack of education. As I have already mentioned, because of the limited information collected in this study, (concerning non-users - because the number of respondents is too small) the findings are trivial, and hence it does not reflect the whole picture of the Maltese society.

Therefore, as I will suggest later on, it would be interesting if a similar study is conducted among non-users of the Internet. It is patently clear that advances in every area of life can also be detrimental to society. Although, I am not going into this aspect in detail, which merits a study of its own, I dare say that any development, whether it is technological or not, raises the question about its sustainability. With regard to the development in technology, and the social changes it has brought with it, there is a lot to be said, especially how it is shaping our lived experiences. This in parallel to Silva (2010: 31), views, where she pinpoints the social transformations that are brought about by technological change in the domestic space: "Technological advances have affected the ways in which homes are made and the demands that the everyday life places upon choices of how to live".

In this regard, I will briefly write about the Technological Revolution and the changes it has brought about, in the next two sections.

1.8.2 Technological Revolution

The concept of communication technology has fascinated humanity for years; leading to technological changes that were particularly marked during the Industrial Revolution of the 19th Century and eventually the Techno Revolution of the 20th Century (Norman 2005; Steve 2003; Castells 1996). This era brought about significant social and technical changes and hence created a period of technological development that left its impact on the whole world.

> The Information Technology Revolution was culturally, historically and spatially contingent on a very specific set of circumstances whose characteristics earmarked its future evolution.
>
> (Castells 1996, p.52)

From the 1960s onwards, communication technology continued to develop at a great pace, in particular, when the United States of America launched the first satellite and when computer technology was introduced (Norman 2005; Steve 2003). The latter, in particular the Internet, progressed along the years, especially during the last two decades. Indeed, this propelled a new epoch in the field of Internet, and its presence in societies brought about new experiences with which we are familiar today. In this regard, the issue of whether the Internet is actually affecting our lifestyles or not, and to what extent it is hindering or not interpersonal relationships and communication, continue to be the focus of considerable discussion (G. Baldacchino 2014, pers. comm., 3rd July; J. Avellino 2014, pers. comm., 19th September). We just cannot deny the fact that, similar to other experiences that occurred due to innovative technology, this new technology is shaping the way we live and hence, we have to adapt to it accordingly.

In a nutshell, technological development, is sculpting our lifestyles: "Information and communication technology are playing an ever-greater role in the economy, the workplace, in education and in our daily leisure" (Livingstone & Bovill 2001, p. 3). In other words, the development in Information Technology is modelling our lives, as I will explain in the next section.

1.8.3 Technology and Community Transformation

An important concept that relates directly to social change has been coined by Wellman et al (2002) and it concerns to community transformation. They have managed to describe very well the actual scenario that is associated with Internet use and how societies are being 'converted' by information technology. In contradiction, Kraut et al (1998) cited in Singer & Singer (2001 p.552) argued that according to their research, heavy Internet use results in minimised social interaction with other family members and friends. On the other hand, in parallel to G. Baldacchino 2014, pers. comm., 3rd July and J. Agius 2014, pers. comm., 19th September, Wellman et al (2002) contend that societies are in a process of renovation:

> Rather than increasing or destroying the community, the Internet assists in transforming community to such an extent that it becomes integrated into the normal daily routine of society, with life online integrated with offline activities.
>
> (Wellman et al 2002, p. 154)

Today, thanks to Information Technology, particularly the use of computers and Internet, access to world-wide communication has become widespread. Technological advances have been instrumental in bringing together countries and people in a myriad of ways, especially those related to the economic, social and cultural sectors, to mention but a few. In this respect, one should consider the ways this development is reforming, both directly and indirectly, humanity's lifestyle.

In this regard, Giddens makes a clear reference to change, and the way it imposes itself on everything and everybody, although it is not always understood:

> We live in a world of transformations, affecting almost every aspect of what we do. For better or worse, we are being propelled into a global order that no one fully understands, but which is making its effects felt upon all of us.   (Giddens 2000, p. 7)

In line with Giddens (2000), Sant (2009) contends that: "The Internet has changed the lives of millions around the world" (Sant 2009, p. 52). It has become increasingly necessary for humanity to adapt to circumstances and changing lifestyles that complement the changes brought about by each revolution, whether in the agricultural and industrial spheres, or, more recently, in Information Technology.

Notwithstanding all this, whose role is it in society to prepare people to eventually enter the technological world? Among the most important social agencies who have this particular role, there is the family (Giddens 2000; Taylor et al 1997; Fulcher & Scott, 2005).

1.8.4 The Family as Socialising Agent of Technology

The family is considered to be humanity's first educator, via primary socialisation. In their early years in the family, individuals are given the first direction to identify and use well their abilities and skills to advance in life. Next in line, comes the education system, which together with the family, works in the interest of children. The foundation stones of the process are the family and the education system, the first one paving the way for the other. In this environment, children and young people meet their first experiences which make them mature for responsible adulthood, facing various areas of life, one of which is the field of information technology, particularly, the use of Internet.

It is true to say that like in every technological change that occurs in life, the use of Internet is leaving its impact (Giddens 2000; Taylor et al 1997; Fulcher & Scott, 2005; Livingstone & Bovill 2001).   Hence, I find it important, if not essential, for families to plan and prepare themselves in advance and learn about the use of the Internet and how this use is going to be an integral part of their everyday life as a family.

From what my friends and relatives shared with me about how they are living their daily life using the Internet, it never occurred to them to think about the lived experience such use would have on their family. They never realised the changes it would make in their life.   They shared a few examples: they pay their bills on-line; spent time browsing on the Internet to find information for their children's school projects; they found it interesting and easy to organise reunions, watch their favourite programmes, and to chat with their friends and relatives through social networks. On the other hand, some expressed the fact that they had changed their meal times and others stayed up late to remain on Facebook or Twitter, others became cyber-widows.

In my research, Vella (2009) which dealt with media literacy, I concluded that there is a need for families to be prepared for this phenomenon, the Internet, and other means of communication. Families need to be prepared for technological changes, which are rapidly increasing, especially information technology. Similar views are shared by Watt et al (1999). They sustain that the debate about how families are experiencing this new technology is of utmost importance. For instance, as I have already referred to previously, they are of the opinion that families are one of society's primary socialising agents:

> They may provide a relatively unique perspective with which to gain valuable insights about potential future trends in the ways in which this increasingly pervasive technology is used and understood.

(Watt et al 1999, p. 1)

Watt et al's statement precisely sustains that the context of family is one of the most valuable settings to study the changes that are brought about with new technology. In addition, and in line with the aims of this research, to explore how Maltese society, in particular the contemporary family, is adapting with such technology, Livingstone & Bovill (2001, p. 3) also express that "children in the world's developed countries are spending ever-greater amounts of time working on and playing with computers". So are Maltese children and young people, NSO (2011/2012; MCA 2012; Eurostat 2012).

At this stage, it is important to mention that every time I had the opportunity of mentioning this study to friends or new acquaintances, I received very positive feedback while some even offered to participate in this research. In fact, some of the families taking part in the sample, which I will write about in more detail in Chapter 3, volunteered to participate. Their support encouraged me no end, especially the fact that even people I do not know personally, urged me on.

Today, more than ever, I am convinced that the Maltese are aware of the effect, good or bad, the Internet is having on the family; what was missing was an in depth study about it. To be able to assess better the effect the Internet is having on the interaction among members of the family, I read up on literature which deals with interaction and communication in the domestic space. This will serve as the basis of the following section.

1.9 Allocation of Time

1.9.1 Introduction

Amongst the diverse aspects that are considered to be important for humanity, which in this study are regarded to be of crucial importance, concern characteristics which are related to the allocation of time. Most studies involving allocation of time, tend to be associated with leisure time, incorporating family time, and working time (Haney & Kline 2010; The Economist, 2006; July 2012; G. Baldacchino 2014, pers. comm., 3rd July; Folbre & Bittman 2004; Lee & Chae 2007). Nevertheless, according to other literature, the very first studies that appraised humanity versus allocation of time during the day were conducted during the early years of the 20th Century (Sonnenberg et al 2011; Taylor et al 2007; Strinati 1992).

Family time constitutes an important component to this research, as I shall explain later on, as it tends to intertwine with communication time. In addition, the very fact that a person at home might be connected with the Internet all the time, it does not necessarily mean that the user is following each and every activity that is taking place on-line. Besides all this, as I shall be explaining in the following section, it is also true, that the issue of how time is used within the family context, is still debatable (Silverstone 1993; Lee & Chae 2007; Leong 2009).

1.9.1.2 Communication Time and Family Time

Although it is evident that a growing body of research on how family relationships are adjusting to the use of Internet is available, Lee and Chae (2007) in particular, contend that most studies in this field do not differentiate between family time and family communication. In their opinion, family time is completely distinct from family communication, and the findings of this research support this distinction.

On one hand, they sustain that family time takes into account actual time spent with other family members, and that this time can be used both actively and passively. If family time is lost, it is permanently lost to the detriment of all family members, young and old alike. On the other hand, Lee and Chae argue that family communication relates more to situations that actively engage respective family members in family matters. In their research, Lee and Chae (2007, p. 643), found also that the impact of the Internet on family relationships, depends very much on the type of activities being carried out online. Internet use may reduce total time spent with family members by displacing passive time rather than active time, including family communication.

The arguments raised by Lee and Chae (2007) are similar to some of the experiences that I have encountered during this research, where some of the participants, shared similar experiences, in particular, time spent on social media, namely Facebook and Twitter. For instance, some parents lamented the fact that although their children were physically present at home, they could not enjoy their company and share a chat. Others moaned that their spouses, or partners, were spending more time on their receptive digital devices, rather than interacting with them. However, it is also true, and this research confirms it, that others contend that through Internet use they managed to enhance their relationships with other members of the family at home.

The importance of these arguments lie in the fact that, within the family, exist two scenarios: physical presence, yet no evidence of interaction and communication. The latter is however carried out online, both with members of families living in the same dwelling and with other persons, outside the home. The other scenario involves physical presence and interaction, with minimal or no interference at all.

> In many ways, computers can bring family members into closer contact. E-mail and the Internet provide diverse and relatively inexpensive forms of communication for family members to interact with other members. At the most basic level this might be written communication, exchange of family photos as files, or interactive "chats" in real time. On the other hand, the computer may isolate an individual.

> (White 2003, p.02)

Similar to the experiences which some families are going through today, the introduction of radio and television, up to a certain extent, created new experiences in society and had an impact on sociological change and the family (Spigal 1992; Brody et al 1980; Bryant & Bryant 2001; G. Baldacchino 2014, pers.comm., 3rd July; J. Avellino 2014, pers.comm 19th September). Hence, I felt that this leading chapter should include a quick look at the way the introduction of the radio and television were experienced by families in the past.

This is relevant because, at the time, these new inventions left their mark on families and undoubtedly, these new means of broadcasting caused society, particularly the family, to live new experiences in the home.

1.9.1.3 Family Interaction Time and the Advent of Cable Radio (Rediffusion) and Television

The Introduction of the radio and later on the coming of television, were instrumental in bringing families together during transmission time. This began with radio, during the Second World War and more recently with television. The introduction of the latter in private homes led to populist and scholar discourse about the effect of television on the family. Studies were conducted to assess the impact of radio and television on the family (Nielsen Media Research 1990s; Livingston & Bovill 2001; Singer and Singer 2001).

It appears that, between 1930 and 1940, when the radio first appeared in the homes, and even later at the beginning of the 50s with the advent of television, families would together congregate in one room to follow the news and their favourite programmes (Singer and Singer 2001). I myself did this when I was much younger. Though I was born in the middle of the 60s, like all other families, my family lived the same experiences of families of 20 or 30 years before. The difference was that instead of the radio, we had Cable Radio, better known as Rediffusion (Claude 2014; G. Baldacchino 2014, pers. comm., 3rd July, V. Buhagiar 2013, pers. comm., 6th January). Later on television, which started transmitting on the 29th September 1962 (Vigar 1993; Claude 2014;) brought about similar experiences. Back in the 70s, my brothers and I waited eagerly for the children's programme on Rediffusion at 4.30 pm. My mother followed assiduously the daily reading of a novel, while my father waited for the news. In the evening we all gathered in the dining-room to recite the Rosary. Our Rediffusion set, took pride of place, as in most households, in the kitchen, exactly on the fridge, while the television set was placed in the sitting-room.

Like Singer and Singer (2001) remark, though we were all together as a family, watching a programme on television, we all had individual ideas about what we were watching and we expressed our ideas vociferously. The television was purchased as a single unit and was placed in the living room. Television brought families together and made family members spend more time at home with one another. However, despite being together in one room, families conversed less than they had before television, and when they did talk to each other, frequently it was in regard to the disagreement over programme choices (Singer and Singer 2001, p.17).

The picture I have just painted is no longer true. This is because, the more time passed, the more people bought televisions sets, most of which found themselves in the parents' bedrooms.

When children grew up, they also had a television set in their respective rooms (G. Baldacchino 2014, pers.comm, 3rd July; V. Buhagiar 2013, pers. comm, January 6th). In a nutshell, home started boasting of more than one set of television. Since the 1950s, there has been an increase in the number of homes owning more than one television set. Therefore, the possibility of isolation and privacy among members of the family gave rise to concern (Lawrence and Wozniak 1989; Livingstone & Bovill 2001; Singer and Singer 2001). It would be interesting if a study, similar to what I am doing, but comparing the use of television with that of the Internet, is conducted. One must also note that through the Internet, one can also follow television. This I have experienced personally in this research, and read about it in the literature (Carr 2011; Cierraad 1991; Munro & Madigan 1993; Silverstone & Hirsch 1992; Putnam 1993; Singer and Singer 2001). Parallel to these experiences, but this time regarding the Internet, I have met similar occurrences in this study. Several participants in my study stated that they spend much of their time alone in their domestic space, (bedroom, kitchen / living, etc) except for meal-times: (I will explain this in more detail in the findings and analysis chapter). Others added that, though there were other members of the family with them during meals, they still used the Internet. The question comes naturally: What is the lived experience of the use of the Internet in the home environment?

Another experience which I, along with many others, experienced, confirms what the authors mentioned above have said. This was when my father decided to install another television set in the dining-room. It was soon removed because we realised that it was hampering our communication at the time we all get together for meals. We interrupted each other and silenced each other not to miss what was being said during the TV programme. It was a good, though hard decision.

Yet, it does not seem to apply to the use of the Internet during meals. Mobile devices make it very easy to use the Internet in every room, also thanks to Wi Fi and modems. I dare to assert that the use of the Internet seems to have become part of dining times. This has saliently been elicited in this research and also contended by J. Aguis 2014, pers. Comm, September 19th, and G. Baldacchino 2014, pers.comm, 3[rd]July. Parallel experiences have already been identified by Putnam (1993), ten years ago.

> The arrival in the home of broadcast media, personal computers and electronic cultural products with their differentiated and individualizing addresses greatly, exacerbates the difficulty of shared use of space. In some homes, rituals of active collective life, such as the shared principal meal or the piano; still occupy an important place; in others, a collective and hierarchically ordered practice of television viewing exists. Television, musical apparatus, and computers, pose an increasing challenge to shared activities in postmodern family life.

> (Putnam 1993, p.151)

In the previous, sections I have briefly tried to explain that the coming of the radio and television brought new realities to Maltese families. Likewise, in this study I am exploring similar lived experiences, but of the Internet use this time. In the next section I am going to take an introductory look to the methods and methodology I adopted in this study.

1.10 Introduction to Methods and Methodology

I read much both about the subject itself and also about the method and methodology and this research enlightened me about the way forward. After the literature review, the next step was to plan a methodology based on the research methods I chose.

1.10.1 Qualitative Approach

As I will explain in more detail in Chapter 3, I decided that the best way to research the question of this study would be to focus on one of the traditional research methods; the qualitative approach, by adopting a Phenomenological Approach with aspect of Narrative-Ethnography. This approach enabled me to explore the lived experiences of Internet use at home on three fronts:

1.10.2 Experiential Experts (Family Members)

As I wanted to hear from the mouths of the participants, who are the "experiential experts" in the subject, the recounting of their lived experience of Internet use at home, I adopted an interview approach based on a key question as recommended by Wengraf (2000) and Dick (1998).

1.10.3 Professional Experts

So that this study would be rich in its analysis, I also incorporated interviews with a group of professional experts coming from the following professional fields, Psychology (focusing on family therapy), Psychiatry, Sociology, Built Environment (Architecture), Philosophy, Ethics and Morality and Archaeology. I discussed with them the same question I posed to the participants, with the difference that they would answer it as professional experts in their respective fields and not as members of the family.

(3) Besides the above, I also wanted to find, on a seasonal basis, what is happening daily in the home, regarding the use of the Internet, over a period of time. Hence, I also opted for a Longitudinal Research Approach, by using Time Diaries with Key Informants Family Sample.

The Phenomenological approach with aspect of Narrative-ethnography was used. It was my intention to visit and attend to the lived experience of the participant families in their respective homes. Eventually I delivered their experiences in narrative style of writing.   Since, I also wanted to find whether there were any seasonal differences in the use of the Internet at home, I used the Time Diaries.

These methods allowed me to be in a better position to explore the research problem whilst keeping my biases at bay as much as I could. I have to add that, though I was not physically present all the time with the participant families, I was still able to explore their experiences while using the Internet at home, through the methods I have chosen, in particular, during interviews and by using Time Diaries.

This meant that besides listening to what the participants shared with me during the interviews and the data elicited from the Time Diaries, I had the opportunity of observing the natural environment of the participating families as well as noticing the expressions and emotions which evolved during the interviews. I kept records of the latter, in my Procedural Memos composed of the Research Diary and the Field Notes.

Therefore, with a key research question in my mind I thought it would be appropriate to follow a Phenomenological approach with aspect of Narrative-ethnography. Eventually I have attempted to explore the Maltese families' daily life experiences about the phenomenon of Internet use at home, with suitable methods and methodologies.

1.10.4 Procedural Memos or Analytical Memos

As I have already mentioned earlier, it is important in every research, that one keeps a record of the details and information which, from time to time, one gathers about the subject being studied.

To these one should add observations, comments, artefacts, and other material which would in any way help the study. With this in mind, I have kept two Procedural memos: the Research Diary and The Field Notes. In the first, I have kept all the information which I came across during the research process, while in the second, I jotted down those observations and experiences I noted during the visits I made in the participants' homes. Notwithstanding all this, I was also aware of the limitations of these methods, as I will explain further on.

After taking a brief look at the methods and methodologies I have chose for this study, in the following section I will be giving a resume' of the whole chapter and explain the contents of the next chapter.

1.11 Conclusion

In this Introductory Chapter, I have given an overview of the main concept behind this research. I started by referring to the fact that technology and social change have been the subject of much discussion for a number of years, whilst I have briefly explained the background behind the study. Supported by a theoretical paradigm, I have referred to an array of plausible arguments raised by a number of authors expressing diverse opinions. Moreover, I supported my reasons for the research by referring to the literature I have reviewed and a number of personal experiences that I have encountered throughout the years whilst I have explained the rationale and the path that paved the way for the research problem.

The studies that I referred to show that conflicting opinions regularly arise between those who believe in the negative influence of the Internet and those who doubt whether it has any effect at all. The observations I have referred to in this chapter are only a glimpse to the study, however, in the following chapter I will refer to a number of plausible researches in the field.

Hence, in this research I have attempted to give a better understanding to this study from a conceptual perspective that will focus on how the Maltese family is living side by side with technological advances in the context of today's world.

In Chapter Two, dedicated to the review of literature, I shall commence by giving a brief introduction to the literature. Eventually, I will explain the roadmap that I have followed throughout the literature review. Moreover, I will analyse the information that has resulted from other studies and examine the latter's methods and methodologies. In this chapter I will also seek in more depth the main themes that emerged from these studies and explain how and why my study is different from those already undertaken.

In short, the literature that I have reviewed mainly indicates controversial views of Internet use; individuals' dependence on technology, to retain daily contact with their peers, whilst others in all age groups, have renewed contact with family and friends abroad after considerable time. I shall refer also to other studies that view Internet as a source that is hindering family time and hence family interaction, in short literature that manifests a complete different scenario. Later on, I will proceed to discuss the theoretical perceptions of the family and the family responses to the changes it has experienced over the years.

In Chapter 3, I will explain in detail the method and methodology which I have used in this study, particularly; the theoretical framework, the research problem and the research question.

I will then explain the Research Methods Components I have chosen, followed by the Sampling Procedure. Subsequently, I will pass on to explain the Limitations of the Study, the Findings of the two Pilot Studies I conducted, while giving details of the ethical procedure I have followed in this study.

This will be followed by an explanation that reasons my choice of the use of narratology. Chapter Four is dedicated for the Findings, Analysis and Discussion whilst Chapter 5 incorporates the Conclusion and the Recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review
2.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents a review of the main literature that I have referred to along the years of my studies. I set out to investigate the extent to which this literature has catered to the research problem. It also includes the course of action I have followed during this study. As I will be explaining further on in Chapter 3, I filed this documentation in two diaries: the Research Diary, where I noted down all the information related to literature about the research problem and the Field Notes where I jotted down observations and annotations I came across during the fieldwork.

In the early stages of this study, I mostly used the Research Diary in which I had a number of box files containing copies of journals and relevant articles, notes and observations I came across during the process of the literature review. I must say that at first this process was not easy, for, besides the fact that it is time consuming, it also gives one the impression of being lost in a maze of rich information and interesting studies. I must also add that, at times I felt I was getting nowhere.

I became so involved that I found myself recording every interesting academic material which, however, had no bearing on my subject. I learnt to discipline myself and focused only on my research problem and left out other irrelevant material. I decided that a brain-storming period was in order; and I had to pinpoint the main areas of my study. Even here I had to be cautious, because without realising it, I was taking on, areas closely related to my study, but which could be subjects for studies themselves. Nonetheless, I have referred to subjects and issues which, though not directly relevant to this study, touched upon the topics I have chosen.

I started by accessing the Melitensia database and the Main Library at the University of Malta, firstly to check about local studies which might shed more light to my study, and secondly, to choose the books I would need. Later on, I searched academic sites like JSTOR, Sage, Google Scholar and Google and Amazon Books, among others, which introduced me to several journals, links, as well as unending lists of academic books. I love having a book in my hand, so, rather than reading all the literature on-line, there were many instances where I ordered books / journals and had them sent to me.

With the title of my study in mind, I started my research for already existing studies, especially local ones, related to the research problem I am exploring. Ever since I started working on the Research Proposal, 6 years ago, I was on the lookout for studies and literature relevant to the research problem I have chosen. Unfortunately, I was disappointed to find that there is precious little locally that can throw a ray of light on this study.

I searched for studies which, in a concrete way, qualitatively analysed how the parents of adolescent children were looking at the use of the Internet in the home. I also searched for similar research which might have studied how the use of the Internet at home was being experienced by couples living together in a relationship. I wished to find a study / studies, manifesting the experiences of those who might have changed their way of life because of the use of the Internet. Moreover, I was on the lookout for studies about persons who do not use the Internet, but live in the same domestic space with other family members whose life revolves round the use of the Internet.

In this scenario, I was forced to conclude that locally there was a serious lacuna regarding this type of study. Recently, this has been reconfirmed by the Department of Family Studies at the University of Malta (K. De Giovanni 2014, pers. comm., 18th August).

There was not only a void of in-depth qualitative research about the experiences of those who use the Internet, as directly expressed from the mouths of family members in their homes, but there was also a dearth of longitudinal research; a repeated study, also called Revisit, where families are revisited over a period of time (Burawoy 2003).

Nevertheless, I managed to find a limited number of literature, both locally based and foreign ones, which up to a certain extent, are relevant to my research. The latter suggest that there is an on-going debate about how the use of Internet is being experienced by societies, in particular, personal experiences, and its effect on the dynamics of family life (Villegas 2013; Whitty 2014; Turkle 2012; Silva 2010; Carr 2011; Huseynzade 2012; Grixti 2004; Galea 2012; Gatt 2012; Sant 2009; Berger 2008; Lee & Chae 2007; Johnson 2007; Castells 2006-2011; Hampton & Wellman 2003; Grima 2004; Hampton & Wellman 2003; Bellia, & Grima 2002; Debono 2001; Howard, Rainie. & Jones 2001; Livingstone & Bovill 2001; Kraut et al 1998)

Reading the literature available inspired me to explore the use of the Internet in the home locally. The few observations that I encountered while reviewing non-locally based literature, exept for one study, that of Grixti (2004), shed a ray of light on this study. In such literature, it was trivially attempted to appraise qualitatively the daily experiences of Internet use at home. In other words, dynamics of family life and Internet use (Berger 2008; Lee & Chae, 2007; Livingstone & Bovill 2001; Miller & Slater 2003; Whitty 2014).

In the preceding chapter, I explained in more detail what drove me to do this study. Among other important facts, I explained the three principal areas on which I have based this research. Among these I emphasised that the fulcrum of this study is the concept of Internet use at home and its effect on the dynamics of family life. In this chapter I focused on studies which were relevant to mine and evaluated their main findings.

Moreover, I have appraised the methods and methodologies used, hence, noting their limitations with regard to my study. In other words, I have looked for new insights to improve this study.

I have referred to a number of relevant publications aimed at understanding, as fully as possible, the phenomenon of how the family is experiencing the use of Internet. These publications give contrasting views. There are thinkers who have very positive views on the subject (via research) and are very optimistic about the fact that the Internet may create greater interaction among those using it (Cao 2013; Caplan et al 2011; Grixti (2004); Chambre 2013; Folbre & Bittman 2004: Robinson et al 2000; Kraut et al 2002; Hampton & Wellman 2003), to mention but a few.

Similarly, I personally have encountered positive feedback from people who were satisfied with the progress they have made by using the Internet. Some said that they just could not imagine life without the Internet, especially because they could communicate easily with relatives, who were not physically near. Others have also found love. Parallel experiences were also recorded by Rainie & Wellman (2012), Miller & Slater (2003), Galea (2012), Hughes & Hans (2001) and Chizmar & Williams (1996) to mention but a few. Yet I have met with other literature which is completely different from what I have referred up to now (Scoville 2009; Lee & Chae 2007; Kraut et al 1998; Livingstone 2000; Mesch 2006; Redhead 2004; Nie, Simpser, Stepanikova, & Zhen 2004).

Hence, I mainly focused on literature which explored family dynamics and the use of the Internet at home. I referred to the continuous debates on Internet use experiences, by seeking both negative and positive perspectives in literature with regard to the use of the Internet at home. Eventually, I have also referred to a number of caricatures (Glasbergen 2010) which clearly expose the different perceptions of the use of the Internet at home.

Because this study is tied to the experience of families themselves, it is logical to mention at the beginning of this Chapter, as I will explain further down, that there exists a number of sociological theories about the family, which I could have used as a guide to this study. In the light of this, after reading carefully these theoretical perspectives, I opted to base this study on a Symbolic Interaction Approach as an underlying theoretical reasoning to guide me and help me to interpret the findings. The main reason for my choice is the fact that this approach focuses on the action and behaviour of individuals in different contexts. Newman (2009, p.59) explains that this theory is conscious of the fact that families are created from day-to-day interaction, where communication among family members is central in creating and sustaining the family bond. Therefore, I felt it was important to dedicate a section, specifically to this aspect. However, later on, I will explain why I preferred to leave out the other theories and focus on the Symbolic Interaction Approach.

Briefly, in this Chapter, I have included a close analysis of a number of different perspectives in literature about the subject. Of interest is, the interpretation given and the limitations shown, by different thinkers.

In the next section I will commence by referring to literature which deals with social change and technological development. Later on, I will refer to literature that will give a wider picture of the experience of the Internet vis-à-vis the family, in the context of a domestic space. In particular, I will refer to writings which show how the family is experiencing the advent and growth of Information Technology.

2.2 Social Change and Technological Development

> Computers…..follow rules; they don't make judgments. In place of subjectivity, they give us formula. ………as we grow more accustomed to and dependent on our computers, we will be tempted to entrust to them tasks that demand wisdom.
>
> And once we do that, there will be no turning back. The software will become indispensable to those tasks……..The seductions of technology are hard to resist, and in our age of instant information the benefits of speed and efficiency can seem unalloyed, their disability beyond debate. But I continue to hold out hope that we won't go gently into the future our computer engineers and software programmers are scripting for us. Even if ……..we owe it to ourselves to considers them, to be attentive to what we stand to lose. How sad it would be, particularly when it comes to nurturing of our children's minds, if we were to accept without question the idea that "human elements are outmoded and dispensable.
>
> (Carr 2011, p.223)

Information technology continued to move forward and it will definitely continue to develop and therefore it poses a continuous challenge to society, which is surrounded by other developments besides that of information technology.

Each change in society will leave its mark. There is no doubt, and this has been explicitly expressed by Castells (1996), that societal change depends mostly on how societies interpret and react to technological advancement:

> The ability or inability of societies to master technology, and particularly technologies that are strategically decisive in each historical period, largely shape their identity, to the point where we could say that while technology per se does not determine historical evolution and social change, technology (or lack of it) embodies the capacity of societies to transform themselves, as well as the uses to which societies, always in a conflictive process, decide to put their technological potential.
>
> (Castells 1996, p.7)

From certain writings, (Silverstone & Hirsch 1992; Whitty 2014; Silva 2010; Turkle 2011; Grixti 2004), it is clear that the aspect of information technology, similar to other technologies, is leaving both a negative and a positive impact not only on the social level, but also on the psychological aspect. This has been stated also by A.Grech 2014, pers. comm., 12th August, P. Muscat 2014, pers. comm., 12th September, and G. Baldacchino 2014, pers. comm., 3rd July.

Every new technology development affects the whole of society in some way or another, even though there may be those who are not directly affected. Through no choice of their own, some become involved in technological systems that inconvenience them. For example, the use of telebanking has affected old people no end. The new way of receiving their pension electronically became a burden to some old people. Some friends and relatives talked to me about their preoccupation with this new development.

> It is likely that the Internet affects families in complex ways because it is a psychological, social, play, and consumer space open to a wide range of positive and negative activities. The wide variation in family interaction styles and circumstances suggests that the effects of the Internet may vary greatly depending on family communication styles and other behaviors.

(Hughes & Hans 2001, p.21)

Nevertheless, Lin (2007) cited in Oliver & Bryant (2009 p.584) sustains that understanding the effects of the Internet on society should not focus on how the Internet will change society but how we will shape that change....the never ending endeavours to maximise the utilities of Internet technology have led to continuous reinventions of the way the medium is used and lasting influences on the lives of its users (Lin 2007, p.584). However, Castells' early writings seem to be rather inquisitive, up to a certain extent, on how society would react and adapt to recent advancements in communication technology: "It is still unclear how much sociability is taking place in such electronic networks, and what are the cultural effects of such a new form of sociability" (Castells 1996, p. 361).

I am in agreement with Castells and I believe that in a world that is still experiencing an Internet revolution and innovative related aspects, society needs to comprehend and appraise how its respective members are adjusting and adapting to this new phenomenon. This is also explicitly expressed by Iskod when stating that:

> We are witnessing a breath-taking evolution of new forms of digital communication were people today hardly find time to consider to what extent, means of communications have moved from printed to online newspapers, from hand-delivered to electronic mail-and from chatting to blogs to social networks.

(Iskod 2007, p.1)

Other thinkers found various views, in particular, that the Internet creates isolation and a lack of communication among those using it whilst at the same time it reunites long lost families and it serves as tool for virtual interaction (Turkle 2012; Mesch 2006; Redhead 2004; Nie, Simpser, Stepanikova, & Zhen 2004; Kraut et al 1998; Livingstone & Bovill 2001; Virilio 1995). This has also been expressed by C. Azzopardi, 2013 pers. comm., 10th June, A. Grech 2014, pers. comm., 12th August and P. Muscat 2014, pers. comm., 12th September. I have personally met individual family members who were of the same opinion: that the Internet is usurping precious family time whilst others shared completely different views.

For instance, some of the sceptics sustained that their children have not done so well at school because of the time spent on surfing the Internet. There were similar results in quantitative study conducted in the United States in 2009. Part of the data collected dealt with communication during meals. According to this study, technical development has become a detriment to communication among family members, especially during meals.

> Similar to TV, all of the gadgets and gizmos we have these days can be a distraction from what really matters at mealtime. Leaving these things in another room will allow the whole family to participate in mealtime conversation and receive the benefits of a meaningful family meal.

(Scoville 2009 p. 2)

As I shall further appraise in Chapter Four, in parallel to the above, in June 2014, the Church in Malta launched a video clip, on the occasion of the World Day of Social Communications, which gives a perception of how the ideal family should be, Internet and all, especially during meal times. This video clip brings the title: Technology: Bridge or Barrier?

The latter shows various members of the family busily using electronic devices for quite some time, but, come meal time and they all gather round the table as a family, whilst putting aside all respective devices. Asked about the background of the video and whether the Church researched this matter or not before actually producing the video clip, the Curia spokesperson sustained they have only produced it to instigate discussion on the matter. Nevertheless, from my experiences during this study, reality is much different from this cosy picture. I met with isolated instances, where what the video clip depicted was true, but, in the majority of cases, the use of the Internet does not stop at meal times. Whether this is good or not, is another issue which I will talk about later on in the analysis Chapter. Yet other studies indicate that the Internet helped individuals and families to keep in contact with relatives and friends abroad and fostered their interaction with other members of the family and friends.

In fact, it is an important reality that the use of the Internet had become a means whereby communication and interaction have taken on a wider dimension. Thanks to this development time and distance barriers have been broken down (Castells et al 2007; Leong 2009; Miller & Slater 2000; Grixti 2014).

Thanks to this development time and distance barriers have been broken down. One can communicate with friends and relatives who are abroad as well as with those who live locally.

According to NSO (2012, 2013), MCA (2012), Eurostat (2012, 2013) and the Internet World Stats (2013, 2014), it appears that communication has flourished. Berger (2008) has rightly explained that interaction does not only take place when the parties concerned are physically present near each other, interaction has become an extension of itself through the Internet:

> Although interpersonal communication has been traditionally conceived of as a process that occurs between people encountering each other face to face, increasingly social interaction is being accomplished through the use of such communication technologies as computers and mobile phones, thus adding a new dimension to this area of communication inquiry.

(Berger 2008, p. 2473)

In parallel to this I refer to an interesting study conducted by Miller & Slater (2003). They manage to give a true, deep and clear picture of how the residents of Trinidad, an island in the Caribbean, reacted to the use of the Internet. In this qualitative study based on ethnography, which they conducted over a period of time, Miller & Slater succeeded in studying the lived experience of the Internet on that society. Their study explored how the people of Trinidad have used the Internet in different areas of their life: economic, social, and religious, among others. The study showed how the people of this island made the best use of the Internet to make their life better.

Malta is no exception to these changes and shares along with other developed countries these new experiences (Internet World Stat 2013, 2014, Eurostat 2011, 2012, 2013; MCA 2011, 2012; NSO 2012, 2013). Though there are different perspectives on the effect of the use of Internet, there is a general consensus that the Internet is having its effect on society. It is clear that, Information Technology has continued to grow and expand in all sectors.

We have a situation where all areas of human life, including the family, are practically dominated by Information Technology and its advances.

Figure 1: World ICT Indicators

Source: ITU World Telecommunication /ICT Indicators database
Note: * Estimate
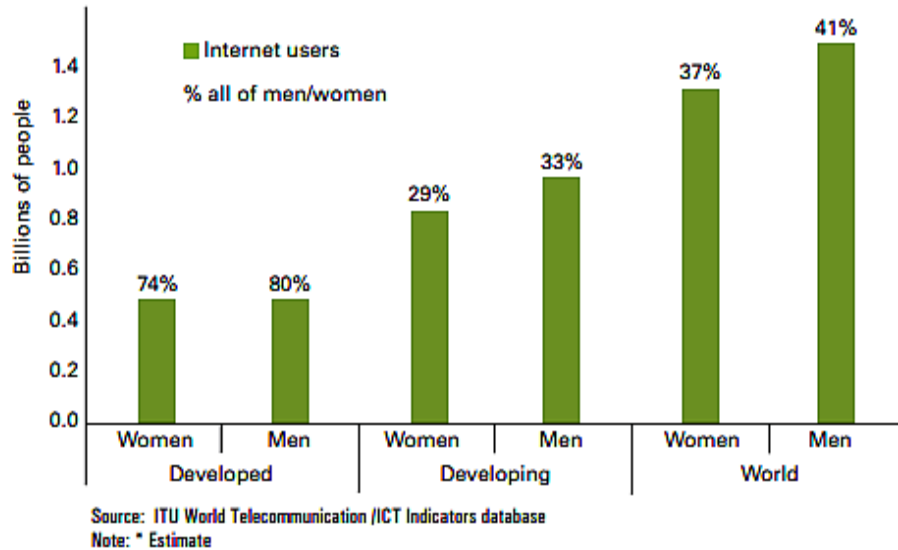
According to the Internet World Stats (2014) more men than women use the Internet, 37% of all world women are online, compared with 41% of all men. In the developed countries the gender divide among Internet users is small: 475 million female users and 483 million male users. However, in the developing world there are 826 million women compared to 980 million men. This represents 154 million more men than women using the Internet in 2013.

In addition, it is evident that most things that humanity is surrounded with, very much depends on technology, especially, that of information – from the purchase of daily needs, to hospital appointments, to trips abroad.

> The computer, I began to sense, was more than just a simple tool that did what you told it to do. It was a machine that, in subtle but unmistakable ways, exerted an influence over you. The more I used it, the more it altered the way I worked…….By the mid-nineties, I had become trapped, not unhappily, in the upgrade cycle.

> (Carr, 2011, p. 12)

2.3 Technological Determinism

Another important concept, that of technological determinism, is closely related to the development of technology which started towards the end of the 19th Century and the early 20th Century. It asserts that progress achieved in technology leads to changes in society. During the aforesaid period, the advances made in technology brought about social changes whilst the effects of such changes are still on-going (Feenberg 1992; Silva 2010; Huseynzade 2012; Hutchby & Moran-Ellis 2013) There are those who, according to Abercrombie et al (1994, p.425) negate the argument that the Industrial Revolution was the result of a group of technologies which caused social changes. Feenberg (1992) is of the same opinion:

> Determinism rests on the assumption that technologies have an autonomous functional logic that can be explained without reference to society. Technology is presumably social only through the purpose it serves, and purposes are in the mind of the beholder. Technology would thus resemble science and mathematics by its intrinsic independence of the social world. Yet unlike science and mathematics, technology has immediate and powerful social impacts. It would seem that society's fate is at least partially dependent on a non-social factor which influences it without suffering a reciprocal influence. This is what is meant by "technological determinism".

> (Feenberg 1992, p.1)

Similarly, Taylor et al (1997) managed to portray a cynical picture of how most societies are very close to relying completely on information technology. "The apparently encouraging lifestyles delivered by communication technology depict young people's lifestyles as dependent on, and organised around Internet" (Taylor et al 1997, p. 531).

This is very much in tune with Iskod's (2007, p.1), Grixti's (2004 p. 19) and Livingstone & Bovill's (2001, p.3) perception that the pace of such technological change is happening rapidly, whilst it is more approachable: "More than witnessing, we are facilitating it (technological change) whilst all of this is unfolding so quickly that we do not have time to pause and reflect on what is happening" (Iskod 2007, p.1). In addition, way back in 1996, Castells' observations', conspicuously manifest his concern on how this revolution eventually will shape society:

> We must take technology seriously, using it as the point of departure of this inquiry: we ought to locate this process of revolutionary technological change in the social context in which it takes place and by which it is being shaped.

<div align="right">(Castells 1996, p.3)</div>

Likewise, Livingstone (2002) Hutchby (2001), Singer (2001), Kraut et al (1998), Mesch (2006), Silva (2010), Whitty (2014), and Hutchby & Moran-Ellis (2013), to mention but a few, share the same concern about how this new technology is effectively changing and shaping society, in particular within the context of family. Most of them express their preoccupation regarding lack of adequate research in this field. In particular, Singer (2001) and Livingstone (2002) respectively express their concern regarding children and young people's lack of skills when using such new information technology and are also concerned about its effect on the family: "The personal computer and the Internet are central to the daily lives of children and young people, yet little is known about the meanings, uses, and impact of these new technologies" (Livingstone 2002, 74).

"The Internet is changing the way we work and live, whilst these changes are clearly affecting the ebb and flow of family life" (Singer 2001, p. 552). On the same lines Hutchby (2001, p.23) argues that "the ways in which we interact can be profoundly shaped by technological media, while at the same time we ourselves are shapers of both the cultural and interactional properties of these technologies".

Although it is true that the use of the Internet has become an integral and important part in the life of humanity, it is also a fact that it is changing our way of life. Here I refer to another study conducted in December 2012, published by the Times of Malta (2013), by the pharmaceutical company Omega Pharma of London, which manufactures Nytol. This medicine is taken by those who find it difficult to sleep.

According to this study which took place in London, it transpired that 9 out of 10 people are not having a restful night due to the fact that they go on using the Internet during normal sleeping hours. In fact, more than half of the 2000 people who took part in the study said that they go online when they are in bed trying to go to sleep. One in five confirmed that before sleeping they check Facebook, Twitter or emails, as they fear they would miss something important, while 1 in 10 said that there was nothing wrong with their sleep (Chambre 2013). My research elicited similar experiences; in particular that some of the participants sustained that they use the Internet till the early hours, particularly accessing Facebook to keep themselves updated.

In a similar vein to this study, among other things, Huseynzade (2012) questions the fact whether we can live or not without half of the technologies we use daily. Yet, Huseynzade comments that technological development has two facets: a good one and a lesser good; therefore one must be aware of how to use it well and not allow it to take control. She also refers to lack of sleep due to the excessive use of the Internet:

> Sleep deprivation and constant headaches, may occur as a result of spending too much time at a computer. This problem is widely spread among teenagers, who are addicted to social-networks and cannot exist even an hour without checking notifications or e-mail

(Huseynzade 2012, p. 2)

Although I agree with her argument, I disagree that this problem affects mostly youth. I can say that the findings of my study indicate that people of various ages use the Internet for long periods of time, especially during sleeping time, and from different places. Besides, nowadays it is not necessary for an individual to remain in a particular space where there is a computer to access the Internet. On the contrary, thanks to Wi Fi, and other wireless systems, nearly every space in the home or outside it, is good to connect to the Internet. Others are connected all the time.

Time is an important issue and individuals can organise themselves to meet their exigencies. It is clear that time and space are salient elements, where Internet is concerned, so I felt that it was important that I discuss development of Information Technology and its relevance to time and space. This is in parallel to what Sant (2013) explains:

> Not only does the Internet provides a different reality for adults and children, but also rather different experiences for different individuals who seek to navigate through different aspects of online behaviour, attitudes, aptitudes, comfort levels, interests, abilities….The idea of the Internet as a constant companion…..can be particularly observed as a common occurrence now that the mobile telephony carriers are also providing access to the Internet as well as conventional telephone and messaging services…. Rather than going online to be on the Internet, users are potentially always online and the Internet is really an extension of human sense and abilities.

(Sant 2013 p.2 - comments)

2.4 Information Technology versus Time and Space

> As long as media is developing, the spatial and temporal dimensions of social life and user perceptions have changed, and the spatial and temporal boundaries also have changed. The new media has changed the face-to-face interaction and also the cognition of 'time' and 'space'. Digital media has a bearing on the spatiotemporal aspects of social life; the other type of media creates a new type of social space. The new media affects the way in which users experienced the spatial and temporal characteristics of daily social life. People experience new aspects of time and space, such as the collapse of time and space, uncoupling of time and space, and transformation of time and space.

> (Kwoen et al 2011p. 29)

During the process of domestication, humanity, not only succeeded in creating an environment of physical space of how and where to live, but also a structure incorporating the times of the day. The words "spaces" and "times" are purposely chosen, as humanity lives in more than one space and experiences different times of the day.

> More specifically, temporal shrinking, permeable spatial boundaries and the establishment of new electronic spaces draw a more complex picture of mediated time-space experiences than that suggested by technologically deterministic theses.

> (Tsatsou 2009, p.15)

As will be explaining later, through the development of information technology, the concepts of space and time have acquired another dimension. In fact, in this study I have managed to explore how, thanks to this development, people have succeeded in finding time to be closer to each other both physically, as well as virtually. Moreover, today, barriers of communication between one country and another, or between one locality and another, all have been nearly eliminated, while the time aspect is no longer a problem in communication. Still, one is also conscious of the aspect of time zones.

> Despite the fast advances in communication technology, time differences remain one of the few challenges in telecommunication that will likely never be truly "solved". On the contrary, its influences will only become more prominent as more and more families have ready access to modern communications technologies. Therefore, understanding the role of time difference in connecting families can be regarded as both timeless and timely thesis.
>
> Neustaedter et al 2013, p. 138

Though, as has been already said, thanks to technology, communication between one country and another has become easier, there still exists the element of time. Geographically, time is different and this explains why in certain areas of the world, it is daylight and in other areas it is night time. Despite this difference, it has become possible for us to communicate with relatives and friends at different times. We can do so directly and immediately by telephone, e-mail or skype - synchronous) or asynchronous, according to when it is suitable for us, in which case the communication is read or played later.

It is also a reality that the process of globalisation has brought with it new experiences of how man is living his everyday life. It seems as if man's life reflects what is happening around the world at different times and in different spaces:

> Globalisation events change the way we conceive and organise the time and space in which we live….. It immediately becomes evident that the effects of globalisation and globalising events on time and space are facilitated significantly by electronic media, as the transnational span of electronic communications can extend the scope of mega-events, making the latter more influential on how people go about their everyday schedules and contexts of living.
>
> (Tsatsou 2009, p.16)

Castells (2006 / 2011) has the same ideas about how the use of the Internet has changed the aspect of modern life, while introducing new methods of communication. He considers the process of the introduction of Internet in everyday life, especially during the past 25 years, as having completely changed one's way of living and communicating with the world around him. In fact he queries whether this development has been too hasty (Castells 2006, p. 356). In this sense, Castells talks about the advances in the information technology field, particularly, that tied to telecommunications. He refers to modern society as "the network society". He sustains that this development has created "the space of flows" where time and space disintegrate through information technology.

Up to a certain extent, this runs parallel to Tsatsou (2009), who argues that despite these developments in information technology, these communication experiences, in no way take the place of direct contact where a person is physically present.

> In today's communication landscape a repertoire of connected relationships takes place, thus going beyond mediated relationships….It is argued that connected relationships do not substitute face-to-face communication, but constitute another communicative dimension and possibly enrich face-to-face communication.

(Tsatsou 2009, p. 18)

Besides, one has to understand that this experience in the development of information technology is not available to everyone, especially to people living in underdeveloped countries. Nevertheless, the development of information technology with developed countries has brought with it new experiences related to temporal and spatial issues which have left an impact on society in its day to day life.

The use of the Internet has overcome space and time, in the sense that the concepts of spatiality and temporality are no longer barriers between frontiers (Castell et al 2007; Judge et al 2013; Kwoen et al 2011; Ballagas et al 2009; Neustaedter et al 2010, 2011, 2013). In the words of McLuhan, electronic media "have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both time and space as far as our planet is concerned" (McLuhan 1964, 1995, p.149). The concept of Temporality and Spatiality, are two aspects which have taken on different dimensions with the development of information technology. "The Internet transforms spatial and temporal experiences such that one can instantly "go" anywhere that is wired" in real time (Garza 2002, p. 190). Notwithstanding this fact, the aspect of instantaneous physical travelling from one place to another is not real. Although this development brought with it undreamed of important transformations, like being able to talk to and see each other in real time, via Skype or share the view of food we have just cooked via Internet, neither can we embrace each other, shake hands, or smell and taste the food. This reality is just a virtual one.

> The Internet reveals a paradoxical spatiality that is both near and distant. It is near insofar as the furthest corners of the globe are made available to my eyes and ears via the "global embrace" of our "extended nervous systems" on the Internet…… It is distant insofar as the body as vital perceptual presence beyond seeing and hearing is left behind. The ability to "go anywhere" with the internet comes at the price of doing so in a disembodied manner. Insofar, as the Internet is presence.
>
> (Garza 2002, p. 191)

In addition, another interesting literature on this aspect is that based on Paul Virilio's study (1995) as interpreted by Redhead (2004), that of Van Dijk's (1999) and Kwoen et al (2011). These studies further instigated me to reflect more on the concept of time and space with regard to technological development and the changes it brings.

For instance, Virilio' is well-known for his theory on time, speed and technology. He is not affected by developing technology. When talking about technology development with special reference to speed, he has conflicting thoughts. In fact Redheads (2004) describes Virilio as a man who looks on technical development as a strategy to abolish time and distance.

> The Information Revolution which we are currently witnessing ushers in the era of the global accident. The old kind of accidents were localised in space and time: a train derailment took place, say, in Paris or in Berlin; and when a plane crashed, it did so in London or wherever in the world. The catastrophes of earlier time were situated in real space, but now, with the advent of absolute speed of light and electronic waves, the possibility of a global accident has arisen, of an accident that would occur to the world as a whole.

> (Virilio 1995 cited in Redhead 2004, p. 47)

Nevertheless, it is a fact that both time and space are two important factors related to the Internet as they have created a qualitative leap forward in the way one may keep contact with others, whether they are physically near or whether they are far.

In this regard, this research evolved around this current reality as the phenomenon reaches an ever-increasing number of local families as a consequence of wide-spread Internet use. In parallel, Van Dijk (1999) and Hutchby (2001, 2013) sustain that the ICT has radically changed for the better the way to communicate easily; this positive change has brought people closer together. In particular, Van Dijk explains that:

> The process of time-space distantiation is marked not only by the extension of space and time, but also by the contraction of space and the compression of time. As a result, time and space in some respect gain importance, instead of losing relevance. The technological capabilities of bridging space and time enable people to be more selective in choosing coordinates of space and time than ever before history.

> (Van Dijk 1999, p. 155)

For instance, a number of studies testify clearly and similarly how this important means of communication and interaction - the Internet- is serving society (Neustaedter et al 2013; Tsatsou 2009; Rheingold 2014; Rainie & Wellman 2012; Castells et al 2011; Schwanen & Kwan 2008; Van Dijk 1999; Boulianne 2009; Shklovsk et al 2004). For instance, one is a study compiled by Boulianne (2009, p.193). The findings of this research perpetuate the positive aspect of Internet use, in particular, it provides: "strong evidence against the Internet having a negative effect on engagement…. data do not establish that Internet use will have a substantial impact on engagement. The effects of Internet use on engagement seem to increase non-monotonically across time, and the effects are larger when online news is used to measure Internet use, compared to other measures". On the other hand, Caroline Gatt (2012), in her research entitled: Becoming Friends of the Earth: An Anthropology of Global of Environmentalism, dedicated a substantial part of her research to analyse how information technology, through digital communication, was instrumental in the work done by Friends of the Earth. In parallel, was the study conducted by Daniel Miller and Don Slater (2000) called: The Internet: An Ethnographic Approach.

The latter is an interesting study of the way residents of Trinidad, an island in the Caribbean Sea, reacted to the introduction of the Internet. These last two studies are mentioned for the fact that they are living proof of how the development of information technology, particularly the Internet and other ancillary services, have created opportunities that have hitherto been remote and impossible. This development has made it possible and easy for communication and interaction to exist among those who are physically apart from each other. Barriers of time and space have been broken down.

In her study Gatt (2012) explains and gives concrete examples of how beneficial the Internet has been to the Friends of the Earth society, of which she is a member, because it created better communication, not only at work, but also away from work:

> They regularly spoke on Skype during the day and evening not only discussing political developments, issues related to Rede Brasil, and NAT, but also such non work issues as their relationships with their partners, their health, their families, and their hopes for the future. They went on camping holiday together in the summer with their partners.

(Gatt 2012, p. 211, p.212)

In addition, in their research, Miller & Slater (2000) have found that Internet has managed to reinforce family bonding, even among those who were not so familiar with it. It seems as if they looked at its positive aspects and tried to get something good out of it rather than considering its negative aspects.

> The Internet has considerably strengthened the nuclear family throughout the Trinidadian Diaspora, allowing closer relations between parents and children and between siblings. It has had an equally strong impact on the extended family…..The Internet has generated great excitement, in which even those with little or no direct experience of it still feel that somehow they are part of it and certainly it is part of their future.

(Miller and Slater 2000, p.23, p.32)

This is totally in harmony with what Shklovsk et al (2004) discovered earlier. They found that there was greater interaction by telephone or face to face by those who mostly use the Internet. Consequently communication became stronger: "Because the Internet permits social contact across time, distance, and personal circumstances, it allows people to connect with distant as well as local family and friends, co-workers, business contacts, and strangers who share similar interests" (Shklovsk et al 2004, 120). This argument is strengthened by what Tsatsou (2009) and Namsu (2010) maintain. They look on information technology development as a strong means of facilitating and encouraging social relationships:

> I consider mediated social relationships prominent and tremendously facilitated by electronic media and communication, with time and space being nowadays both stretched and compressed ………The experience of time and space has significant implications for people's physical mobility and sense of identity. Thus, the changes in time and space under the influence of media technologies have provoked a heated debate between theorists.

(Tsatsou, 2009, p. 14)

In brief, this technological development has shown how everyday life has adapted itself to it. Today's digital world is serving as a bridge in certain areas and so, walls and barricades built over the ages have fallen down. For example, we cannot ignore the length of time it used to take for people, or States' Governments, far apart from each other, to communicate and negotiate. Technology development has meant that even time and distance have taken on a new dimension in this regard.

> Before the advent of electronic communications, people were bound by oral communication and physical travel, whereas today people are able to cross and adjust temporal and spatial distances largely because of the usage of electronic media and communications.

(Tsatsou, 2009, p 13)

Today, in a matter of seconds, one can communicate freely, as through this technology, difficulties created by distance and time, have been nearly completely eradicated. The same can be said of events which happen globally. Whereas about 20 years ago, international news and events happening in remote places outside Europe took a certain amount of time to reach the outside world, we are now witnessing them instantaneously. Even now, direct on TV through Internet we can follow protests and civil wars happening around us (Neustaedter et al 2013; Rheingold 2002, 2014; Castells et al 2011; Namsu 2010; Rainie & Wellman 2012). Although it is not directly relevant to my research, it is pertinent to mention the occurrences happening around the world due to the use of information technology with regard to time and space.

So, in the coming section, I am going to refer to the organisation of groups and movements who are spreading protests, creeds and different causes through the use of the Internet.

2.5 Smart Mobs

With such dynamic technological processes and discoveries, societies are now experiencing what has been termed as Smart Mobs, coined by Howard Rheingold (2002) in his publication Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution, and Net Smart (2014) respectively. Through a number of years Rheingold managed to observe, and eventually appraise how people succeed in utilising communication devices to organise themselves:

> Smart mobs, consist of people who are able to act in concert even if they don't know each other. The people who make up smart mobs cooperate in ways never before possible because they carry devices that process both communication and computing capabilities. Their mobile devices connect them with other information devices in the environment as well as with other people's telephones.

(Rheingold 2002, p.12)

Lately, most of us have all witnessed, and are still experiencing, the fall of a number of dictators from power, thanks to smart mobs. The growing diversity of technological development in a rapidly changing world, within the context of time and space, will definitely need to be regularly appraised. Research manifests that information technology, in particular Internet use, is affecting and changing people's way of living. Most of the people's life is surrounded with information technology (Meszaros 2004; Carr 2011; Castells et al 2011; Whitty 2014; Mills 2014).

As is quite evident, the Internet experience has infiltrated various area of life and therefore, it is affecting society directly. This is also true of the family environment, which is the focal point of this study. It is interesting to note that when something new is introduced, whether it is technological or not, society faces new situations related to this new experience, and eventually changes occur.

Over the years, these changes will become an integral part of everyday life. As I mentioned in the introductory Chapter, the same thing happened when radio and television were invented.

> The growing saturation and use of the newest media technologies; the personal computer and the Internet, primarily capture our attention today. Parental concern about the effects of new media has also been a phenomenon of this past century. With time, as children have been exposed to new technologies, adults have predictably become concerned about possible harm. Psychologists, sociologists and family scientists have entered into discussions of the positive and negative effects of technologies and their implications for children, families and society. Yet what do we know about the widespread presence of new media technologies in the home and their implications for changing family dynamics, family values, and family processes?

> (Meszaros 2004, p.378)

Maybe the introduction of social media has made some of us less aware that we also have a personal/ private life besides the other kind. It has become possible for us to live personal as well as other experiences online. When I was young, based on an old Maltese proverb, my parents used to instil in me, that "friends ought to stop at the doorstep - "Il-hbieb sal-bieb" In a nutshell, my parents were very strict and reluctant to let our friends come over to our house. This maxim has been overturned, as now, far from stopping at the door step, "friends" are entering even our private rooms. As long as these are true friends, this does not matter much, but we are welcoming "strangers" known only via Internet (Moscardelli & Divine 2007; Silva 2010; Grixti 2014; Livingstone-Bovill 2001; Mesch 2007; Whitty 2014).

Yet, it is also a fact that our life has been made easier by the use of the Internet, (Neustaedter et al 2013; Rainie & Wellman 2012; Carr 2011; Castells et al 2007; Tsatsou 2009). It is a new reality that activities and errands have become very different from what we have been used to.

For example, if we wanted to go abroad on a tour, we had to go personally to the Travel Agent to book it; nowadays, through Internet we book with agencies which are far away from our shores. We can choose not to queue anymore to pay bills; we just pay on line, even being able to indicate when the payment is due. This was explicitly elicited in this study. Who would have told us that instead of waiting weeks and sometimes months to receive a letter from our emigrant relatives, we can simply press a button and find ourselves visually there!

> The Internet, and the various activities in which people are involved when using it, has fundamentally changed the meaning of temporal differences and their implications for physical mobility. Contacts between distant locations can take place on the Internet at the same time. Internet activities, such as e-mail, alter the dimension of time in work and in social interaction, releasing rigid time-patterns in the organisation of work and other everyday life activities.
>
> (Tsatsou, 2009, p. 21)

The question of this study therefore begs an answer: How are we looking at this new experience of the use of the Internet, particularly in the home? In other words, how are the Maltese living with the use of Internet in different spaces in the home and even outside the home? On the same lines, but in a general way, Turkle (2011), referred particularly to the continuous connecting to the Internet. She comments that we are passing through particular experiences because of the Internet. She maintains that though the digital era has had a short life, it has brought a significant change in the use of the Internet, particularly the reasons behind online connectivity:

> Online connections were first conceived as a substitute for face-to-face contact, when the latter was for some reason impractical: Don't have time to make a phone call? Shoot off a text message. But very quickly, the text message became the connection of choice. We discovered the network – the world of connectivity - to be uniquely suited to the overworked and overscheduled life it makes possible. And now we look to the network to defend us against loneliness even as we use it to control the intensity of our connections. Technology makes it easy to communicate when we wish and to disengage at will.

(Turkle 2011, p. 13)

The latter shows that it is significant to explore how Internet users and those around them are being affected, or not, by the use of the Internet; whether they are communicating among themselves locally or with relatives and friends abroad. Others may have the experience of contacting long lost relatives through the use of the Internet. To what extent are remote feelings enabled by Internet? Still others may be studying with foreign institutions on-line, while others, especially new mothers and fathers, may be working from home via Internet. In spite of this perception and important queries which are based on aspects of time and space in a digital context, yet, as I will show further in the following sections, the studies conducted by NSO (2005-2013), MCA (2012 - 2013) and Euro Stat (2012 - 2013), all leave out this important factor.

2.6 Internet Use Surveys by the National Statistics Office (NSO), The Malta Communications Authority (MCA), Eurostat and Internet World Statistics

Among the officially recognised entities in Malta, which have made studies on a national scale, there are the National Statistics Office (NSO) and the Malta Communications Authority (MCA). On a European scale and globally, one finds, among others, the Eurostat and the Internet World Statistics.

Though these entities base their research on the quantitative method, they still give interesting, valid and reliable information, which is rather difficult to collect when using qualitative methods. I have given importance to the information offered by these entities in their publications.

2.6.1. Computer and Internet Use Surveys - National Statistics Office

The data collected and published by the National Statistics Office, concern the trends of how the introduction of the computer and, eventually, the use of the Internet, have become accessible in the homes of the Maltese during the past 10 years. As early as 2005, the NSO felt the need to trace the trends of access to the use of the Internet in Maltese homes, as is clearly indicated in the Figure 2 below. One can notice a continued percentage increase every year, except between 2007 and 2008. There was no increase in homes having Internet access in that period: the registered 63% homes with computer use remained the same during both years.

On the other hand, in the same years, there was an increase in the homes having access to the Internet, from 54% in 2007 to 59% during 2008. In the years 2009 to 2012, the rise of homes with access to a computer and the use of the Internet, continued to rise: in 2009 it was 67% for the use of a computer and 64% for the use of the Internet. In 2010, they were respectively 73% and 70%; in 2011 they were 78% and 77% respectively.

Figure 2: Internet and Computer Access in Households against Time
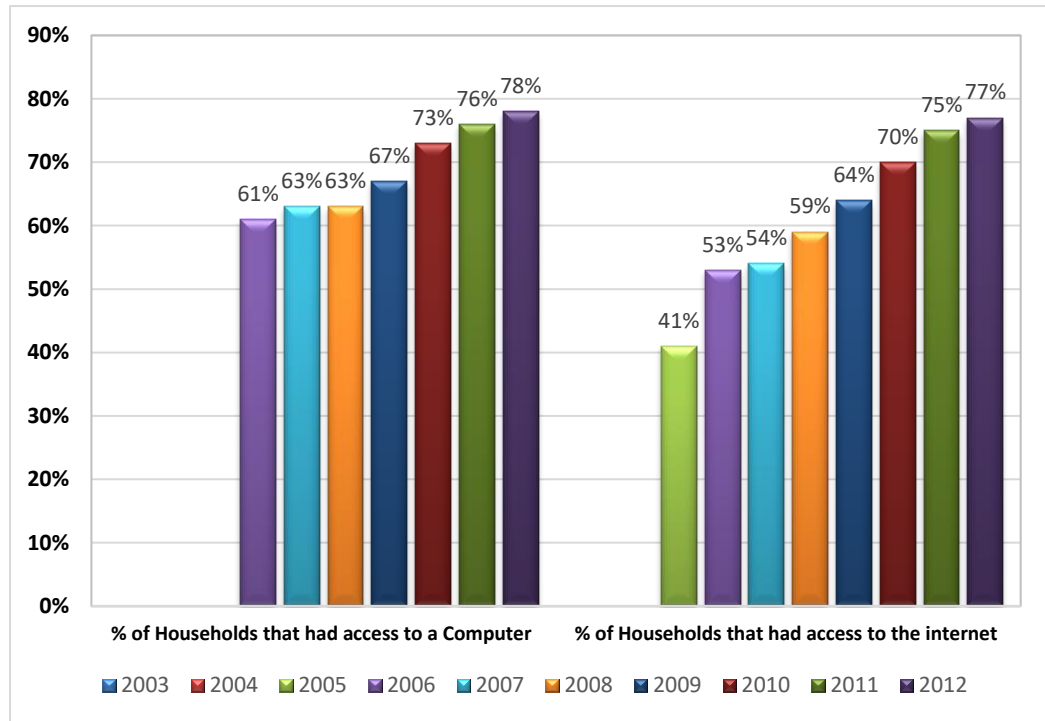
Source: NSO(Source: NSO 2013)

Meanwhile, it is important to note that the NSO concluded that, in 2012, 77.5% of Maltese and Gozitan households had access to the Internet, while the proportion of Internet users making daily use of the Internet, reached 83.3%.

This is a high rate indeed and compares favourably with the rate of other European countries (Eurostat 2012). It would be opportune to analyse in detail these figures and how the use of the Internet is being experienced by Maltese families. Apart from this, the Maltese made various uses of the Internet. According to NSO (2012) the uses varied from a need to communicate, having "access to information" and "entertainment", to "e-health" and "other online services". Internet use for "communication" and use to "access information", scored highest: 93.6% and 91% respectively.

Next, at 70.1%, there was "use of other online services", while 68.5% used the Internet for "entertainment".

Table 1: Activities for which the Internet was used: 2012

	Percentage Internet Users - Total	Absolute Total
Communication	**93.6**	**203,103**
Access to Information	**91.0**	**197,518**
Entertainment	**68.5**	**148,600**
Creativity	**17.7**	**38,318**
E-health	**4.5 (u)**	**9,814**
Other on-line services	**70.1**	**152,100**
(u) Under represented		

Source: NSO, News Release ICT Usage by Individuals and in Household: 2012: p.6

An interesting fact, coming from the same sources, states that 69% of the individuals in the 16-74 age group used some type of computer between January and March 2012, while during the same period, 68% used the Internet. Moreover, and this is important to my research, the same data exposed that the majority of those using the computer in that period were youth between 16 and 24. In fact, there was a higher percentage when this data were compared with the figures of 2011; access to computer reached 99% and Internet use scored 98%.

On the other hand, the 65 to 74 age group were those who used the computer and the Internet least. These type of indications also emerged from my study, which although qualitative gave me an indication of the age and amount of time that the Internet is used. The above data lacks important information such as non-verbals; emotions and feelings during the times the Internet was used and in which domestic space it was used are not included. However, it still points at an important conclusion. The fact that the computer and the Internet are used mostly by youth between the age of 16 and 24, may mean that they still live with their parents / carers: (This fact still has to be scientifically proven).

So the questions arise: What is the lived experience of these youth and their parents with the use of the Internet at home? What is the lived experience of partners living together under the same room and Internet use? In which domestic space are the family members using the Internet? What type of interaction are they having, or not having, with their parents and other family members? It would have been interesting had the NSO extended its study by including relevant questions which would shed a light on their home experience vis-à-vis the use of Internet. In this regard, I wanted to know why the NSO failed to ask more pertinent questions, like the ones listed above. I communicated my complaint to the NSO representative. The reply of NSO (2013) quoted the European Union regulations and the Mission Statement of the NSO itself. It seems that the NSO is bound by parameters and instruction set by Eurostat, which is the official entity of the European Union which deals with research.

> The ICT Usage in Households and by Individuals Survey is carried out according to the provisions contained in EC Regulation No 808/2004. This framework regulation was in 2012 implemented by EC Regulation number 937/2011.
>
> This document outlines in substantial detail Malta's information obligations within the European Statistics System and ensures that information collected locally is comparable with that of other EU member States.

In most cases data collected under this regulation is of a quantitative nature. The questions suggested by Mr Vella fall outside the scope of this regulation and thus it would be impossible to derive a European comparison for any of these estimates.

Furthermore, NSO is by duty bound to minimise the burden imposed on its respondents thus, it is reluctant to add any more to its surveys unless this is strictly necessary. Acting otherwise would go against NSO's own Missing Statement; that is: "To produce efficiently and with minimum burden on respondents high-quality statistics that are relevant, reliable and comparable and to disseminate them in an impartial, independent and timely manner, making them available simultaneously to all users".

(NSO's reply to the researcher's queries 2013)

Although I empathise with the NSO's position with regard to the obligations and instructions of the EU when dealing with statistics, I still maintain that Malta would have gained if the study went deeper. Notwithstanding the fact that one needs to balance any "gains" with the additional costs and discomfort caused to respondents, through the use of qualitative studies; we would have been in a better position to assess the reality, or non-reality, of the effects of the use of the Internet in the home. I do not believe that the EU would stop, or can stop, the NSO from conducting a study like I am suggesting. I am optimistic that in the future, standing regulations will be abolished and new studies will be commissioned using suitable methods and methodologies, which will show the actual realities, in particular, the lived experiences of the use of Internet at home, of European societies, including that of Malta.

2.6.1.1 Computers at Home

Nevertheless, the NSO study proved that every year there has been an increase in the access to computers in the home. An interesting observation is the fact that the increase is in homes where there are children. This correlates with Prenksy (2001) statement, where he maintains that those who are born in the Internet epoch are digital natives.

The new generation of people who were born into the digital age are those who are digital natives. There are many ways to look at the information technology revolution and its aftermath. This is also known as the digital divide. Societies are divided into digital natives and digital immigrants.

This change is being experienced in most developed countries. Nevertheless, it also raises concern. We are living in a time period where people are changing the way how they communicate. On the other hand, when it comes to information, this is the fastest period of technological change affecting all generations of our society.

As I have mentioned earlier most people who learned to use computers at some point in their adulthood are called digital immigrants. The assumption is that digital natives are better at understanding technology, while the assumption is that digital immigrants are usually more confused or unacquainted with it.

There are a variety of ways to view digital natives and immigrants, and this variety is best conceptualized as digital fluency. However, it seems that the purchase of computers is related to the presence of children in families whilst it also appears, but this has to be tested, that the computer has automatically become a fixed item on families' spending agenda. Like the rise in the percentage of those using the computer, the rise in the use of the Internet was reflected by the NSO (2012) research:

Table 2: Households with access to a computer at home						
	2011 %	2011 Raw Count	2012 %	2012 Raw Count	Absolute Change	Percentage Change
Total	76.4	109,744	78.3	108,087	1,657	1.5
Household composition						
One adult without children	43.9	11,853	52.2	11,896	-43	-0.4
One adult with children	83.2	1,829	:	:	:	:
Two adults without children	65.8	23,454	63.1	23,694	-240	-1.0
Two adults with children	92.5	23,840	94.8	22,190	1.650	6.9
Three or more adults without children	90.6	36,858	91.9	37,505	-647	-1.8
Three or more adults with children	96.0	11,910	97.5	11,357	553	4.6
Data not reliable due to small sample representation						

Source: NSO, News Release ICT Usage by Individuals and in Household: 2012:p.2)

As the above table indicates, the rise in the computers in homes where there are two adults and children is very significant. The same can be said about homes where there are three adults and children. The NSO investigated what mobile devices were used for the of the Internet by those who participated on the study: 41.3% declared that they made use of a Mobile Phone or Smart Phone, while 6.46% said they used other handheld devices, like PDA, MP3 layers, and e-book readers. With reference to Tables 2 & 3 it is important to appreciate what each represents. In either case, the figures quoted refer to the number of households that answered "Yes" to the relevant question "access to computer" / "access to Internet" in the households. In either case the figure is presented both in absolute terms and as a percentage of the total number of households of the same composition.

The total number of households is based on the census of population and housing which was last carried out in 2011 and is updated annually by NSO using register data. It follows that the figure varies year on year. If when computing the percentage, the change in the denominator is big enough, it is possible that an increase in absolute terms translates into a decline in percentage terms and vice versa. I am of the opinion, that even here, the NSO failed to provide information about which domestic space the participants used, or used most. We would then know which domestic spaces are most frequented by those using the Internet.

At first, when the computer made its appearance, most families placed it in a central place where it would be accessible to all (Livingstone & Bovill 2001, V.Buhagiar 2013, pers. comm., 6th January). But today, we know that things have changed, because of the introduction of Wi Fi and modem.

Table 3: Households with access to the Internet						
	2011 **%**	**2011 Raw Count**	**2012** **%**	**2012 Raw Count**	**Absolute Change**	**Percentage Change**
Total	75.3	108,179	77.5	106,908	-1,271	-1.2
Households composition:						
One adult without children	45.0	12,143	52.2	11,896	-247	-2.0
One adult with children	76.2	1,674	:	:	:	:
Two adults without children	62.7	22,342	62.1	23,341	999	4.5
Two adults with children	90.8	23,403	93.6	21,906	-1,497	-6.4
Three or more adults without children	90.2	36,707	90.8	37,077	370	1.0
Three or more adults with children	96.0	11.910	97.6	11.369	-541	-4.5
Data not reliable due to small sample representation						

Source: NSO, News Release ICT Usage by Individuals and in Household: 2012:p.2

Of importance also is the frequency of the use of the Internet. Though the data collected by the NSO is rather vague, and lacking important detail, yet, it gives a slight hint about the question of frequency. It would be interesting if the NSO asked, like I did in my study, how many times a day the participants use the Internet. I believe such question would be an eye opener. In spite of my criticism, I admit that nowadays it is difficult to keep track of when individuals are using the Internet because many are connected 24 hours. Maybe, a quantitative study can be made of how many times during the day an individual goes on line with his device. In fact, the University of Bonn, conducted a similar exercise where gadgets were installed in a number of devices, which indicated and kept a record of each time the participants of the sample went online.

Apart from this, it is clear that during the period when the NSO study was conducted – the year 2012, there was a substantial rise in the use of the Internet in the home when compared with the same period in the year 2011.

Table 4: Frequency of Internet Use at Home –Absolute Values				
	2011	**2012**	**Absolute Change**	**Percentage Change**
Total	216,194	216,984	790	0.4
Every day or almost every day	174,629	180,747	6,118	3.4
At least one a week (but not every day)	34,283	27,763	-6,520	-23.5
At least once a month (but not every week)	6,616	7,058	442	6.3
At least once a month (but not every week)	:	:	:	:
Data not reliable due to small sample representation				

Source: NSO, News Release ICT Usage by Individuals and in Household: 2012:p.4

Figure 3: Frequency of Internet Use at Home in Percentage
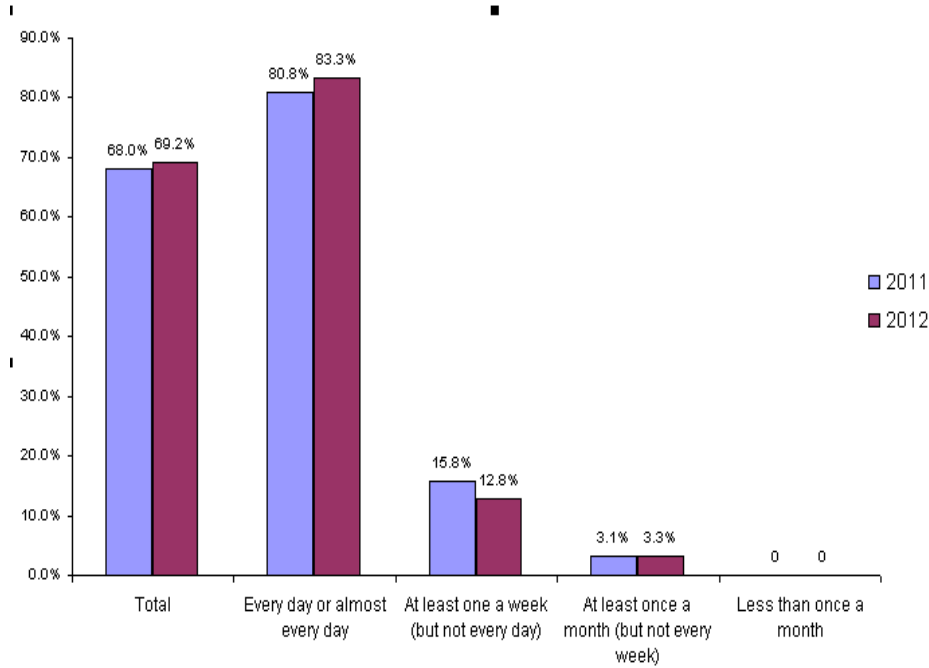
Data not reliable due to small sample representation

Source: NSO, News Release ICT Usage by Individuals and in Household: 2012:p.4

A significant detail is the level of education of those using the Internet. In 2011 and 2012, 98.4% and 98.1% respectively, had a tertiary level of education. Right behind them, at 89.9% during 2011 and 62.5% during 2012, are participants with post-secondary level of education. The latter scored 62.9% in 2011 and 94.3% in 2012 respectively. Although in my study I asked participants about their level of education, it still was difficult to collect this important data in a representative manner. This is because my samples were too small while the NSO sample was based on 1500 household, and, therefore, it gave a clearer indication on this aspect. An obvious conclusion is that a certain level of education is very important in the field of information technology. It may prove difficult for one to advance in this area, unless one has, at least, a secondary level of education (Van Dijk 1999).

Notwithstanding this, I know people who have not had a good basis of education, yet they have mastered the art of computer literacy and even how to use the Internet – via observational social learning (Bandura 1971).

2.6.2 Use of ICT Survey – Malta Communications Authority

Meanwhile, according to another local study run by the Malta Communications Authority (MCA 2012), among 556 students and their parents, it transpired that 76% of students in years 4, 5, and 6, as well as 84% of students in forms 1 and 2, and 82% of youth-students, who are in form 3 and 4, have a computer at the home which has access to the Internet. Moreover, the same study showed that 57% of the students in years 4, 5, and 6, 69% of students in forms 1 and 2, and 72% of youth-students of forms 3 and 4, have a laptop home which has access to the Internet as well.

It is also interesting to note that this same study found that 15% of students in years 4, 5, and 6, 18% of those in forms 1 and 2, and 14% of others in forms 3 and 4, have a tablet, while in general, 98% of the students in years 4, 5, and 6 and 99% of the students in the sample between forms 1 and 4 have a computer or laptop with access to the Internet.

The MCA study proved that access to the Internet is available in the homes of a high percentage of the Maltese. Like the NSO research (2012), the MCA (2012) one, also leaves much to be desired. It fails to give information about where the Internet is used, and even, like what I have asked in my study, whether there are other members of the family near while the Internet is being used. There is also another important lacuna in the MCA (2012) study. The NSO (2012) and the Eurostat studies, confirmed that Form V students (16 years and over), are the ones to use the Internet most. Yet, they have been left out of the MCA report.

I officially asked the MCA why they failed to include this cohort in their study, when according to the NSO, ICT Usage by Individuals and in Households (2012), youth between 16 and 24 years were classified as the cohort using the computer and the Internet the most, at a staggering 99% and 98% respectively. The MCA replied that it was impossible to include the Form Vs. in their study as the study was conducted at the end of the scholastic year, when the Fifth Formers do not attend school regularly:

> Form V students were not included so as to ensure the correct representation of the sample chosen. Since the field work was conducted in the latter parts of the scholastic year, the number of Form V still regularly attending school is significantly low and therefore it would have been extremely difficult to collect data which correctly reflects the behaviour, use and perceptions of this cohort.

(MCA's reply, 2013)

I still feel that this problem could have been overcome, had the research been made at the beginning of the scholastic year, when the Fifth Formers were attending regularly. I hope that in a future study, this cohort is included because as we have witnessed, it is the one which uses the Internet most.

In spite of these shortcomings, the MCA study reveals that 49% of the students in years 4, 5, and 6, 60% of students in forms 1 and 2 and 68% of students in forms 3 and 4, have access to the Internet in their bedrooms. In my opinion, this information is not enough to show clearly, how, from where and when children and youth are using the Internet. I asked the MCA why the question set referred only to the bedroom and did not incorporate other rooms/ domestic space where the Internet is used. It is a well-known fact that today the Internet is used in various rooms, like the kitchen, the bathroom, the living-room, the garden, the roof etc. This has been confirmed through my research.

Nevertheless, the MCA answered that there are two reasons for their choice of question: One is that the bedroom is considered to be the room least supervised by the parents in the house. The MCA wanted to send a message to the parents, that, as far, as possible, access to the Internet should be in a common area for more safety:

> There are two reasons for this. The first reason is that the bedroom is considered as a room in which parents are less likely to be in a position to supervise a child whilst using the Internet. It was (and still is albeit to a lesser extent with the introduction of Wi-Fi) a fundamental Internet safety tip; that of placing devices with Internet connectivity in a room which is likely to see more passers-by such as kitchen.

<div align="right">(MCA's reply, 2013)</div>

The other reason given by the MCA was that their preceding study, conducted in 2010, also contained the same question, about the use of the Internet in the bedroom. It was therefore necessary, according to the MCA, to repeat the question, to be able to compare the findings of 2010 with those of 2012:

> The second reason is that the exact same question was asked in the previous study, ICT use by Minors 2010, therefore this was a good indicator upon which we could measure the impact the BeSmartOnline! campaign has had on this aspect. I completely agree with you that with the proliferation of Wi-Fi connectivity this question is rather futile however, despite this, parents can still limit the access to the Internet from bedrooms.

<div align="right">(MCA's reply, 2013)</div>

The MCA also asked about the duration of the use of the Internet. I asked MCA why they did not also ask which were the most popular times when the Internet is used at home and how long the sessions last. The MCA replied that primarily their study concerned Internet safety, and therefore, their priority was not to see when children used the Internet and how long they did so. According to MCA, this is the prerogative of the parents.

Nevertheless, I just cannot understand how the MCA could sustain that the study, primarily, concerned Internet safety at home, whilst at the same time it did not consider as priority to study the popular times when the Internet is used by children at home, and how long the latter lasts.

> This survey was primarily concerned with assessing Internet safety and related perception. In view of this, the time when children access it is not really an issue we dealt with through the project – very much a parental discretion. Also the issue of overuse of the Internet again is very much dependent on the parent's discretion – for some people it could be 2 hours for other it could be 5. Therefore through this question we wanted to understand if parents think their children are overusing the Internet – irrespective of the trash hold parents use to assess this overuse.

> > (MCA's reply 2013)

The last question I asked MCA dealt with the fact that children and parents were not asked if there were other persons near them, like relatives, siblings or parents, and if so, whether they communicated with them at the same time they were using the Internet. I am of the opinion that this question is important as the information gleamed will give an inkling of how Maltese families are living this experience.

In their answer the MCA, among other things, said that while they were aware why I would include that question, it was not the intent of their research. Still, they understand the probability that the use of the Internet can be infringing on family time:

> To answer this I will make reference to your previous argument. Today the Internet can be accessed from various rooms within the house but also outside. I think if parents think they are in a position to supervise their children 24/7, especially elder children in possession of a Smartphone, they are alluding themselves. I appreciate the objective of your research and I also appreciate your argument that the Internet may be stealing precious time families could spend physically together however, this was not the intent of our research.

> > (MCA's reply 2013)

Still, the MCA research asked both students and parents if these same students used the Internet at least twice a week. I think this is a rhetoric question whilst it does not give a true picture of the situation. Notwithstanding this, the answers given by the parents were quite close to those given by the students. In fact, students in years 4, 5, and 6, scored 70% in the question, while their parents scored 78%. There was unanimous agreement between students of forms 1 and 2 and their parents, both of whom scored 94% on the question. The results of students and parents were not the same in the last sample. In fact, there was a slight discrepancy between students of forms 3 and 4 and parents, because they scored 91% and 99% respectively in the question asked.

Another important data that emerged from the MCA (2012) research tackled the issue of whether parents thought their children spent too much time using the Internet. 69% of parents of students in years 4, 5, and 6, maintained that their children did not overuse the Internet, 13% agreed that their children used the Internet for a long time, while 15% would not commit themselves to the question. Answering the same question, 48% of parents of students attending forms 1 and 2 said, that their children did not use the Internet extensively, 33% think that in reality their children spend much time on the Internet, while 18% were neutral in their answer. Finally 34% of parents of students in forms 3 and 4, were of the opinion that their children did not spend that much time on the Internet, while 45% agreed that their children used the Internet for long periods of time. The last 19% took a neutral position in their answer to the same question.

As I have already mentioned briefly, according to the NSO (2012) and the MCA (2012) researches, participants used the Internet for various reasons, principally, for social networking research related to school, playing games, downloading music and films, shopping and paying bills over the Internet, to mention but a few.

What emerged from these researches, and up to certain extent, what emerged also from this study, is the fact that 93.6% of those who participated in the NSO (2012) research, use the Internet for communication, while nearly 90% of form 3 and 4 students use it for social networking MCA (2012). This may lead one to deduce that many tend to keep contact with friends on Facebook or Twitter, eliminating the need to go out and meet them, but at the same time, keeping contact with them. For instance, two young people, I lately met, reiterated what I have been constantly hearing that: if they do not use Facebook regularly, they feel they are missing out, as they will be up to date with their things as their friends. This is an interesting phenomenon and merits a study by itself.

On the other hand, it is also interesting to know how parents feel when children spend hours on the Internet. Although the MCA (2012) research gives information elicited from a quantitative study, about whether parents think that their children spend too much time on the Internet, the report is not enriched by the expressions of non-verbals that can only be experienced by stories resulting from qualitative studies. An example of this, which can be experienced in a qualitative study, and which shows what is really happening, is the case where the mother or father may be undergoing problems with family time when he or she, brings home work from the office and works on his / her computer far into the night. Another case in point may be the emotions of parents who see their children using the Internet till the early hours. A qualitative study is therefore important, as it brings out the feelings and emotions of the participants vis-à-vis with the use of the Internet at home.

2.6.3 Internet Use in Household and by Individuals: 2012 Eurostat

Although the focus of my study was the use of the Internet in Maltese homes, I thought it was important to take a glance also at the study commissioned by the European Union through Euro Stat, which incorporates similar data from all member states. Malta, like other member states, is in duty bound to pass on to Eurostat the information collected by NSO about various topics. Among these studies of Eurostat, there is the one I have already referred to: Internet Use in Households and by Individuals. This study gives a holistic picture of what is happening in this sector in the European Union, as well as in each member state. The latest Eurostat (2012) research (During the Research Period) shows that, the great majority of households, and individuals, have access to and use the Internet. Moreover, 60% of the individuals in the European Union make use of the Internet daily.

Another snippet of information relates the possibility of using the Internet in various places without the need of fixed cable lines. This has become possible through mobile devices, like smart phones and tablets, devices which are very popular with the young. In fact, 60% of youth in the European Union states, aged between 16 and 24, uses the Internet frequently, especially mobile devices.

In a nutshell, the same conclusions reached by NSO (2012) research were being confirmed by other European member states. Here also, in the Eurostat research, like in the reports of NSO (2012) and MCA (2012), important items were missing. The Eurostat report did not give information about the length of time spent on the Internet, which rooms were mostly used and whether there were any other persons present during the use of the Internet. Hence, similar to what I have done with both the NSO and the MCA, I posed the question to Eurostat about the reason why these details were not included in the research.

The reply, was mainly that they are very cautious about the questions they ask and their research was conducted as commissioned by the European policies.

> The content of the Eurostat surveys on ICT usage in households and by individuals corresponds to European policy demands and has to cover various topics such as place and frequency of internet use, activities done, online purchasing, e-government interaction, internet security etc.. The detailed information requested by you was not demanded and there are no plans to include them in the future. Please note that the number of questions and items in the annual questionnaires is restricted to keep the response burden at adequate level.

(Eurostat's reply, 2013)

Nevertheless, the Eurostat gave important data about the use of the Internet, particularly that 73% of individuals in the European Union used the Internet during 2012.

The report also states that about 1/3 of the individuals made use of the Internet through mobile devices in places away from the home and their work of place. Moreover, the research made known that during 2012, the proportion of households within the European Union which could access the Internet, reached 76%. This was a 6% rise over the year 2010. In addition, 72% of the households in the European Union have access to broadband at home.

Even here, when compared to 2010, there was a rise of 11% points. Access to the Internet, however, varied in the EU countries. Some states have 90% access to the Internet; examples are Denmark, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Sweden, which are at the forefront. Other countries like, Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece, have 55% of access to Internet in their respective households. The Eurostat statistics say that, between 2006 and 2012, there has been a decrease of individuals who have never used the Internet. In 2006, 42% of individuals did not use the Internet while in 2012 the figure went down to 23%. There was not the same significant decrease between the years 2011 and 2012; the proportion of non-users went down from 24% to 23% only.

The majority of those who used the Internet during the period under study, used it to communicate via e-mails and social media; they also used it to seek information about goods and services, listened to / or read the news and used it for banking purposes.

2.6.4 Main Findings: NSO (2012), MCA (2012), & Eurostat (2012)

To conclude this section related to the research conducted by the NSO (2012), the MCA (2012) and Eurostat (2012), respectively, in the following section I recapitulated the main findings of these studies:

2.6.4.1 National Statistics Office

- There was a significant rise in the access to computers and the Internet in homes between 2005 – 2012.

- Youth between 16 and 24 years were those who used the computer and the Internet most during 2012. There were percentage rises when compared to 2011, reaching 99% for computer use and 98% for Internet use.

- There was a clear and significant indication that the use of the Internet is tied to the level of education.

- There has been a rise in the percentage rate of computers in homes, especially in homes where there are children.

- There has also been a rise in mobile devices.

- 77.5% of Households in Malta and Gozo had access to the Internet

- 83.3% of Internet users used the Internet daily

- 93.6 % used Internet to communicate

- 91 % used Internet to access information

- 70.1%, used Internet for other online services

- 68.5 % used Internet for entertainment.

2.6.4.2 Malta Communications Authority

- A high rate of the students interviewed had access to the computer and mobile devices with access to the Internet

- Internet usage continues to increase with spilling of tables, games consoles and mobile devices

- Use of social networking is on the rise even amongst the very young

- A high rate of students with account /profile on Facebook

- A high rate of students who have access to the Internet in their bedroom

- A high rate of students who said they used the Internet at least twice a week.

2.6.4.3 Eurostat

- 73% of individuals in the European Union used the Internet in 2012.

- The proportion of households in the European Union who has access to the Internet reached 76% during 2012. When compared to 2010, it is clear that there is a rise of 6 percentage points.

- 72% of households in the European Union have access to broadband at home. Even here there is a significant rise when compared to 2010, in fact an 11 percentage point rise.

- One third of individuals use the Internet through mobile devices from different places away from the home and the work place.

- 60% of individuals in the European Union use the Internet daily.

- 60% of youth in the European member states, aged between 16 and 24, use the Internet frequently, especially through mobile devices.

- There was a decrease in the proportion of individuals who used the Internet between the years 2006 and 2012.

- The majority of those who used the Internet during this period, used it to:

  - Communicate via e-mails and social media.
  - Seek information for goods and services.
  - Listen and watch the news.
  - Access baking operations

2.7 Digital Divide

I believe that in today's scenario, a person who is computer illiterate faces difficult situations. This goes to show that it is practically impossible for any person who is not familiar with Information Technology, thus falling under the concept of Digital Divide, to cope with change, and this, more often than not, leads to the person lagging behind in society and in personal achievement:

> There are several dimensions to the digital divide: the social divide, the gap between the information-rich and information-poor nations, the global divide, the gap between industrialized and developed countries, the democratic divided, the gap between those who use Internet for civic participation and those who are passive consumers of internet services.

(Steve 2003, p 138)

I shall not be delving deeply into this aspect, since this would necessitate a specialised study, yet it is important to make a reference to it when taking into consideration the continuous development that is occurring within the Information Technology sector. Hence, one has to analyse the experience of those who do not use computer and the Internet. I am convinced that a study about those who do not use computer or the Internet will yield a totally different picture from this study. I would welcome such a study in the future as it would give us a new perspective of life, that of those who do not use information technology. Eventually, there could be an interesting analysis of these two experiences: those who use information technology and those who do not. I admit, I am very tempted to do this study, once I finish the present one. In the next section, I am going to give a general outline of the literature that focuses on different interpretations of the use of the Internet.

2.8 Internet Use: the Cartoonist perspective

The aspects, of how the use of the Internet is being experienced, have resulted in a number of caricatures, in particular the ones by the internationally famous artist Randy Glasbergen (2013). Through his art, Glasbergen has managed to give a number of first class interpretations of the lived experience of Internet use. In a very simple, yet significant and subtle way, Glasbergen has succeeded to describe, how the use of the Internet, might be experienced by the users and those around them. Without being bombastic, Glasbergen wants to pass a number of messages through his caricatures.

To reach his aims, he draws episodes, based on "real" every day circumstances and turns them into salient caricatures. These caricatures need no profound thought to understand and interpret them. Nevertheless, with his artistic expressions, Glasbergen manages to give them a noticeable twist, to enhance his messages that, according to his opinion, Internet use is taking over.

In Figure 4 Glasbergen is referring to a lived experience, where parents are "calling" their children via Internet, to come down from their respective rooms to eat. This is something that I have significantly experienced in this study. I recall, an instance were a colleague of mine chatting with her husband on Facebook, (both at home) asked him to prepare "a nice cup of tea".

Figure 4: The Internet at Home Randy Glasbergen
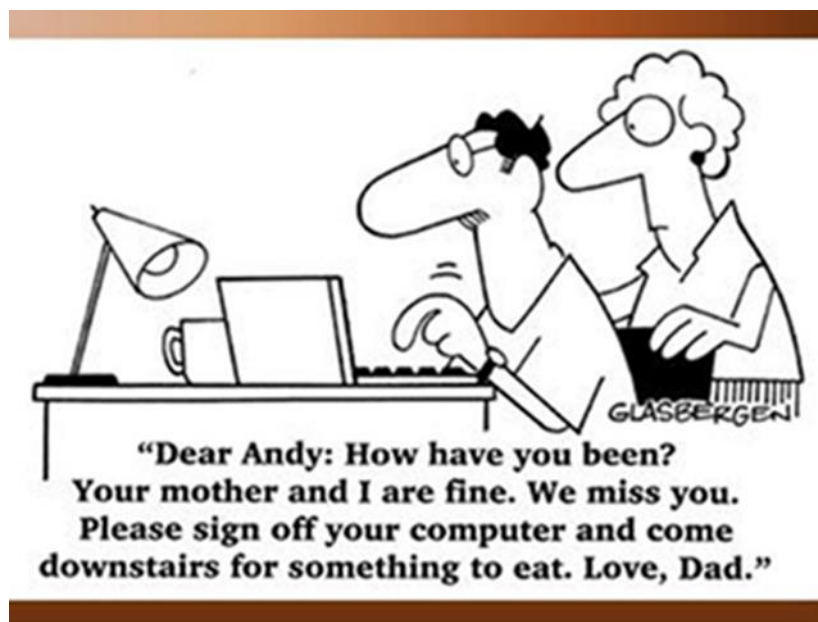
Source: Randy Glasbergen (2013)

What Glabergen left out in his comments, is something noteworthy: when the children or other members of the family come to eat, some of them carry on using the Internet even while eating. Parents are constantly complaining to me about this situation over which they seem to have lost control, as some of them add. This has also been saliently elicited in this study.

Glasbergen presents us with another interesting experience. In Figure 5, Glasbergen manifests a couple who are both using their respective computer /laptop in bed. Many interpretations can be given to this situation, just as Galsbergen did, but, the fact remains that a number of people use the Internet when in bed, like quite a few participants in my study told me. The same participants shared that they generally use the Internet to read books through Kindle, to access Facebook or Twitter and to watch films which they have downloaded.

I must add that some participants expressed their disappointment that their respective partners select to use the Internet in bed. Some were even constrained to compromise not to aggravate the situation.

Figure 5: The Internet at Home Randy Glasbergen

"Not tonight. Didn't you get my email?"
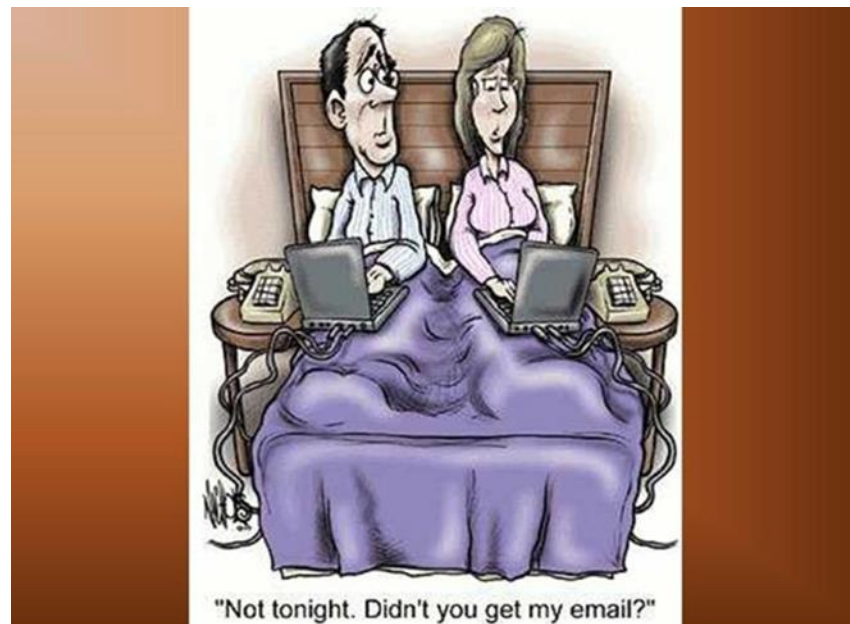
Source: Randy Glasbergen (2013)

These caricatures present a touch of "reality" of what is happening in the home environment. Yet I also found that in some homes, the respective families plan their life in such a way that the Internet help them to organise their family dynamics. More so, these same participants saw it as instrumental in helping them reach the fullness of their potential, like Miller & Slater (2000) also found. However, the latters' ethnographic research is more interesting because it gives detailed accounts of how the people of Trinidad positively welcomed and experienced the use of Internet. Miller & Slater managed to analyse the economic, social, political and particularly, the religious aspects of the effect of information technology in Trinidad:

> We found very little negativity or technophobia…….. More people were concerned with whether Internet media provided effective or appropriate means to pursue practical projects; and they were concerned to discover what was new or specific about this new set of technologies and practices, given that the Internet appeared to have a huge and inevitable place in their future.

(Miller & Slater 2000, p.6)

Similar to the "natives", as Prensky(2001) calls those who have been born at the time of technological development, the people of Trinidad have accepted quickly this change and have acted positively by taking advantage of this development to carry on with their lives, or better still, to ameliorate the conditions of their lives. In a nutshell they have accepted the Internet in a natural way. When speaking directly about families, Miller &Slater (2000), maintain that this novelty in technology has strengthened the styles of life already established, but now have become easier:

> The Internet – specifically email- allows the kind of mundane, constant, and taken-for-granted daily contacts that enables Trinidadians once again to live in families of the kind they see as natural, to be involved in active parenting and mutual support, despite the diasporic conditions that had earlier been making this impossible.

(Miller & Slater 2000, p.11)

In contrast to Kraut's (1998) early studies, where he found that greater use of the Internet has been associated with declines in communication with family members, declines in the size of a person's social circle ….and increases in depression and loneliness, both Galea (2012) and Miller & Slater (2000) disagree with his findings.

However, in his later studies Kraut (2001) found a completely different scenario:…. 'the sample generally experienced positive effects of using the Internet on communication, social involvement and well-being'.

In addition, Mesch (2006) shared similar negative views to Kraut's 1998 findings: "Frequency and type of Internet use are negatively related to family time and positively related to conflicts, yielding a low overall perception of family cohesion……whilst existing research literature on the impact of computer technologies on the family is very limited" (Mesch 2006, p.01).

Undoubtedly, controversy and disagreement occur in every field of study. In this section, I have tried to analyse and interpret the different perspectives expressed by a number of thinkers on the subject. Without giving the impression that I am taking the middle road, it has become clear to me that the experiences of the families I contacted support both views. In parallel, the latter was further confirmed by Galea (2012), Miller & Slater (2000) and Tsatsou (2009).

Hence, one might contend that, throughout its existence, humanity has experienced a complex of technological changes ranging from the use of light and sound communications to wireless devices and instant texting via social networks. In a nutshell, it was into this multifaceted scenario that numerous technological inventions were brought about by their founding fathers, all aimed at ameliorating social contact and communication. In this ever extending technological development, new ways and means of communication, that could easily be connected via the Internet, continue to be discovered and invented:

Smartphone, Ipad, net book, palmtop, laptop, smart book, and PDA, to mention but a few. In the next section, I will analyse the main theoretical perspective of the family which I will correlate with my studies.

2.9 The Family and its Theoretical Perspectives

There are a number of divergences among sociologists who try to explain the social aspect of the family in diverse contexts and the experiences it goes through over the years. At the same time, these thinkers/social scientists try to strengthen their arguments and theories by carrying out research. They are, however, open to criticism from others who look at the family from another perspective or who belong to a different school of thought. For instance, Newman (2008, p.58) says, that these theories, brought about by various thinkers, do not have the aim of showing how things should be, but rather how things are.

It seems that today it makes more sense to talk about doing families rather than being family. This has been stressed both by Finch (2007) and Morgan (1996). They both are of the opinion that modern families place more emphasis on the activities and behaviors of their respective members than on the structure of the family itself. Their arguments focus on the fact that societies today are constructing their own social worlds. However, the experience of having a family can change over time and is deeply ingrained in a person's personal experience Finch's argument is based on the idea that the family environment should be considered as the best environment for its members. This means an environment in which families practice, gain experience and socialise.

In addition to this, the process by which individuals and groups of individuals communicate to each other, that certain activities of theirs constitute "family affairs", tend to be called the process of display. Hence, Finch argues that this process thereby confirms that these relationships are "family" relationships (Finch 2007).

On the other hand, Morgan, explains that the family is important because it provides an adequate environment in which family members can practice their lives. In a nutshell, Morgan describes the family as the unit that poses the practices that each member of the family has special meaning to at different times in their lives.(Morgan 1996).

In reality, Morgan distinguishes between family structure and family practices when he discusses the function of the family. In this regard, Morgan, like Finch (2007), appears to dissociate family from its conventional function.

In addition to this, Morgan (2011) reaffirms that it is challenging to talk about "family" in this setting. When he states that "there is no such thing as the family," he is being quite clear (2011, p.03). He has trouble defining the family because there is no clear line between what constitutes a "marriage," a "family," and a "home."

For Morgan, the family is there to provide a setting in which family rituals can be carried out rather than to make one feel a part of it. In his views, the family, is a collection of family rituals that, at certain points in each family member's life, have a particular significance for that member. He also argues that family practices are insignificant occurrences in daily life that are frequently taken for granted by family members. Additionally, Morgan is adamant that the difference in socioeconomic status plays a role in the establishment of the family, which serves as the foundation for that family's lifestyle. He questions what one expects from a family in terms of duties and obligations whilst he is aware that in a family setting, where social norms and values predominate, the family is responsible for the care commitments of its members.

In this regard, that is why it is important that every theory is thoroughly researched and analysed, to show the reality of facts. On the other hand, research should be based on a theoretical background, which is prepared beforehand so that the findings are interpreted only on facts already known. Hence, in the following sections, I am going to take a look at the principal theoretic perspectives which are of relevance to the family. I will start by dealing with those theories which focus more on social structuring. Eventually, in the last part, I will explain in detail the Symbolic Interaction Approach on which I based this study. In this section, I am going to strengthen my reasons for choosing this approach.

2.9.1 Structural Functionalist Perspective of the Family

It has already been mentioned that among the sociologists who think positively on the functions and duties of the family, one finds the Functionalists. In general, the Functionalists find that co-ordination among various systems of society, brings about an interaction for the common good. In other words, this school of thought is of the opinion that for society to function well, and in the interest of its respective members, so that no one falls behind, it is imperative that all work together and all depending on each other. Newman (2008, p.60) explains that the Functionalists believe that various structures of society must work together in harmony, so that the respective societies can function as they should and as it is expected of them. For this purpose, each person always plays several roles (being for instances, a husband, and a father and a teacher, and a member of a band-club, etc.) so that like mechanical engine, all the different components work in union.

Likewise, citizens function together in a community or a stable society. Durkheim (1893) and others, Murdock (1949) and Parsons (1955), explain that if the structures of society do not function perfectly, and if members of society do away with their values and norms, a society without values, a norm less society (anomie) is created which will finally result in instability and chaos (Slattery 1992; Steel et al 2012; Newman 2009).

According to these sociologists, it is unthinkable for society to function as it should, without the structure of the family, among other requisites. The Functionalists convincingly believe that the family has an important role to play, which, together with other social agencies, prepare tomorrow's adults to acquire social skills, norms and values.

It is a perspective that sees all the social agencies collaborating with each other in total harmony, like body organs do. "This co-ordination will eventually result in responsible and mature adults who take an active part in society by contributing their own efforts as needed" (Bilton et al 2002, p.232).

Though this is an ideal picture of how society should function, it is pertinent to point out that not all members of society are ready and willing to co-operate as they are expected to and should. The Functionalists believe that, in the eventuality of disagreement, where some members will not pull their weight, society will be threatened and therefore pre-agreed sanctions should be imposed by the same society so that it should continue to function as normally as possible (Steel et al 2012; Newman 2009; Nock 1992, p.12; Taylor et al 1997; p.235).

Among the most known sociologists who promoted this school of thought on the family, one finds George Peter Murdock (1949) and Talcott Parsons (1955). The latter focused mostly on the modern family in industrialised societies while Murdock considered the family from an anthropologist perspective.

In fact, in his research, Murdock analysed about 250 societies. His findings revealed that, though there were differences in how members were related to each other, in all societies he studied, he found some form or other of a family, Murdock (1949). He maintains that the family has four important functions in a human's life, and, they are all important. Furthermore, society cannot exist without them:

> In the nuclear family, or its constituent relationships, we thus see assembled four functions fundamental to human social life - the sexual, the economic, the reproductive and the educational. Without provision for the first and third, society would become inexistent: for the second, life itself would cease: for the fourth, culture would come to an end. The immense social utility of the nuclear family and the base reason for its universality, thus begin to emerge in strong relief.

<div align="right">(Murdock 1949, p.10)</div>

Parsons (1949), on the other hand, says that the pre-Industrial Revolution family lost, or better still, modified many of the roles it played. As has already been mentioned, most of these duties and functions were taken over by other social institutions. Like Murdock, Parsons gives particular attention to the most important functions of the family and says that they are irreplaceable. He believes that the family has two special functions, which cannot be delegated to others and which only the family can perform well.

Parsons considers as crucial the role of the family as the first educator of children; this role should come first and foremost. In the family environment, children are reared and given norms and values as is expected of them by the society in which they live. Parsons emphasises the fact that the family prepares the children for stability in life by helping them to form a personality that will be necessary for them in their future lives, by showing them how to act according to the norms and values of society. Parsons sees that the family ambience is ideal and necessary for the children to be taught skill which will eventually lead them to have strong healthy personalities.

The other function which Parsons gives particular importance to, is related to the support, serenity and feeling of safety which the family provides to its members in emotional and stressful periods of their lives. Nowadays, much more than before, life throws great challenges which bring about tensions and high emotions.

Here Parsons sees the family as giving the support badly needed by its stricken members. As a result of this, the family is more stable and functions better. This sociologist also maintains that the nuclear family is the best social agency which can capably do sterling work in an industrialised society. The family gives the first push to the children while other specialised institutions like schools and training agencies will carry on with the formation of children and young people.

Parsons (1955) looks on these agencies as complementing what the family started. This research attempted to analyse if this role of the family, as explained by Parsons, is being threatened, or otherwise, because of the far reaching impact of information technology.

2.9.2 Opponents to the Functionalist Perspective of the Family

A disparity in thought by different sociologists is to be expected. The Functionalists have their detractors, who criticise the fact that they only consider the positive aspects of the functions of the family and completely ignore the disadvantages. Both Feminism and Marxism promote the conflict theory. They maintain that relationships among the members of a family are dominated by males, and, consequently, the family is not free as the Functionalists believe.

The Functionalists are also criticised for ignoring the fact that there may be other members of society who have not had a positive experience of family life. It is not always the case that family life is ideal for all, as the Functionalist assume.

Moreover, the latter have faced negative reactions about the way they have not researched about alternative types of families, like the case of the Kibbutz in Israel. In these societies, different members take care of other members of the same community irrespective of whether they are relatives or not (Steel et al 2012; Newman 2009; Taylor et al 1997, p. 236). In addition, Rayman (1981) maintains that these experiences are realties in the context of conscious and organisational societies:

> Certain societies and communal experiments continue to offer the promise of new modes of social organisation and social consciousness. The Israeli Kibbutz has been one of those experiments.

(Rayman 1981, p. 3)

2.9.3 Conflict Perspective of the Family

It is pertinent to appreciate that the conflict theories originated from Karl Marx's ideology. His ideas are closely connected with the concept of class distinction in capitalist societies. As Nock (1992, p.10) aptly explains, Marx maintains that while capitalists abuse workers, the family is an accomplice to this and compounds this abuse, by providing children and offering support to fathers, so that the Capitalist System marches on and flourishes. According to Marx, all components of the Capitalist System: education, law, the Church and also the family, are all approving this process. In fact, he compares the relationship between husband and wife with the relationship between the employers and their respective employees.

On the other hand Engels (1884) cited in Nock (1992, p.10), very earnestly compares the role of a woman married to one man (monogamy) to that of a prostitute who is forced to prostitute herself with her husband to at least guarantee support and safety, for herself and her children.

This school of thought, contrary to the Functionalists, looks upon social institutions as plotting to push forward the Capitalist System, through norms and values benefitting only the few.

It is no wonder that the conflict theorists criticise the Functionalists who believe that the value consensus is the basis of society, and therefore society itself works for the interest of everybody. The conflict theorists think otherwise; they contend that the family is part of a Social Superstructure and, thus, forms part of a number of institutions whose main aim is to promote the needs of the Infrastructure System.

These sociologists hold that the scope of the Social Structure is to create divisions among the different group, while promoting inequality. They say that social order is not the result of social harmony, but the result of dominance and power.

In short, this school of thought looks at society more in terms of conflict, than as a society where everyone contributes so that there is harmony (Steel et al 2012; Taylor et 1997, p. 238; Newman 2008, p.61).

2.9.4 Feminist Perspective of the Family

More recently, other groups have joined the fray, also projecting the Conflict Theory. Among them, one finds Feminism, with leftist roots. These are also of the opinions held by the Conflict Theorists as they consider the family as part and parcel of the organisation which furthers the aims of the Capitalist System. Those supporting this school of thought believe that men and women in a family have different experiences and each expect different things from the family they are part of. Engels (1884) cited Newman (2008 p.61) describes the process of the male dominance over the female. He says that woman wielded more power because sexual relationships in groups were casual and without any rules.

So, it seems that the first forms of family were more related to the biological aspect of the mother than of the father, as it was difficult to ascertain who the father was.

When, by time, relationships became more stable, the women became, according to Engels (1884), the sexual property of the male. Considering such concepts, those supporting feminism argue that the way the woman's role in the family is being interpreted, is very much the same way that society interprets the woman's role. Some of those who support feminism comment about the housework done for free by women and the onus of rearing children which falls squarely on their shoulders, while the men are free to dedicate all their time to earn a living. It is only fair to point out, that in many areas women's lot has improved. Still, in various countries, women are still greatly oppressed.

A radical extension of this picture of the family has been referred to by Millet (1970) cited in Taylor et al (1997 p. 240), where she argues that the way society is organised, creates the perfect environment for the male to be able to dominate the female. According to this school of thought, the solution to this problem would be for women to independently build an alternative society to confront patriarchy and bridge the division between the roles of women and men.

More recently, feminists asked for a greater presence and involvement of men in family life, rather than asking for the formation of another society with new or changed families. They believe that more male involvement in the family would benefit the family whilst feasibility is being advocated and promoted in various countries, including Malta (Camilleri-Cassar 2005).

2.9.5 Opponents to Conflict and Feminist Perspectives of the Family

Among the salient criticism that such perspectives receive are related to the economic aspect and its relationship to the functions of the family. In a nutshell, and up to a certain extent, similar to the functionalists approach, conflict theorists and feminism tend to hold that the economic factor plays an important part in the role of the family.

However, they think, contrary to the functionalists, that the role of the family is predetermined by the needs and interests of a Capitalist Society.

Very often, these schools of thought have the tendency to by-pass the positive aspect of the family, and instead focus on the negative perspective, by looking at the role of the family as being an accomplice of the Capital System which functions in the interest of the few to the detriment of the many. They ignore the fact, accepted by the functionalists, that there are families in which the women are content with their lot, that of rearing children and caring for the family (Newman 2009; steel et al 2012; Taylor et al 1997, p. 240).

2.9.6 Social Exchange Perspective of the Family

Similar to the above, this is still another perspective which persistently looks at and analyses the family from the economic social aspect. Proponents of this school of thought promote the concept that human beings are instigated to better their situation and therefore, they do their best to acquire those benefits that may give them satisfaction. The same theorists argue that the same members of the family may be ready to change their relationship with those around them, if they find better experiences which give them greater satisfaction. With this in mind, this research will try to establish whether there is a correlation between the use of Internet and the beginning of off-line relationships by members of the family.

This aspect is the same as that what happens in the context of economic activity, where individuals try hard to make more profits, and, at the same time decrease their expenses (Newman 2008, p.64). Giddens (2000) describes very clearly the process and changes that society goes through and shows how its structures are affected:

> Identifying significant change involves showing how far there are alterations in the underlying structure of an object or situation over a period of time. In the case of human societies, to decide how far, and what ways a system is in a process of change, we have to show to what degree there is any modification of basic institutions during a specific period. All accounts of change also involve showing what remains stable, as a baseline against which to measure alterations.

> (Giddens 2000, p. 632)

In spite of this perspective, according to Coltrane & Collins (2001) not everybody can change the circumstances he/she is going through when and how he/she wants.

It is also impossible, that even though there is a ray of hope for a change, the fact still remains that those involved may not acquire the best deal: "A theory of exchange must also include the structure of the market, the opportunities available to each individual to exchange with others, as well as the line-up of resources that each person on this market has available to exchange with others" (Coltrane & Collins 2001, p. 25). In addition, Tabone (1995), when considering the local context, comments about the fact that the future of the family depends on social changes and the effect such changes have on the family:

> The future of the family depends on an adequate response to the inevitable process of social change. Among the various forms the Maltese family is taking in its transition, one finds a propensity towards both strength and weakness. Some forms enhance fundamental family values, others seem to be drifting away from these values to the detriment of the family.

> (Tabone 1995, p.134)

Nevertheless, Tabone (1995) is conscious of the fact that youth are the sculptors of the family of the future, while being the members of the family most affected by social changes. Tabone is of the opinion that youth cherish the value of the family, and, if they are well directed, they will, in the future, produce families that are beneficial to society.

However, Tabone is aware that social change is a challenge to each and every member of society, as it applies pressure of related and social burdens: "The family is a powerful agent of social, political, cultural, and, even economic change. It is a vehicle for development. The family can also be influenced by the nature and pace of change which exert pressures upon it" (Tabone 1995, p. 2).

However, the social change theory is considered to be lacking in explanation of how individuals identify the characteristics and behaviours that are beneficial to them. The theory does not make it clear how one can further one's aspirations.

Some sociologists, for instance, criticise this theory because they contend that individuals do have the tendency to rationalise when deciding on intimate relationships and family experience (Newman 2008, p.65).

2.9.7 Symbolic Interaction Perspective of the Family

> Humans respond to a classified world, one whose salient features are named and placed into categories indicating their significance for behaviour. In short, humans do not respond to the environment as physically given, but to an environment as it is mediated through symbols - to a symbolic environment.

> (Stryker 1959, p.114).

As already explained in the introduction to this Chapter, this study is guided by the Symbolic Interaction Theory, because it mainly focuses on the action and behaviour of individuals in different contexts. This is contrary to the other perceptions which focus more on social structures. On the other hand, the Symbolic Interaction Theory concentrates mostly on different environments and the ways by which people communicate and act with those around them in these environments, of which the family is one.

Although I could have used other theoretical perspectives as a basis for this study, I realised that they would not have led me to see how the use of the Internet is being experienced by family members in the home environment. In other words, the fact that I wanted to analyse the lived experience of family members in a particular environment – at-home- by different types of families and in a specific context, while using the Internet, made the choice for the Symbolic Interaction Approach an automatic one. This approach analyses and interprets society by taking into consideration the experiences of interactions which are taking place from day-to-day, in various environments, the family being one (Cheal 2002; Newman 2009; Seal 2008).

Besides, this same theoretical direction gives importance to the individual, to the way he / she looks at the world around him / her and how he / she makes sense of it. And that is exactly one of the principal aims of this study – to discover how Maltese families are experiencing the home environment with the use of the Internet and explore how they are making sense of this experience:

> Although all families consist of identifiable statuses, roles and norms, each individual family adapts these structural features to its own everyday experiences. The reality of family life is not fixed and inevitable. It is created, sustained, and changed through the day-to-day interactions that take place among members.

(Newman 2009, p.66)

Undoubtedly, this perspective is the most useful to this research precisely because it explores interactions among members of society and how these interactions are interpreted by the same individuals. George Herbert Mead was the protagonist of this concept. He studied the differences that exist between humans and animals, where, obviously, the former have the ability to think. Mead (1934) gives a clear and concise explanation of humans' capacities to analyse, negotiate, adapt, interpret and even express their emotions:

> To plan consciously and adapt his behaviour according to the situation in hand or the goals he has set himself…..To communicate with others through a wide variety of symbols, the most important of which is language, and interpret the meaning behind what they say, do or indicate in reply…..To be self-conscious; to be aware not only of his own feeling, motives and views but those of others; to be able to take the role of the other and imagine how other people might interpret a particular act or situation and even to imagine how he looks to other people. We all therefore have a self and a self-image.

(Mead 1934 cited Slattery 1992, p. 192)

It is important to take note of Mead's perspective of the family because it analyses how individual members of the family look at their roles and the roles of other members within the family. In other words, Mead (1913, 1934) insists on the fact that human beings have the capabilities of interacting and creating social relationships. Mead holds that communication is the key that produces interaction among members of society. In the light of humanity's innate propensity towards socialising, urges a symbolic character. Seale (2008) explaining Mead, says that humanity's ability to understand and interpret messages sent to someone else by gestures and responses, leads to the creation of interactions and social relationships. In this physiological and psychic impulse regard, this reseach, in particular, attempts to explore Mead's approach on the aspect of communication among family members at home while using the Internet.

For instance, Mead (1913), talks in detail about humans' ability of living someone else's experience by putting himself in his shoes. The aim behind this philosophy is to clarify that, as people living with other, we may be in a better position to anticipate what we are going to say or what other individuals, living alongside us, are experiencing. Mead thinks that this experience is important as it leads people to distinguish between Self and Self–consciousness. To Mead, the aspect of Self is considered as a cognitive and social concept, while he makes a distinction from aspects related to humans' personality.

In simple words, Mead believes that people start understanding themselves and looking at themselves from the so-called perspective of Self, at the very moment they experience interaction with other members of society. In the case of this thesis, the study begins in the family environment where the family member starts having first contact with other family members. In this process of social interaction, the person starts to observe roles and behaviours of other members, while he himself is living the same experiences.

In this way, the individual may better understand and feel what others are going through (Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2012). With this in mind, I felt that if this study is given a theoretic direction based on Mead's philosophy, I would be in a position to interpret well the lived experiences of the participants. In fact, Seal (2008) maintains that Mead succeeded in creating a theoretic aspect which explains that human beings, through their interactions with other members, are capable of internalizing the perception of how others look at them from the outside. That is precisely why I decided to follow this theory which holds that humans' behaviours should be studied by gaining access to their environment; in the case of this study, the environment is the home: "…..social world is best investigated in naturally occurring situations rather than under artificial conditions" (Seale 2008, p. 38).

Nevertheless, it is appropriate to note that although Mead was the founding father of this theory, he wrote nothing more, leaving it to his students to expand on his thoughts. One of them, Herbert Blumer (1986) and I am in complete agreement with him. He believes that the family should be studied from the inside and not from the outside. According to him, members of society themselves should express what they feel and they should do this while living in their natural milieu. In addition to this, Mead (1934), Husserl (1927), and Moustakas (1994) are all of the opinion, that the family lived experience is investigated from the inside rather than the outside.

They contend that individuals within society should express their emotions and do so while interacting with their natural environment. This study aligns with this idea because it offers another way of analysing society, and in the process, it analyses the family. In other words the theory encourages observation of interactions between families in their respective living spaces. Moustakas (1994) himself argues, that the research question has to focus on the study and guides the investigation. Hence it has to be carefully constructed, and each word must be deliberately selected and placed adequately so that it illuminates it. In his words this is a phenomenological process of seeing, thinking and perceiving. Each method is question-related and developed solely to clarify the question, providing a presentation of a phenomenon that is significant, rich, and multi-layered in its texture and meaning.

This research goes along with this idea, as it offers an opportunity of how one can analyse society, and, in so doing, analyses the family, as the theory promotes the observation of interaction among members of the family at their respective contexts/habitats.

For instance, in parallel, Newman (2008) explains, that contrary to the functionalists, whose focus is on marriage and the need for a social system, the Symbolic Interactionists give more importance to the relationship of a couple in the new context of marriage: "From a social action perspective marital roles are not prescribed by the social system, they develop from negotiated meanings during the process of interaction" (Newman 2008, p.65). Besides this, this same picture also pays attention to how the members of the same family discuss their respective roles. This is explained well by Stryker (1959):

> Positions are socially recognised categories of actors, any general category serving to classify persons: father, sergeant, teacher, are positions by this usage, as are playboy, intellectual, black-sheep. The significance of such categories is that they serve to organise behaviour towards persons so categorised……An equivalent assertion is that in attaching one of these position designations to a person we are led to expect certain behaviours from him and we behave towards him on the basis of these expectancies. To the expectations with regard to behaviour attached to a position, the term role is given……

> …….These expectations are social in the same sense symbolic behaviour is always social: the ultimate meaning of the positions to which these expectations apply is shared behaviour. They are social in another and most important sense, namely, that it is impossible to talk about a position without reference to some context of other positions: one cannot talk about the behaviour of a father except with reference to positions of mother, child and so on. Thus every position assumes some counter-position, and every role presumes some counter-role. To use the term role is necessarily to refer to an interpersonal relation.

> (Stryker 1959, p.114)

In this section I gave a general look at some of the principal sociological perspectives which analyse the family and the relationship of its members with the rest of society. Though there are many divergences, yet, all schools of thought agree about the importance of the family vis a vis its respective members.

On one hand, there are sociologists who believe in the importance of the family for society, so that the latter will eventually functions well and remains stable. On the other hand, there are those who look at the family as being an accomplice with a range of socio-economic situations, which "dehumanises" people.

Though these opposing schools of thought have been criticised, they still remain the schools which have done most to promote their ideas about the family. Other schools of thought giving more importance to the individuals in the choices and decisions they make, have also been referred to.

These schools of thought are considered to uphold the concept that human beings, contrary to animals, have the power to think and emotions to reflect. Eventually, they are in a position to create their own habitat.

2.10 Main Findings and Themes that emerged from Literature Review

After that detailed explanation of the studies and literature I have analysed, in this section I am going to list the findings and the principal themes which emerged from these studies and correlate them to my study. Eventually, I will be able to identify which themes were not represented in the mentioned studies. I have studied the methods and methodologies used, and appraised them to find whether they varied or were similar to the one that I was proposing. This exercise served as a backdrop to my study. As I will explain later, the literature I read yielded many findings and themes, which apart from being interesting were consistent. The findings and themes indicated below give important information about the use of the Internet. Such information should be mulled over along with the information and the themes which did not see the light of day and which could be as significant and important as those which emerged.

A look at the following data shows that the findings of the studies are based on the quantitative approach. This means that these findings were not the results of qualitative methods and, therefore, do not include findings related to information about personal lived experiences, enriched by observations, expressions and emotions (non-verbals). On the other hand, there emerged important findings which are difficult to discover through a qualitative study alone.

- **The introduction of television, musical apparatus and, eventually the computer and the use of the Internet in individual room, particularly in the bedroom.**

- **A yearly increase of computers, and access and use of the Internet in Maltese homes and those in European member states.**

- **Significant use of the Internet by youth between the ages of 16 and 24.**

- **A high percentage of those who use the Internet have a tertiary level of education. They use the Internet mostly to study and as social media.**

- **There is only a small percentage of individuals who have a low level of education. The latter use the Internet mostly for games and as social media.**

- **A high percentage of youth have a laptop with access to the Internet in the home. There is also a high percentage of youth who have mobile devices with access to the Internet.**

The next data shows important literary information which indicates the negative use of the Internet as interpreted by a number of authors. These fall obviously into the category of the sceptics about the effect of the use of the Internet on the users.

- **The Internet minimises social circles, decreases interaction and may even be instrumental in bringing about social isolation.**

- **The Internet has considerably hindered closer relations between parents and children and between siblings.**

- **Young people's lifestyles are dependent on, and organised around Internet.**

- **It is still unclear how much sociability is taking place in such electronic networks, and what are the cultural effects of such a new form of sociability.**

- **There is lack of sleep due to the use of the Internet. People are not having a good night's sleep as they used the Internet during sleep time. Other studies confirm that some of the Internet users, before going to sleep, check Facebook, Twitter or e-mails, as they are afraid of missing out on things.**

- **Constant headaches, may occur as a result of spending too much time at a computer.**

Contrary to the themes and findings of the preceding data, the one that follows shows the positive aspect of interpretations given by respective authors. This information paints an optimistic picture of the use of the Internet, particularly stressing that it is instrumental in creating interaction among people who use Internet:

- **Families gathered together in one room to follow the radio or television and Internet. Hence, the Internet has considerably strengthened the nuclear family, allowing closer relations between parents and children and between siblings.**

- **Barriers of time and space have been broken down. Possible and easy for communication and interaction to exist among those who are physically apart from each other. The Internet, has created opportunities that have hitherto been remote and impossible.**

- **The Internet provides convenient channels to increase social contacts with others. Online interaction facilitated by digital connection creates a situation in which users negotiate their time online with real-life socialising. The spread of social media helps people traverse online and offline social relationships through online interaction.**

The majority of findings and themes emerging from these studies are the result of quantitative studies, and therefore, the information lacks the lived experiences of those who participated in the respective studies; this is the opposite of my findings from this study. Only two studies, those of Miller and Slater (2000) and Galea (2012) are based on qualitative studies. The findings in these studies are interesting while, important themes were also identified, meriting consideration in my study. I based the research problem of this study, on the themes and findings resulting from these later studies. I sought a research question which would help me list findings and themes which were lacking in previous studies, thereby exploring the actual lived experiences of Internet use among family members at home.

The already conducted studies provided important themes and findings which threw a light on how the use of the Internet is being interpreted. Yet, in no study did I find enough detailed information about my key research question.

As I will be explaining in the following Chapter, the basis of my study is built on a qualitative study, incorporating also quantitative study through the use of Time Diaries. I constructed research tools and methodologies similar to those used by Millier & Smith (2000) and that used by Galea (2012), but adapting them to my research.

2.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have focused and reviewed literature which in one way or other is related to the phenomenon of the use of Internet, the family, and the home and therefore, it could help with this research. In the Introduction, I briefly explained that the literature I read focused on two tracks: First I tackled the literature of those in favour of the use of the Internet, and therefore, see it as a means of increasing interaction among those using it. Then I analysed the literature coming for the sceptic camp. These thinkers doubt whether the use of the Internet is being instrumental in increasing communication and interaction among those making use of it.

To confirm this, I also noted down some experiences of friends of mine and relatives who also shared diverse opinions. Some looked at the Internet as a threat to the family and others said they could not imagine living without it.

Among the thinkers whose literature and studies I have consulted, there are: Castells (2006); Van Dijk 1999; Virilio (1995); Denzin (1997); Schmidt & Cohen (2013); Silva (2010); Grixti (2004); Robinson, Kestnbaum, Neustadt, & Alvarez 2000; Kraut et al 2002; Hampton & Wellman 2003; Chizmar & Williams (1996); Kraut et al (1998); Nie, Simpser, Stepanikova, & Zhen (2004); Mesch (2006); Livingstone & Bovill (2001); Redhead (2004);

Galea (2012); Miller & Slater (2000); Attard (2008); Hutchby & Moran-Ellis (2013); Rainie & Wellman (2012) Mills (2014); Abela & Walker (2014) and Whitty (2014) to mention but a few.

Before analysing the literature I read, I have also managed to give a detailed explanation, based on the thoughts of Creswell (2001), about the procedures I adopted to arrive at the academic material I included in my study.

Eventually, to be in a better position to gauge how society started this new experience I also referred to the onset of radio and television in the household. I felt I had to include this experience, as there is a similarity in the reactions and interpretations from different points of views, who expressed their feelings about the impact which information technology has on society. The latter paved the way to explore the experience of the family and information technology, particularly the use of the Internet in the domestic space.

This was enhanced and confirmed by references I made to findings resulting from statistics published by the National Statistics Office, the Malta Communications Authority, the Eurostat and the Internet World Stats. The findings of these official entities of statistics enabled me to find out in a quantitative way how the Maltese, in general, are experiencing the use of the Internet. According to Eurostat, the results were similar to those experienced in other member states in the European Union. To strengthen my analysis of these studies, I asked for, and included, explanations from officials of the NSO, the MCA, and the Eurostat, about shortcomings, in my opinion, in the respective studies.

I enriched this chapter by including some of the caricatures of Randy Glasbergen (2013), through which I showed how with simple drawings, this artist expressed extracts of lived experiences with the use of the Internet. Later on, I referred to the way the barriers of time and space have been broken down by information technology. Particularly I referred to the school of thoughts promoted by Van Dijk (1999) and Virilio (1995). I mainly explained how the latter remained known for his beliefs in time, speed, and technology. In fact, he has a tendency to be controversial when referring to technological development.

Later I focused on the study of Galea (2012) and that of Miller & Slater (2000), since their studies are relevant to this study. I think that both these studies are of particular and significant importance. With regards to the latter, I highlighted the fact that the researchers managed to focus on the positive experience of a society in an island in the Caribbean which is faced by the novelty of the Internet. In fact, it was evident that Miller & Slater, succeed in demonstrating how the people involved made good use of the technology development and the Internet in everyday life. Moreover, Galea (2012), in her study explored the same occurrence, though from a different angle. In particular she shows how thanks to the Internet, many of her colleagues in an international group, have succeeded to keep in contact with each other, as though there were no barriers of time and space. I have also analysed the way she looks at this communication as a real one rather than a remote one. In fact, she asserts that the interaction among her colleagues is such that their communication is not only related to the work of their group, but includes familiar and personal matters. I have focused on the common traits and findings that both Galea (2012) and Miller & Slater (2000) found in their research and applied them to my study. I built on the experiences of these studies by referring also to literature which throws a light on the experience of Technological Development and Social Change, and the experiences that these bring with them, together with Technological Determinism.

I referred particularly to the classic studies of Castells (1996), through his exceptional publication "The Rise of Network Society". Quoting real examples, Castell manages to give a wide interpretation of how society is coping with the epoch of technological information. Whilst he interprets technological information development, he clearly shows the importance to be given to this experience of a society surrounded by the use of the Internet. Castells insists on the need of analysing the changes in society as a result of technological development.

This chapter would not have been complete had I not referred to the sociological perspectives of the family, particularly those expressed by Engels (1884), Burgess (1926), Mead (1934), Murdock (1949), Parsons (1955) and Giddens (1989/1999), to mention but a few. Moreover, I have also referred to the preoccupations of social thinkers about the need and importance of precautionary measures to be taken to safeguard Internet users, in particular children and youth from dangers associated with the abuse of the Internet. In the next chapter, I will explain the choices I have made regarding the methods and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

> Exploring of the process of meaning making, requires a method that allows space for an explication of the dynamic relationship between the technological artefact, wider culture, the technology's positioning within the public and private spheres, and its doubly articulated biography. Research with a focus on the domestic context has involved ethnographic observations, interviews, diary keeping and maps of domestic space.
>
> (Berker et al 2005, p.7)

As it has already been explained in previous chapters, similar to other countries, Malta is going through a digital age which is constantly developing and, consequently, facing new challenges with all the advantages and disadvantages that they present. Therefore, this research has been undertaken in an effort to explore the lived experiences of individual members within Maltese families while using the Internet at home. In a nutshell, it was aimed at developing an understanding of daily experiences at home, in particular, how family time is structured and lived within the context of Internet use. The fact that in Malta there is a dearth of in-depth studies on this matter, spurred me on to proceed with this research.

This study concentrates on the lived experience of Internet use among Maltese families at their respective homes. Whilst it is true that Internet studies lend themselves to post-structural modes of critique (Sant 2013), because the Internet flows everywhere, I have adopted a structural approach.

Although I am aware of these centre-less flows, where indeed, one can be closer to someone in the United States of America, than someone in the same building, my emphasis is on interaction within the physical boundaries of the households in relation to the Internet, which has an existence that goes beyond physical boundaries. Therefore, I focused on a phenomenological approach with aspects of narrative-ethnography. Although I am aware of the fact that I could have used one methodological approach, I thought it would be appropriate if I were to adopt the mentioned two qualitative aspects all together. Besides all this, these two approaches are very close to each other to such a degree that, I dare say, they overlap each other.

By using these approaches in this study I was able to explore the experience of families through the personal stories recounted by members themselves. In addition, I have also managed to elicit important information through the data collected by the use of Time Diaries. The right choice of Research Design enabled me to analyse, not only how time is structured in the home with regard to the Internet, but also to evaluate how time is being experienced by the participants themselves, both individually and as a family.

These stories helped me to understand better how the experience of the use of the Internet has evolved in Maltese homes, and to appraise its impact on the members of the family. Besides all this, I thought it was opportune to interview a group of professional experts who could shed another light on the use of the Internet at home. I interviewed two psychiatrists, three family therapists (psychologist), a sociologist, a philosopher, a moralist, an architect, and an archaeologist. Eventually, with my interpretation guided by theoretical background, aided by the perception of professional experts I interviewed, I was in a position to analyse this study.

In parallel to some of the participants' views, all professional experts sustained that the use of the Internet at home is creating conflicts among family members – conflicts between spouses and between parents and children. It was not all doom and gloom, because other aspects of the matter came out which gave this study a new twist.

Besides all this, I wanted to find out where in the house the Internet is mostly used: In addition, I wanted to see whether Maltese homes opted for any structural change due to the use of information technology. I wanted to explore how the dynamics of family life at home are being lived by the Maltese people. In a nutshell, weighing up all the information, I came to the conclusion that the best way of reaching the aims and objectives of this study was by structuring a Research Design mainly based on a qualitative approach.

Through applied tools and techniques I could collect the exposed data and interpret and analyse it through a thematic analysis approach. From my observations, since the beginning of this study, alongside the participants' stories of their day-to-day lived experiences of Internet use in their natural habitat, the home, I was in a better position to make an in-depth analysis.

As I have already explained, this approach allowed me to interpret and describe the participants' experiences. Therefore, in the section dedicated to the rationale for using a qualitative research, I am going to explain in more detail why I have opted for a phenomenological approach with aspects of narrative-ethnography. Subsequently, I will explain what the Research Question of this study is and how I decided upon it.

Later on, in the section dedicated to the rationale for sampling, I will explain the sampling procedure I adopted, the choice of sample size and the sample population. I will include the profile of the participants and clarify how I found my participants and my choice of a balanced location of residence. Since I also wanted to listen to the experience of professional experts with regards to the impact they think that Internet produce in Maltese homes, I will also talk about the choice of sample of expert participants whom I interviewed. I will then give a detailed explanation of the methods I used.

These include research instruments and techniques which I employed in the field. In another section, I will deal with the recording of data and the process of its analysis as well as bring out the details which emerged from the pilot study I conducted.

These sections will then be followed by an explanation of the limitations of the research, an explanation behind the choice for using a narrative style of writing for this study and the ethical procedures I have followed. Therefore, in this chapter I will explain the Theoretical Framework I followed in this study. In a nutshell, I will be focusing on the process based on a theoretical direction which led me to choose the suitable methods and methodology.

3.2 Methodological Shortcomings

Exploratory investigations certainly have some drawbacks, but their main drawback is that they rarely offer satisfying answers to research issues, even though they can suggest possible answers and point researchers in the direction of potential research methodologies. Because the individuals researched in exploratory research may not be representative of the greater population of interest, exploratory studies themselves are rarely conclusive. In other words, the sample is probably not representative.

Even this study has limitations, just like every other study. This kind of research has limitations in terms of population representation. It takes a lot of time to ensure that a sample is representative.

The study's validity and reliability may potentially be limited as a result of the qualitative methodology. Since the final analysis heavily depends on the researcher's interpretation, there is a chance that qualitative studies will be biased by the researcher's personal opinions. In this case, the study becomes a mirror of the researcher's viewpoint rather than providing accurate information. When dependability is an issue, a qualitative study may also have limitations. There is a chance that if a similar study is carried out and the results are compared to see if they are the same, they may be different.

The fact that a portion of it is based on the longitudinal approach is another restriction. This method is time-consuming and costly, and there is a great likelihood that the participants will decide to cease taking part for a variety of reasons. If this occurs, some of the data is lost. As with other approaches, data can also be biased if participants find themselves under scrutiny. Then they can change their attitude or stop participating.

3.3 Theoretical Framework of the Study

In any study conducted, it is important to give a clear and adequate explanation of the theoretical direction the study will be taking. In other words, a clear display of the Theoretical Framework of the research is of paramount importance. This display should be structured according to the methods and methodologies used in the research.

The study that I conducted was aimed at exploring a phenomenon that is directly involved with human experience in a domestic context. The Theoretical Framework of this study, therefore, as I have already mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, needed the application of one of the two traditional methods and methodology – Qualitative Research

> Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explores a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.   (Creswell 1998, p. 15)

It was therefore imperative that the analysis of the experiences of the use of the Internet in the home and its effect on the interaction of the members of the same home be theoretically analysed in line with respective school of thought. While this analysis was principally enlightened by the interpretation of the participants, it was enhanced by my observations, interpretations and analysis as a researcher. Briefly, the main theoretical direction of this study is an interpretative phenomenological one (Smith et al 2011, Seale 2008, Hughes & Hans, 2001, Creswell 1998, Moustakas 1994; Wolcott 2001) and hence, it was necessary for the body of knowledge explored to be analysed through an inductive approach.

3.3.1. Qualitative Interpretative Phenomenological Approach

> The ways in which the Internet in family life have been studied are limited and problematic. In general, most reports about the use of computers are based on large-scale studies using self-report, cross-sectional data from one household member. The range of methods used to study the Internet and families need to be broader. For example, qualitative studies are needed to provide a richer description of the families, processes, and context surrounding Internet use.
>
> (Hughes & Hans, 2001, p.20)

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Generally, for a study to be a representative one, the tendency, is to use a quantitative approach. But, as I have already mentioned, and this is also substantiated by Hughes & Hans (2001), these types of studies do not give the whole picture; they especially do not portray the emotions of the participants and the observations made by the researcher. Notwithstanding this, quantitative studies give figures from which various statistics emerge, for example: what type of gadgets / devices are used within the domestic space, what type of Internet service they use, (if they have one), the ages of the residents who use the Internet most, and other relevant data (NSO 2013/ 2014; Eurostat 2013; Internet World Statistics 2013).

This type of data can easily be compared and contrasted with similar data at different times. Nevertheless, in the literature I have consulted for this study, I have met with tentative qualitative studies which tried to explore how the use of information technology has been experienced over the years (Attard 2008; Schmidt & Cohen 2013; Debono 2001; Galea 2007; Gatt 2012; Miller & Slater 2000; Nie & Hillygus 2002; Nie et al 2004; Rheingold 2002, 2014).

With regard to the interpretative aspect, I have to add that those who promulgate the interpretative approach think that the work of a sociologist is to interpret meaning of what happens to social actors (Moustakas 1994; Smith et al 2011; Seale 2008; Hughes & Hans, 2001, Creswell 1998; Haralambos & Holborn 2001; Feldman 1995; Wolcott 2001). It is precisely because of this that, I have mainly applied an Interpretative Phenomenological Approach.   The participants themselves are the experiential experts who shared with me their lived experiences of Internet use at home. Eventually, I have interpreted and analysed the information that was gleaned, from this perception in tandem with the literature's appraisal and professional experts' reflections.

3.3.1.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Approach - Symbolic Interaction Perspective

> Human beings in interacting with one another have to take account of what each other is doing or is about to do; they are forced to direct their own conduct or handle their situation in terms of what they take into account. Thus the activities of others enter as positive factors in the formation of their own conduct; in the face of the actions others' one may abandon and intention or purpose, revise it, check it suspend it, intensify it, or replace it.

> (Blumer 1986 p.7)

Among the interpretative approaches I consulted to be adopted for my study, I referred to the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach as well as the Symbolic Interaction Approach. I thought it would be wise to focus on them. The latter is based on the phenomenological approach as presented by Husserl (1927) in (Smith 2001; Moustakas 1994; Blumer 1986). Both approaches focus on the action and behaviour of individuals in different contexts.

They concentrate mostly on different environments and the ways by which people communicate and act with those around them in these environments, of which the family is one. Undoubtedly, these perspectives are useful to this research precisely because they explore interactions among members of society and how these interactions are interpreted by the same individuals. Newman (2008) justly explains, that contrary to other theories, whose focus is on the need for a social system, the Symbolic Interactionists give more importance to relationships. It is important to take note of Mead's perspective because it analyses how individual members of the family look at their roles and the roles of other members within the family:

- To plan consciously and adapt his / her behaviour according to the situation in hand or the goals he / she, has set himself / herself.

- To communicate with others through a wide variety of symbols, the most important of which is language, and interpret the meaning behind what they say, do or indicate in reply.

- To be self-conscious; to be aware not only of his/ her own feeling, motives and views but those of others; to be able to take the role of the other and imagine how other people might interpret a particular act or situation and even to imagine how he / she looks to other people. We all therefore have a self and a self-image (Mead 1934 cited Slattery 1992, p. 192).

Although Mead was the founding father of this theory, he wrote nothing more, leaving it to his students to expand on his thoughts, in particular Blumer 1986; Slattery 1992; Giddens 1992). On the same lines of Mead (1934) cited in Smith et al (2009) had already promoted the importance of human experience:

> The specific experience of this house, this body, of a world as such, is and remains, however, according to its own essential content and thus inseparably experience 'of this house' this body, this world; this is so for every mode of consciousness which is directed towards an object. It is, after all, quite impossible to describe an intentional experience – even if illusionary, an invalid judgment, or the like - without at the same time describing the object of that consciousness as such.

> (Husserl, 1927:para.3 in Smith et al, 2009, p.14)

I am in complete agreement with Mead (1934), Husserl (1927), and Moustakas (1994), and by adopting their perception, the family lived experience, is being studied from the inside and not from the outside.

According to them, members of society themselves should express what they feel and they should do this while living in their natural milieu.

This research goes along with this idea, as it offers another opportunity of how one can analyse society, and, in so doing, one analyses the family, as the theory promotes the observation of interaction among members of the family in their respective contexts/habitats.

> Phenomenology is the first method of knowledge because it begins with things themselves, is also the final court of appeal. Phenomenology, step by step, attempts to eliminate everything that represents a prejudgment, setting aside presuppositions, and reaching a transcendental state of freshness and openness, a readiness to see in a unfettered way, not threatened by the customs, beliefs and prejudices of normal science, by the habits of the natural world or by knowledge based on un-reflected everyday experience.

(Moustakas 1994, p.41)

3.4. Reasons for a Phenomenological Approach with aspects of Narrative Ethnography.

A pertinent question that I have to answer at this point is: why am I referring to this method of research as a Phenomenological Approach with aspects of Narrative Ethnography? In other words, what do I understand by this approach and how was it applied to my study? I must add that, though I did not use the quantitative method, I by no means want to belittle its merits. I have already used it in my previous studies (Vella 1999, Vella 2002).

But, I must also reiterate that the quantitative method does not give a complete picture of a study. For instance, in the studies I have mentioned, in one where I analysed the voting patterns of young people during the General Elections of 1998, and in another study, the expenditure profiles of young people committed in a steady relationship, I did not have the opportunity of personally interviewing young people to understand why they decided to switch over to another political party, when their respective families had always supported a certain party. As politics in Malta is a serious issue, it was not wise or possible to qualitatively interview (face-to-face) participants to reveal how they had voted. The quantitative method I used did not permit me to know what experiences led them to vote for the candidates they chose. Yet, I could give figures of how they voted and know if their family, friends or the Catholic Church influenced them in one way or another (Vella 1999).

Although I could have used the qualitative method in the other study, I wanted the sample to represent the population, and this required a big sample. I could not possibly, therefore, use a qualitative study with a large number of participants.

Meanwhile, as I will be explaining further down and as I have already touched upon earlier, I could not find any studies which used the type of investigative approach I had in mind. I, therefore feel in a position to state that I have also managed to create a contribution to knowledge by the methodology I applied. This has been possible because of the way I have merged together the two methods of study to develop my own way of doing a research study.

Through the phenomenological approach, I succeeded in collecting the accounts of the lived in experiences of participants in their natural environment that is the home.

Besides, through these accounts, I have discovered and, at the same time described, the everyday life these participants are living within the context of the use of the Internet in the home.

Though I was not living with them in their home, as is the norm in ethnographic studies, I have still been in a position to collect very important information from their own accounts. In fact, as I will recount in more detail in the analysis, from their accounts, I have been able to obtain a clear picture of how Maltese families are living life, at various times of the day, within the context of the influence of use of the Internet. I have been very faithful in recounting what participants revealed.

To further enrich this study I have made use of Time Diaries (Longitudinal Approach). Thanks to them I have been able to analyse and compare how Maltese life is being experienced in the summer and winter seasons. Because of this approach, I can say that I have created an original contribution to knowledge, showing how one can combine two methods of study and adapt them in such a way as to enable one to elicit as much significant and original information as possible.

3.4.1 Narrative Ethnography

> Narrative analysts, in practice, approach the issue of truth differently. Some assume that language represents reality. The narrative clauses recapitulate experiences in the same order as the original events…..Others, influenced by phenomenology, take the position that narrative constitutes reality: It is in the telling that we make real phenomena in the stream of consciousness.

> (Riessman 1993, p. 22)

With regards to the reason why I am focusing on a Phenomenological Approach with aspects of Narrative Ethnography, I have to explain that, at the very start of my research for the different options of research available, which eventually guided me in my study of how Maltese families are experiencing the use of the Internet in their homes, at first I was inclined towards using ethnography. For instance, I agree with Creswell (2004), Handwerker (2001) and Denzin (1997), that ethnography is a process of observations, experiences and interpretations of particular groups in society at periods during their life. From these observations and experience-sharing, eventually emerge the thoughts and opinions of the participants enriched by emotions which no quantitative study alone can bring out.

> As a process, ethnography involves prolonged observation of the group, typically through participant observation in which the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people through one-on-one interviews with members of the group. The researchers study the meanings of behaviour, language and interactions of the culture-sharing group.
>
> (Creswell 2004, p. 58).

> Ethnography……consists of the processes and products of research that document what people know, feel, and do in a way that situates those phenomena at specific times in the history of individual lives…..
>
> (Handwerker 2001, p. 4)

> Ethnographic accounts should possess that amount of depth, emotionality, nuance, and coherence that will permit a critical consciousness to be formed by the reader.
>
> (Denzin 1997, p. 283)

As already stated, at the very beginning of my study, I speculated that I could also experience a substantial part of what is expressed above by Creswell (2004), Handwerker (2001) and Denzin (1997), through an ethnographic study.

Yet, during the process of this research, I realised that it would be wiser to focus principally on a Phenomenological approach, incorporating also the narrative- ethnography aspect.

So, finally I came to the conclusion of adopting a Research Design based on a Phenomenological Approach with aspects of Narrative Ethnography. This is because, while listening to the experiences shared by the participants, the researcher, at the same time, can observe closely the reactions of those taking part, whilst analysing their body language, which at times provides more information than what they are actually saying (Seale 2008; Creswell 1998; Riessman 1993). This inferred information was crucial to this study as it laid bare the level of interpersonal relationship there is in the Maltese family.

3.4.2 A Longitudinal Approach – Time Diaries

As I have mentioned earlier, part of this study was based on the longitudinal approach, where I made use of time diaries over three different periods of the year. Therefore, I was able to analyse the participants' experiences during different seasons, thereby shedding different light on the use of the Internet in summer and winter.

As I will explain in more detail in the section dedicated to the findings and analysis, one may notice that the use of the Internet at home was more significant during the 1st week of July 2013.

Hence this study, paved the way for the analysis of the structure of time, the level of interaction and family communication that exists, or did not exist, among the members of the same family. In tandem with a qualitative approach, based on a phenomenological approach, I, as a researcher, was in a better position to ensure that the information gathered is more comprehensive (etic) (Fetterman 1989).

In a nutshell, by using a phenomenology with characteristics of narrative-ethnography, participants had the possibility to recall their personal experience on the research problem. The information elicited from such circumstances is rich and valuable to the study. As has been explained earlier, I managed to collect this information by combining data elicited from both qualitative interviews and time diaries. To reach the aims of my study, I was interested to see how the participants made use of their time during different seasons, with regard to the use of the Internet. With this in mind, I realised that I could achieve this by using time diaries over a period of time.

> There is ample evidence that people are unable to provide accurate reports about how much time they spend doing various activities unless that information is collected through time-diary methods…… researchers need to consider longitudinal designs that take into consideration ways in which families change and adapt to technological changes. It is likely that patterns of interaction with home computers and the Internet change over time on the basis of a number of factors, such as age of children and computer proficiency.

> (Hughes & Hans 2001, p.20)

The findings of my research shed new light on the lived experience in Maltese households when members of families use the Internet. In particular, it was elicited that, most of the time members of families spend at home, they are connected to the Internet.

The latter was also related to age. In fact it was elicited, and this was even reflected in NSO's, MCA's and Eurostat's studies, that young people spent more time on the Internet than senior citizens.

In tandem, it resulted that, Internet users are multitasking, since they tend to do other things besides using the Internet, namely, cleaning of the house, cooking, watching television and studying, to mention but a few. It became evident, that Internet use has become part of everyday life at home.

These lived experiences were directly shared by the participants, who in this research are the experiential experts on the subject (Smith et al, 2011; Berg 2009; Wolcott 2001; Feldman 1995). This is the main reason that led me to focus mainly on a Phenomenological approach.

When one decides to do a Phenomenological study with narrative-ethnography as a backdrop, one must realise the probability that it will be time consuming. It is also generally accepted that qualitative inquiry requires particular field techniques and instruments that pave the way for the researcher to explore and understand the whereabouts of the subjects understudy. In other words the researcher has to immerse in the natural setting of the participants to be able to elicit first-hand vital information.

On the other hand, it is argued that while the survey method may provide quantifiable data to answer specific questions, it is not necessarily the best way of uncovering the range and depth of peoples' feelings and opinions (Pill 1995, p. 42).

Moreover, according to Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) qualitative research has to be based on the following features:

> •   A strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them.

> •   A tendency to work primarily with unstructured data,

> •   Analysis of data that involves explicit interpretation of meanings and functions of human actions, the product of which mainly take the form of verbal descriptions and explanations, with qualification and statistical analysis playing a subordinate role at most.

> (Atkinson & Hammersley 1994, p 248)

Besides the fact that qualitative research provides adequate opportunity for the researcher to use relevant tools for the study, it also tends to provide the possibility to interpret and analyse participants' body language and reactions, hence enriching the data collected with regards to feelings, disappointments, and happiness, in other words, their emotions, to mention but a few.

I have already mentioned that, this is definitely something that cannot be achieved by using a quantitative approach. Moreover, visiting participants at their respective homes, besides helping them to feel more relaxed, also tends to create a healthy relationship between the researcher and the participants, and hence, build a good rapport which eventually paves the way for exploring the insights of the families under study.

> Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding, based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.

<div align="right">(Creswell 1998, p.15)</div>

This is further supported by Taylor et al (1997), Feldman (1995), Wolcott (2001) and Berg (2009) who contend that contrary to the information elicited through quantitative methods, qualitative inquiries are more capable of bringing about covert information. They also maintain that such methodology is more appropriate to be used for studies related to social life. Qualitative data covers a range of material from the descriptions of social life provided by participant observation and unstructured interviews to information from written sources such as diaries, autobiographies and novels. Some researchers argue that qualitative data provides greater depth, a richer and more detailed picture of social life.

It is more likely to capture the subtleties, nuances and shades of meaning than the numerical data provided by quantitative methods (Taylor et al 1997, p. 632). In parallel, Taylor & Bogdan (1984, p. 11) share the view that qualitative research exposes a more realistic view of the participants: "When we study people qualitatively, we get to know them personally and experience what they experience in their daily struggles in society". In other words, respondents would feel comfortable enough to share their insights whilst they can guide the researcher to other important and relevant issues:

3.4.3 Experiential Experts

An unstructured interview offers greater opportunity for respondents to "take control", to define priorities and to direct the interview into areas which they see as interesting and significant. In this way, they have a greater chance to express their own viewpoints. And this can lead to new and important insights for the researcher (Taylor et al 1997, p.618). This school of thought, that promulgates the inductive approach, concentrates and explores how the "experiential experts" are the participants who will give an interpretation of what they are experiencing in the home "The participant is the experiential expert on the topic in hand and therefore they should be given much leeway in taking the interview to the thing itself" (Smith et al 2011, p.58).

However, it is also true that there are instances where it is more advisable to incorporate both methods. In particular, Giddens (2001) holds that, to be able to analyse the information resulting from a study, one needs to take a look at the roots of both the inductive and deductive approaches. However, I am of the opinion that there are instances, like in my case, where researchers may choose to adopt one main method of research whilst enriching it with aspects of the other method, and analyse them accordingly.

Nevertheless, when such a study is undertaken, it is also important for the researcher to understand, observe, and finally feel what the participant is going through, by putting himself / herself in the other person's shoes.

It is pertinent to mention that Alfred Schutz (1889-1959), a phenomenologist who studied human consciousness, and how a person looks at and interprets the world around him, also maintains that a researcher should empathise with interviewees.

So does Max Weber, whose concept related to social action, emphasises the importance of empathy between, the researcher and his participants (Slatter 1992, p.141; Taylor et al 1997, p.641). I definitely experienced Weber and Schutz advocacies during my research among Maltese families. Qualitative research precisely provides the possibility to empathise with the participants and creates the opportunity to probe for other covert information through observation.

Creswell's definition of qualitative research builds on Schutz's and Weber's theories with regards to the importance of really understanding the individuals being studied. This can only happen if the researcher is physically present in the natural environment of his/her interviewees. Moreover, Fielding (1993, p. 137), confirms the importance of unstructured information when he refers to a study conducted in England, where he explains that when the researcher visits participants personally in their own homes, the result is very effective. In addition, Dobash & Dobash (1980) hold that this type of methodology helps those interviewed to open their hearts on sensitive matters. There is no doubt that other methodologies would not give the same results. In fact, that is what I actually did in this research: I have left the individual participants at liberty to share with me their lived experience when using the Internet at home.

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As I shall explain in more detail in the following sections, this was possible because I presented the participants with one open key question, asking them to share their lived experience about the use of the Internet at home (Wengraf 2001; Dick 1998). Through this approach, the participants were given the opportunity of sharing their views of Internet use at home.

Brewer (2007) speaks well about the use of such a methodology. In fact, he sustains that this approach focuses, in particular, on aspects of a specific group in terms of behaviour, habits, practices and usages in relations to these aspects. In fact, this is what actually happened in my study where I had the opportunity to notice the practices, habits, and behaviours of individual members of Maltese families at home with regards to the use of the Internet.

Moreover, Zimmerman and Wieder, (1970) cited in Taylor & Bogdan (1984, p. 11) outline that, through an examination of common sense, the ethno-methodologists seek to understand how people 'go about the task of seeing, describing, and explaining order in the world in which they live'.

In fact, this is what happened, because the individual members of families shared their lived experience of how the world around them in the home was being affected by the use of the Internet. Even Creswell (1998) contends that qualitative research based on both phenomenological and ethnographic platforms, enable the researcher to interpret and analyse the daily lived experience of families by observing their reactions and attitudes in their natural environment. Therefore, by using this approach for my research, I had the possibility to explore the process of interaction and the behaviours of Maltese families' members, as surrounded by the use of Internet.

The direction my research followed has been inspired by classic methods forwarded by Creswell (2003), Moustakas, (1994), Burawoy (2003), Wengraf (2001) and Handwerker (2001), among others. My final aim was to arrive at a methodology which accommodated adequately, the research problem I have investigated, that of being in the shoes of Maltese families, observing, and feeling what they experienced through the use of the Internet.

To arrive at this aim, it was necessary for me to analyse well the methodology used in the studies of qualitative research. This made me read much literature on qualitative research that in particular incorporates Phenomenology and Narrative-ethnography approaches, to have an adequate basis of this method. My in-depth readings led me to structure the desired, suitable approach. This strengthens the argument that there is a need for similar studies about the family.

> Much of the debate about the effects of computers on families has been left to social commentators who often have limited access to empirical data or to technologists who predict use on the basis of the capacity of computers. Past approaches to studying technology and families that have assumed that people are passively affected by technology, are problematic. It is essential that we develop conceptual models about families in context and study the ways in which families adapt to technological developments.

> (Hughes & Hans 2001, p.22)

In the coming section, I will explain in more detail the reasons why I did not use a quantitative method.

3.4.4 Reasons for not using a Quantitative Approach

As the key to this study is to establish the lived experience of individual members of Maltese families at home in the context of the use of the Internet, I felt that my study would not benefit from the use of a deductive approach.

Although I have included the Time Diaries, which are usually used for quantitative surveys, they were only used to study seasonal differences of Internet use that might have been experienced at home.

In fact, only six families were selected for this part of this study, and the data elicited was solely appraised seasonally and eventually compared with the themes that came out from the interviews that I conducted. In a nutshell, I could not rely on a quantitative method research, based on a sample of 6 families only. With this in mind, I presented a number of short questions to all members of families representing the Key Respondents Families sample. As I will explain further down, these questions clarified when and how the Internet was used during the study period in the home and how these occurrences, were being experienced by respective individual family members.

It is worth mentioning that for Karl Popper, the knowledge and information about a particular phenomenon should be collected from repeated observation – something I performed, by using a Longitudinal approach. Popper, like Comte, is of the opinion that knowledge and information collected are used to verify or refute previous or new findings. Popper insists that the research is repeated many times so that the findings that are weak are eliminated and only the more plausible ones are left. In fact, according to Popper, findings are temporary and momentary, though they remain valid until they are contested by other findings (Slattery 1992; Taylor et al 1997; Seale 2008; Haralambos & Holborn 1999).

On the other hand, Kuhn thinks a little differently about how findings can be contested, He contends that if there is a new set of thoughts about an issue or a new phenomenon, together with a system (paradigms) of how these can be actuated, then the time has come for the precedent studies to be refuted or contested (Taylor et al, 1997; Seale 2008).

In the light of this, it seemed important to me to apply a Longitudinal Study by using Time Diaries. Nevertheless, I have referred to the interpretative qualitative approach, by using interviews, because having only numbers at my disposition I would not have a feedback of the personal experiences, emotions, and non-verbals of the participants.

In this section I have dealt with the method of my research, thereby, strengthening my theoretic arguments regarding my choice of approach for this study. Now I am going to explain in detail the research problem which eventually led me to form the key research question. Later, I will give details of the instruments and research techniques I applied in the field.

3.5 The Research Problem and the Research Question

The research problem, and eventually the data that emerged from the research question, enabled me to understand and appraise the use of the Internet in the homes of Maltese families. Initially, the desire to study this phenomenon emerged from the fact that according to a number of friends and relatives of mine, the use of Internet in the home was being experienced differently.

In particular, it has been stated that the Internet in the home was decreasing the interpersonal relationship among members of the family, encouraging isolation, whilst it was also serving as a tool to enhance family interaction. It was important for me, as a researcher, to explore these views more deeply. With this in mind, I thought it would be of interest if I were to study in depth, both the way a group of families look at the use of Internet in the home, and at the same time apprehend how, as individual members, they do interpret it and experience it.

In other words, I wanted to find out, from the horse's mouth, what is happening at home with regards to internet use (Rheingold 2014; Turkle 2011; Carr 2011; Tonkiss (2004) in Seale 2008; Perry 2002; Hammersley 1992b).

3.5.1 The Research Problem in Detail

The aim of this research was to explore how individual members of the Maltese families were experiencing the phenomena of Internet use at home. Intrinsically, in this study I delved and explored, and eventually exposed, how Internet use was embedded in the daily lives of Maltese families. In other words, I attempted to answer the main research question: In what ways are Maltese families experiencing Internet use at home?

The study headed towards a holistic understanding of the participants with regards to Internet use in their habitat, the home, hence, posing the adequate research question to individual members of a number of Maltese families. As Moustakas (1994) himself sustains, that it has to be calculatingly selected:

> The research question, that is the focus of and guides an investigation, must be carefully constructed, every word deliberately chosen and ordered in such a way that the primary words appear immediately, capture my attention, and guide and direct me in the phenomenological process seeing, reflecting, and knowing. Every method relates back to the question, is developed solely to illuminate the question, and provides portrayal of the phenomenon that is vital, rich and layered in its textures and meanings.

> (Moustakas 1994, p. 59)

Thus, the question was formulated to throw a light also on the aspects of Time and Space, because these are of crucial importance with regard to family dynamics. In fact, the findings elicited data that focused on how families were using their time and space while at home, in particular, the time spent using the Internet versus the time spent with other members of family. Moreover, it was also important for the research to expose where and when respondents were using the Internet, since this sheds light on the relationship between family time and communication time (Lee and Chae, 2007).

Since, this research attempted to appraise the lived experiences of how Maltese families were adapting to Internet use at home, the research question was mainly studied from the respondents' perspectives. Through family-group interviews, and through individualised interviews not in the presence of other members, I have attempted to find out how Maltese families were experiencing this phenomenon as a family.

For instance, similar to Livingstone and Bovill (2002) and Nie et al (2002), some respondents confirmed that, up to certain extent, Internet use was hindering their relationships with other members of the family, whilst other participants said that Internet use enhanced family communication and interaction. It is appropriate to mention at this stage, that I have decided to interview a group of individuals not in the presence of their respective families, for the sole reason to encourage the latter to share with me their individual experiences of the use of the Internet with more freedom. I had a reason for this; it could be that the truth would not come out in front of the other members of the family.

3.5.2 Key Research Question

As Moustakas (1994, p. 59) rightly affirms, before the Research Question is formulated, it is very important to evaluate well the aims and objectives of the research. I confirm that before I concluded what I thought was the best Key Research Question, I not only analysed well the main aims of this study, but I also wanted to assure myself that the said Research Question would throw a light on the Research Problem. The first thing I did was to re-analyse the feedback I had received from friends and family, regarding the Research Problem and put it together before I actually started the study. I kept these annotations in my Research Diary. With this in mind I posed the following key research question.

What is your lived experience of Internet use at home?

Through this question I have managed to create a new body of knowledge, which up to now has not been exposed in Malta. I was optimistic that, if I used the right methodology, I would be in a position to appraise this new phenomenon. I was hopeful that the result of this study would give a new clear picture of how the Maltese families are experiencing Internet use at home. In fact, the findings and analysis speak for themselves.

However, in this study I wanted not only to listen to the experiences from the respondents themselves, by responding to my key research question, but I wanted also to experience their stories through their body language, their gestures and through the expressions in their eyes. These all help to give a clearer picture of the whole story. In tandem, I kept in mind the importance of looking out for other lateral information and clues that took place.

As I will explain in the next section, by using a qualitative approach with a narrative ethnography slant, this study examined what is happening within the Maltese family, through the expressed views of the participants themselves. As has already been mentioned, within this milieu, this study attempted to answer the above research question. This has been achieved by exploring deeply the nature and implications of Internet use and its relevance to social interaction and interpersonal relationships among Maltese family members at home. In this regard, the research method and methodology were designed in such a way to elicit responses which shed light on the research problem. Hence, in the following section, I shall explain the rationale behind the research method components that I have adopted in this study. I shall begin by discussing the reasons behind the choice of the sample.

3.6 Sample Rationale

> The purposeful selection of participants represents a key decision point in a qualitative study. Researchers designing qualitative studies need clear criteria in mind and need to provide rationales for their decisions.

> (Creswell 1998, p.118)

3.6.1 Sampling Size in Qualitative Research

In every type of research, the choice of sample is to be considered carefully. Various schools of thought have pronounced themselves about the type of sample to use for qualitative studies. I read and analysed many writings to arrive at a conclusion (Mason 2010; Seale 2008; Sandelowski 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2007; Leech 2005; Creswell 1998).

For instance, I found an interesting research among 560 Ph.D. studies to throw light on the suitable sample sizes for qualitative studies at PhD. level (Mason 2010). This study showed that the debate about the sample amount is still going from the extreme position of one person to a sample of 95 participants.

> Within any research area, different participants can have diverse opinions. Qualitative samples must be large enough to assure that most or all of the perceptions that might be important are uncovered, but at the same time if the sample is too large data becomes repetitive and, eventually, superfluous. If a researcher remains faithful to the principles of qualitative research, sample size in the majority of qualitative studies should generally follow the concept of saturation when the collection of new data does not shed any further light on the issue under investigation.

<div align="right">(Mason 2010, p.1)</div>

The arguments varied according to the study. According to Charmaz (2006), 25 participants in a small study will suffice. One asks; who decides if a study is small or not? On the other hand, Ritche et al (2003) contend that samples of qualitative studies should not exceed 50 participants, while Green & Thorogood (2004, 2009) maintain that according to the majority of qualitative researchers "little that is new comes out of transcripts after you have interviewed 20 or so people" (Green & Thorogood 2009 in Mason 2010). Other arguments give the impression that there is no clear indication about the importance of the size of qualitative studies:

> A common misconception about sampling in qualitative research is that numbers are unimportant in ensuring the adequacy of a sampling strategy. Yet, simple sizes may be too small to support claims of having achieved either informational redundancy or theoretical saturation, or too large to permit the deep, case-oriented analysis that is the raison-d'etre of qualitative inquiry. Determining adequate sample size in qualitative research is ultimately a matter of judgment and experience in evaluating the quality of the information collected against the uses to which it will be put, the particular research method and purposeful sampling strategy employed, and the research product intended.

> (Sandelowski 2007 p.1)

Leech (2005), with whom I am in total agreement, like Sandelowski (2007), insists that it is important that there is a good analysis which finally will lead to the best choice of sample. In her own words, sampling procedures have several dimensions and so it is essential to give importance both to the choice and even to the size of the sample.

> Many qualitative researchers state that sample size and sampling are not issues in qualitative research. However, we argue that making sampling and sample size considerations is central to qualitative research. First, we refute arguments made by qualitative researchers who claim that sampling and sample size considerations are not relevant. Second, we contend that sampling represents a multidimensional construct. Third, we posit that most qualitative studies involve some type of analytical generalization. Thus, choosing a sample size and sampling scheme represent an active process of reflection

> (Leech 2005, p.1)

These writings and studies cleared my concerns, mostly the one that for my study I could use a reasonable sample size. Notwithstanding the fact that I was aware that normally a qualitative study is time consuming because of the transcription process, I still opted to go for a big sample.

I know that there are differences of opinion about the best size of sample, but I believe that a reasonably large number yields stronger information. Moreover, I have focused on a sampling strategy which adopts a mixed, instead of a representative one. I opted for this because it was my aim to explore excerpts from the private lives of the participants, always regarding Internet use. Therefore, it made more sense to look for, identify and approach the participants myself. I succeeded in doing this with the help of friends and representatives of particular organisations, like the Malta Gay Rights Movement, (MGRM), the Drachma and The Fertility Support Group (FSG). In the next section, which deals with Sample Population, I will explain that I resorted to purposive sampling. I approached some families whom I knew personally, and I later applied the snowball sampling also, especially to gain access to gay and childless families.

3.6.2 Sample Population

Given the fact that the desired population for the study was difficult to recruit, since it incorporates different types of families, it necessitated that the research be carried out by a purposive sample (Creswell 1998, p.62). Further to this, Seale (2008) sustains that: "…..participants are selected on the basis of having significant relation to the research topic" (Seale 2008, p.199). Hence, a purposive sample of 36 family units, composed of 96 participants, was identified for this research. However, it is appropriate to mention at this stage that, since this study is about the Maltese families, and how the latter are experiencing Internet use at home, I wanted to have a wide choice of families that live in Malta and Gozo.

Therefore, as I have already explained in detail in Chapter I, before choosing a sample, I felt the need to give a definition of what the term "family" really means, because today it is very difficult to define a "family". With this in mind, it was necessary to find out the types of families existing in Malta today. Keeping this premise in mind, and taking into account the literature I read to define the term "family", I have identified 6 types of families. Participants of the sample were mainly selected on the bases of their marital status whilst, location of residence, age, gender and occupational variables of the respondents were taken into account. This selection made it certain that the sample is varied.

Moreover, it is appropriate to mention that all the chosen families are composed of two persons or more (Newman 2009; Steel et al 2009). This is in total agreement with what is stated in the guidelines for research, which were published by Eurostat (2011) and NSO (2011). I must say that there were moments when I considered including participants who live alone. On further reflection I decided not to do so as my main aim was to explore how the use of the Internet was being experienced by the members of families, not by persons living alone. A study regarding these people would definitely prove very interesting, irrespective of the fact whether they are living alone or within a family unit.

Hence, backed by literature review (Steel et al 2012; Newman 2009), I have selected the following family sample that represents the different types of families that are found in the Maltese Islands.

• Traditional / Nuclear families - Including families with members with special needs:

This type of family is referred to as the married intact nuclear family, where the family consists of a married couple, father and mother and their children (McCarthy and Edwards 2011; Corbert 2004; Walsh 2012; Livingstone & Bovill 2001; Murdock 1949; Parsons 1955; Rizzo 2004; Abela & Walker 2014; Mills 2014; Whitty 2014; Steel et al 2009; Newman 2012; Cheal 2002).

• Joint-custody families/ Cohabiting families: Couples that are not married and live together and have joint custody of the children (Walsh 2012; Scott Loveless & Holman 2007; Lamanna et al 2014; Charlotte 1996; Steel et al 2009; Newman 2012

• Single-parent families - Males and Females: Fathers and mothers raising their children on their own. (Bilton et al 2002; Nock 1992; McCarthy & Edwards 2011). Similar to their European counterparts, local single parent families have been increasing at a fast pace.

• Child-free families: Families without children. There are couples who, for medical or personal reasons, do not have children. They are referred to as child-free families (Walker 2011; Keim 2011; Scott 2009; Cain 2002; Ross 1994).

• Blended/ Step-families /Reconstituted / Re-established families: These are the result of second or more marriages which include children coming for previous marriages of both sides. (Dreman 2013; Hantrais 2004; Jeynes 2012; Hennon & Wilson 2011; Simpson 1994).

Besides, second-marriages that follow annulments, Malta is experiencing other types of marriages since divorce was legalised in 2011.

• Gay families (Males and Females): Adults are of the same sex, with or without children (Giddens 1989; Coltrane & Collins 2001; Charlotte 1996; Walsh 2012; Bilton et al 2002; Nock 1992; Weeks et al 2007; McCarthy & Edwards 2011).

In addition to this, I would like to refer to an interview I had (Research Diary 2010), with a staff member of the Cana Movement, to discuss with him the types of families I have identified for my research. This meeting was characterised by a lack of agreement about the criteria that establish a family. According to Cana Movement (2010) a single mother who had a child out of wedlock, as well as couples of the same sex, are not considered a family. As far as this study was concerned, I considered them as family unit.

3.6.3 Respondents' Profile

The chosen participants all come from families with different social backgrounds; their ages vary from 10 to 76 years. In fact, the sample population is composed of groups of family units which, although not representing the Maltese family units, in terms of percentages, it includes a wide range of types of families. This sample includes affluent families, middle class ones and those with a low income – depending on their income.

When I came to choose the sample, I even considered the ages of the participants. This was important as envisaged by the NSO (2011, 2012, 2013) studies and that of Eurostat (2013), the age of the participants reflects the amount of time spent on the Internet. As was desired, the sample was composed of participants coming from all walks of life and having various ages.

The sample incorporates family members with a tertiary level of education, others who have stopped at post-secondary level and other who stopped at secondary level. Incidentally, their level of education was reflected in the type of jobs they held during the period of the study. These jobs were also various:

Teachers	Bankers
Lawyers	Broadcasters
Cleaners	Businessmen/women
Police Corps Members	Port Workers
Clerks Public Service /	Paramedics
Lecturers / University	Housewives
Pensioners	Students

Besides, I made sure that the sample included families with persons with special needs. I included a family with a blind member, another family with a member with impaired hearing and another family coping with a member suffering from Down syndrome. I also included families with aged people / pensioners. During the time of the study, all participants worked full-time except for children, young people who were still studying, pensioners and housewives.

In my sample of identified families, I have not included people living on their own, and people living together but having no family relationship. In other words, I have excluded people, like friends or students/workers who live in apartments/shared houses, and the religious who live in convents / monasteries. I have also left out the residents who live at the Corradino Correctional Facility, young people that are under the custody of Church Institutes, patients in hospitals and asylums, foreign residents, immigrants and refugees.

I wanted to analyse only those individuals who, in one way or another, fall under one of the categories of families I have identified. Nevertheless, I am convinced that similar studies to this can be conducted with different samples.

3.6.4 Sample of Professional Experts

A study of this type needs to be open to analysis from different angles. So, as I will explain further down in more detail, I decided to include a sample of individuals who are professional experts in their chosen fields so that my study would throw more light on the research problem (Bogner et al, 2009; Bozoki 2011). In other words, I wanted to see also if the accounts of experiences related by the participants, up to certain extent, correlated with those expounded by the professional experts. With this in mind I interviewed the following professional experts:

Dr. Anton Grech, (Chairman of Psychiatry) - Head of Mental Health of Malta, Dr. Peter Muscat (Psychiatrist), Dr. John. A. Agius (Clinical Psychologist / Family Psycho-Therapist,) Dr. Charles Azzopardi, (Family Psycho-Therapist - Head of the Family Therapy Institute), alongside with, Dr. Rev. John Avellino (Department of Philosophy), Prof. Arch. Vince Buhagiar, (Head of Department, Environmental Design, at the Faculty of Built Environment), Dr. Katya De Giovanni (Department of Family Studies), Prof. Godfrey Baldacchino (Sociologist – Department of Sociology), Dr. Nadia Delicata (Faculty of Theology), and Mr. Joe Magro-Conti (Archeologist) respectively.

3.6.5 Recruiting Research Participants

> Gaining access to individuals may require years of preparation depending on the level of access required by the researcher. Researchers need to develop reputation for consistency and integrity. This is very much required when one is conducting an ethnographic based research that requires the researcher to live and show commitment to the community before being trusted with the information that he/she is seeking for. Also, finding the right individuals to interview ……..can be challenging especially if the study is on individuals that are not connected to an organisation.
>
> (Johl and Renganathan 2010, p. 42)

The fact that for this study I used a purposive sampling approach stopped me from basing my methods on a sample frame like the electoral register or the telephone directory. Despite this, I managed to contact associations that referred me to participants from their registers. So, from the outset of this research, I started jotting down in my Research Diary, names of potential participants, associations and persons who could help me. Besides, I started sharing my thoughts with various friends and relatives, some of whom chose to participate themselves.

They also referred me to other individuals who could participate. I used the snowball sampling to approach gay families who were in a long, steady relationship and also to meet families, who, for one reason or another were childless.

I approached participants I did not know by telephone first. After introducing myself, I briefly explained to them my intentions about the research project and I invited them to come and have a coffee with me. At this early stage, it was enough from my end to meet only one member of the family, to get to know each other and to start building a good relationship.

> In conducting research it is important for the researcher to think about how to go about gaining access. Gaining access involves convincing people that the researcher has decided upon on who should be the informants that would provide information in conducting research. This would require the researcher to talk to many people by developing rapport with them and to be in a position to learn from them. Therefore, gaining access is not a simple task where it requires some combination of strategic planning, hard work and luck.

(Johl and Renganathan 2010, p.42)

So my first meeting with the prospective participants was crucial, as besides describing what was expected of them, I also had to persuade them to participate in the study. I also had to convince them that their contribution to this study carried certain benefits to Maltese society. Finally, I asked each member of the family I met to explain to the other members of his /her family the whole process. Even so, I still briefed each family I met.

Another important step I took was to e-mail them letters of information and consent forms, for them to pursue at their leisure before participating. I collected the signed letters of consent when I conducted the interviews.

3.6.6 Locations of Research Participants

Although the nature of the study precludes the inclusion of location of residence of the participants, I still tried to include persons from different towns and villages in Malta and Gozo. I visited many localities where I eventually conducted my interviews in respective homes of the participants. In fact, I even spent a week in Gozo, where I had the opportunity of visiting a number of families, so that the study would also include a sample from Gozo. I spent about 2 hours with each family.

At this stage I have to remark that though in my introductory letter I had asked for an interview at their home, some opted to be interviewed away from the home. I accepted the wish of these few and conducted the interview in a number of cafeterias. I still asked the participants to describe briefly their home, its size and which rooms were more frequented when using the Internet.

Exactly after each interview, I went home and took down a transcript of the meeting. I took down the whole transcript, though I was exempted from doing so, as I felt more comfortable doing so. When one is taking down the whole transcripts, one is able to remember particular episodes much better. Moreover, one re-lives the experience and is truer in what one writes. Besides the latter, the researcher can jot down even other incidents he/she remembers. Examples of these are; laughter connected with a comment, or, as one participant related the fact that he uses the Internet during his morning stint in the bathroom.

Another example may be when there are different levels of voice tones which at times indicate different particular situations. For instance, this happened when a couple related to me that they used the Internet even in bed. With a shake of the head, the husband, raising his voice to emphasise the point, said that they both were in bed, but they were watching different things on their respective laptops. So, when the qualitative researcher is transcribing the interviews, he / she makes use of the notes he / she has made while observing his /her interviewees, enabling himself / herself, to recount in the best manner the context and atmosphere of the interviews.

> It is worth transcribing at least some, and preferably all of the interviews yourself. This is because you have ideas as you transcribe, and transcribing makes you very familiar with the data. It helps you to start making connections and identifying themes for analysis. In fact you should keep a pad handy when you transcribe to write down these thoughts as they occur to you.

(Fielding 1993, p. 137)

After explaining the samples, in the next section I will talk about how I planned to evaluate the chosen sample. In other words, I will explain the whole process that I followed which finally led me to collect the experience of the participants and the experts.

3.6.7 Samples' Evaluation Plan

For this study I chose two types of samples: a sample of family units, which is divided into 3 sub-samples, and a sample of experts.

3.6.7.1 Family Units Sample (Composed of 3 Sub-samples)

To be in a better position to analyse it well, I felt it necessary to divide and identify the family sample in 3 sub-samples as follows:

General Families (GF)

- Composed of 30   Family Units termed as the General Families Group Sub-Sample

Individual Members' Families (IMF)

• Composed of 6   Family Units termed as the Individual Members' Families Sub-Sample

Key Informants Families (KIF)

- Composed of 6 Family Units termed as the Key Informants Families Sub-Sample (These families were selected from General Families Group Sub-Sample)

3.6.7.2 The General Families Group Sub-Sample (GF)

The General Families Group Sub-Sample, composed of the 30 groups of families representing each of the six identified family units, answered only the key question of the research, that is, they were asked to narrate their lived experience of Internet use at home. This approach combines the use of a Single Question Aimed at Inducing a Narrative (SQUIN), which is the brainchild of Wengraf (2001) and the Convergent Interviewing approach as posed by Dick (1998). These approaches enable the participants to share their lived experience of Internet use at home by answering just one general question.

As has been explained earlier, taking into consideration these approaches, I decided to apply the framework of a Narrative-Ethnography, intertwined with a phenomenological approach and developed it to adapt it to my study.

3.6.7.3 The Individual Members' Families Sub-Sample (IMF)

The Individual Members' Families sub-Sample was composed of six individual members, also representing each of the six identified family units, were interviewed individually, not in the presence of their respective families. The aim of including this sample is that I wanted these participants to feel comfortable away from home constraints while recounting their experiences.

For example, some admitted that they were spending too much time using the Internet and this decreased the time the spent with their families. Though they admitted this to me, they were not ready to do it in front of their family. They were already being criticised for this at home. All families were interviewed at their respective homes, except for those, as I said earlier, that expressed concern, whilst the interviews were conducted by myself.

3.6.*7.4 The Key Informants Families Sub-Sample (KIF)*

The Key Informants Families Sub-Sample was composed of 6 Families, also representing each of the six identified family units, participated through the Longitudinal Approach. They were expected to fill in Time Diaries on three occasions over the period of a year (Seale 2008; Fulcher & Scott 2005; Bolger & Laurenceau 2005). Because of the fact that the process of the diaries was a long and meticulous one, lasting over 3 periods of time during a year, I wanted to assure myself that the participants using the time-diaries were faithful to the study. I wanted them to be true to their word and work well so that the study would be reliable.

> In order to obtain reliable and valid data, diary studies must achieve a level of participant commitment and dedication rarely required in other types of research studies. The burden of repeated queries and responses places substantial demands on the participant.

(Bolger et al 2003, p. 591-p.592)

With due respect to all participants, I however, chose six families, whom I knew personally, to be the Key Informants Families, to take part by keeping time diaries. This sub-sample of 6 families was taken from the sub–sample of 36 General Families. This means that 6 families in this study participated twice: once by being interviewed and another time by keeping time diaries.

3.6.8 Reasons Behind the choice of Professional Experts Sample

As I mentioned earlier, in a study of this kind, I felt it was important to include a group of professional experts to strengthen it (Dexter 2012; Bozoki 2011). With these experts I took different angles for my study: first, I wanted to know how the use of the Internet at home is being interpreted by the same professionals. For instance, I wanted to appraise how their patients/clients recalled their experience of Internet use at home during therapy. In other words, I wanted to see to what extent such experts are seeing clients who ask for their professional help, because of problems that are related to the use of Internet at home. Moreover, I wanted to know what changes were necessary along the years in Maltese home due to technological developments, among which was the use of Internet in the home.

In tandem I also wanted to explore how through the years, family rituals and routines changed and how these are affecting or not the family dynamics. It became evident from the interviews, and as I explain later in my analysis, the use of the Internet at home, is among the actual issues that the experts are coming across in the field of social and mental health issues respectively (P. Muscat 2014; pers. comm., 12th September, J. Agius 2014, 19th September, C. Azzopardi 2013, pers. comm., 10th June, A. Grech 2014, pers. comm., 12th August). It has become also clear that over the years, up to a certain extent, the Maltese home has had to adapt to accommodate to technological development (V. Buhagiar 2013, pers. comm., 6th January 2013, Mousu' 2007) whilst family routines and rituals are evolving due to social change, (J.Avellino 2014, pers. comm., 19th September, G. Baldacchino 2014, pers. comm., 3rd July, N. Delicata 2014, pers. comm., 9th September; J.Magro-Konti 2015, pers.comm 19th October).

After explaining in detail the sample rationale, in the following section, I shall explain the rationale behind the research methods components that I have adopted in this study.

3.7 Research Method's Components

> Media technologies are highly symbolic and have significant status in the organisation and lived experience of everyday life and, as such, have demanded a methodology that explores the nuances of their symbolism, appropriation, and interpretation in the context of consumption.

(Berker et al 2005, p. 6)

When doing any research, it is crucially important that participants are studied by using adequate research tools. This is vital so that the study is valid and reliable. It would be useless to conduct a profound study which later results in having used an unsuitable method.

As a researcher wanting to explore the lived experiences of Maltese families in their habitat – the home. I found it necessary to find a method which incorporates those research instruments and techniques which help me reach this aim. When such tools and techniques are used, in this case based on a qualitative study, the participants have the opportunity of playing a more active role and share their experiences without being influenced by anybody.

Discovering daily family dynamics as surrounded by Internet use, necessitated the provision and the designing of an appropriate methodology. With this in mind, I read much literature to enable me to choose the best method for this study. The research-method adopted, provided authentic information and lessened the possibility of bias on my part as a researcher. Eventually, I was directed to the right choice. Although, there are a small number of local studies about the family and Internet use, especially quantitative ones, there was a dearth of qualitative research.

This strengthened the argument that there was a need for a qualitative study about the family. By using the right tools and techniques, through this research I managed to gather useful information.

Amongst the literature that I referred to, and which enabled me to choose the best methods components for this study, I have consulted, Creswell; 2003; Seale 2008; Burawoy 2003; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004; Saldana 2013; Wengraf 2001; Smith et al, 2011; Clough & Nutbrown 2012, Cohen & Manion, 1994; Denzin, 1997; and Dick 1998; Fulcher & Scott 2005; Bolger & Laurenceau 2005; Haralombos & Holborn 1999. Since the study explored the day to day experiences of the participants at their respective homes, the following research main components were applied:

For the sub-samples, composed of the General Families (GF) and the Individual Member's (IMF) respectively, I have followed the method that is based on what has been termed as the Lightly-Structured Depth Interviews (LSDI). This is an approach composed of using both a Single Question Aimed at Inducing Narrative (SQUIN) by Wengraf (2001) and Convergent Interviewing, (CI) by Dick (1998).

For the Key Informants Family Sample (KIF) I have used is a Longitudinal Approach, composed of Revisit Time Diaries, (RTD). (Burawoy 2003; Gilbert 2006; Seale 2008; Robinson 2002)

Finally, the research included data that I have written down in the Procedural Memos (PM), which are also known as (Analytic Memos). These memos are composed of a Research Diary (RD) and Field Notes (FN) (Esterberg 2002; Marshal & Cretchen 2006; Berker et al 2005). In the Research Diary I have jotted down my annotations during the early stages of the study.

These included most of the personal experiences and observations that I have encountered when participants were approached for the very first time. On the other hand, all the observations that I have come across during my interviews with the participants at their homes, have been listed down in the field notes. Eventually, these were appraised and incorporated in the final analysis.

All the participant families were informed of their rights as is stipulated by the Research Ethic Codes of the University of Malta. Besides, I made sure to immediately collect the consent forms of the participants and their children who were under the age of 18. In the next sections I shall give a detailed explanation of how I followed these approaches.

3.7.1 Revisit Time Diaries - Longitudinal Approach

A study of this kind requires taking a period of time. As I explained earlier I barely came across a local research that involved the Longitudinal Approach. These studies promote re-examination of the same experiences, situations and /or circumstances, which happened before. For instance, Burawoy (2003); promulgates the concept of revisits in sociological studies.

This school of thought is important and relevant to my studies. It urges researches in certain sociological and psychological studies to re-do the same study, with the same people, in the same environment, but at different times over a period of time. In this way, the researchers can check if there has been a change or a variation from the preceding studies about the same phenomenon:

> When we revisit, however, our purpose is not to seek constancy across two encounters but to understand and explain variation, in particular to comprehend difference overt time.

(Burawoy 2003, p. 647)

With this in mind, I thought it would be interesting to apply this research component to my study. Therefore, I have selected and visited a number of family units (see Sample Rationale), who kept records of how time is spent on Internet use at home on more than one occasion. They were also asked to write down if other members were present or not and if any communication took place. This gave me the opportunity to see the pattern of Internet use at different times of the day and during different periods, throughout the year.

In brief, through this approach, every family member was expected to keep a record on the use of the Internet at home (Seale 2008). The latter were bound to keep a time record of Internet use on a daily-basis of their home routines, during the first week of January 2013, July 2013 and January 2014 respectively.

It was of utmost importance that one of the field techniques used for this study, be based on time diaries. As Robinson (2002) explains, Time Diaries are useful since they shed light on everyday life:

> The source of this new evidence is a comprehensive set of data on how people spend their time. These data on activities are recorded by respondents in the form of time diaries.
>
> These diary data, which have been collected on irregular bases in more than 20 Western countries, since 1965, (with some measurements extending back to the 1920s) provide………insights in how daily life is and has been changing.
>
> (Robinson 2002, p.47)

Since, participant family members were bound to keep the Time Diary (Appendix IV) to write down, on a daily-record, their Internet-use at home, the latter's information provided me with deeper and personal data.

As has been explained earlier, these participants, kept record of the instances they used the Internet, how long and why they used it, in which room they used it, if they were alone or if they were accompanied, in which case they had to say if they communicated, or not, with those present. The information collected from these Time Diaries, eventually enabled me to seasonally compare and observe the experiences of the individual members of the same family and of the groups of families. This led me to explore the differences in the results between one time and another, that is, the use of the Internet at home during the summer and winter seasons.

I wish to add that this approach, similar to the interviews that I have conducted with family-groups, enabled me, as an observer, to make direct contact with the participants in their own environment and, therefore, it made it easier for me to build a close rapport with those participating. In fact, to build this rapport with the participants, I felt the need to make a number of visits in their respective homes.

I have to note that I already knew some of the participants closely. This knowledge made it easier for both parties involved to be comfortable with each other, thus paved the way for more genuine and truthful information.

> Observation, inquiry and data collection depend upon the observer gaining access to the appropriate field and establishing good working relations with the people in it. They need to be relationships that are able to generate the data the research requires. The identity that the observer assumes determines the success of this.

> (Seale 2008, p.228)

Meanwhile, as has already been explained, to gain more insight into what is happening in the home with the use of the Internet, I have also adopted in-depth interviews.

Hence, in the next section, I will look into the use of the Lightly Structured Depth Interviews that I have applied

3.7.2 Single Question Aimed at Inducing Narrative (SQUIN) - Convergent Interviewing Approach (Group & Individual Interviews)

The use of the in-depth interview is crucial in a study where the researcher wants to explore the personal experience of a participant and the family as a group. I searched for the type of tools and techniques which would be ideal to help me explore the phenomenon of the use of the Internet in the home through an interview. After going through much literature about the subject in order to find the best method, I concluded that the methods known as Single Question Aimed at Inducing Narrative (SQUIN) as proposed by Wengraf (2001) in tandem with the Convergent Interviewing approach as coined by Dick (1998), would be ideal.

I have combined the two approaches as they are very similar. All I did was to give them a twist to suit them to the approach I wanted to take. Using these two methods together, was founded on the principle that if using one general question, I succeeded in listening to the participants' accounts without influencing them with my interventions. Sometimes, there were circumstances when I had to ask questions to clarify points which appeared vague, yet I still kept back from commenting during the interview.

Normally, during an interview, a number of questions are asked. From the same questions many themes emerge. The method I used, made it possible for me to elicit a number of themes from one question only, during the participants' accounts.

I analysed the emerging themes together with the annotations I collected and jotted down in the Research Diaries and the Field Notes.

With this method, every member of the family had the opportunity of recounting his/her story of how he/she was experiencing life at home surrounded by the use of the Internet. It is prudent for the researcher to keep back from asking many questions during interviews of this sort so that he / she does not give any slant to the data. The main question should be formed in such a way to instigate the participants into telling their stories. On my part, I carefully took short notes, not to distract the interviewees. I made the most of my body language by nodding and putting on adequate facial expressions, thereby giving indications that I was being engaged by the participants. They felt comfortable and appreciated the fact that I was following their accounts assiduously. I had the feeling that they felt proud of assisting and contributing in my study. I can tell this because I felt their interest and enthusiasm during their accounts.

Still, I must to admit that it was not easy to be psychologically present all the time. There were instances when my thoughts flew far away and other moments when I lost my concentration for a few seconds. Thanks to recordings, I could still fill in the gaps when I was not "present". My tape-recorder played an important part for, besides guaranteeing that I could listen to the recordings many times, it also helped me to assess the impact of the voices of the participants, which also enrich the stories.

When I started approaching participants, I made sure they had no problems to my using of a tape-recorder during my interviews. There were three occassions when I could not use the tape-recorder: One was when I interviewed a person who was partially deaf and her voice was unintelligible in the recording.

On the other two occassions, certain members of the family said they were not comfortable talking with a tape-recorder on. In these cases I relied on my notes and memory, but to put their mind at rest, I showed them the transcripts after the interviews to make sure I had faithfully taken down what they had said.

Through my interviews in the homes of these families, my exploration and observations as a researcher, ranged from the time participants spend on the Internet versus the time they spend with other members of the family.

I would like to point out that I experienced a number of instances where participants expressed the fact that they preferred to be interviewed in another place instead of their respective homes. Hence, these interviewed were conducted at different cafeterias. I admit that I would have preferred if all the interviews were conducted at the participants' homes, but at the same time, I was aware of their concern and appreciated the fact that at least they accepted to participate.

After every family visit, I immediately made transcripts of the interviews. My memory would still be fresh and I would recall facts if these came out a little muddled. I also jotted down on the same transcript the observation I would have made. I wrote the whole interviews down, even though I was not obliged to do so. It was time consuming but worth it as I will now explain. First of all it was an opportunity to confirm what the participants said. Besides, when I re-read the transcripts, I seemed to re-live moments during the interviews, especially when there were spontaneous reactions by the interviewees. For instance, I witnessed participants pointing their fingers at each other and laughing at each other when recounting experiences.   In certain circumstances, members of the family revealed that other members carried their ipad or other devices with them to the bathroom.

I would not have witnessed these experiences had I used the quantitative methods. It is appropriate to mention at this stage that most of the participants sustained that they became more aware of how their lived experience were being surrounded by Internet use, precisely during the interviews. I am ending this section by explaining the Procedural Memos I used for this study. Later I will also explain the Narratology used.

3.7.3 Procedural Memos - (Research Diary and Field Notes)

Similar to in-depth interviews, observation is considered to be one of the primary research instruments of qualitative research (Seale 2008; Fielding 199). By observing the participants in their natural setting, the researcher is in a better position to appraise, in more detail, their views and attend to their concerns.

At the same time, apart from the interviews, by keeping Research Diaries and taking Field-Notes of the observations around the paticipants, the researcher will be in possession of other important non-verbal data that will enhance the findings, namely participants' emotions, feelings, body language, and room logistics, to mention but a few. These are important since, besides depicting a clear picture of the situation, they also express other information which the participants might not express.

Ever since I started this study, I decided to keep the two documents mentioned above, namely the Procedural Memos (Esterberg 2002). The first one is known as the Research Diary (RD), whilst the other one is called Field-Notes Document (FD). I felt the need of keeping two Procedural Memos, though some researchers may do with only one.

The reason behind this is that I have made a distinction between the first and second process of this study, hence, the Research Diary and the Field-Notes respectively. In the Research Diary I include observations related to the theme of my research, that is; literature reading, the structuring of the Research Problem, the type of methodology and the choice of participants.

On the other hand, the Field-Notes include observations which are the result of my personal experience of the study through the visits I made to interview the participants in their respective homes. Although these two procedural memos are very similar, yet, since they were made at different periods of study, I have kept them separate.

3.7.3.1 Research Diary

I decided to include in the Research Diary all that information and material relevant to my study. I divided the Research Diary into two parts: (A) and (B). Under Section (A) I wrote down the occasions and observations I came across during the process which was relevant to the research: I jotted down notes related to the pertinent literature and also the research problem, the methodology and the choice of family participants. In Section (B), I kept all the published material that I came across throughout the research and which is connected to the study. Most of the latter is included in Chapter 2 and will be further referred to in the analysis of this study.

Of the two parts of the Research Diary, I find that the first part is of particular importance, as it includes a detailed account of all the experiences I came across when I made the acquaintance of the participants for the first time to invite them to take part in this research.

In this section, I meticulously jotted down where I met the participants, what their reactions were, when I informed them about the study and other observations, for example fits of giggling, when I told them that I would like to know if they use the Internet when they are in the bathroom, or if they stop showering if they notice that there is someone online on Facebook or on Twitter. Two of the participants answered:

> Are you serious?..... But, it's true; I do not go to the toilet without my ipad……
>
> > (Carmen, a mother participating in this study, Research Dairy, 2011)
>
> My boy asked me - Am I really going to note down every time I go to the toilet with my ipad, to this person? "
>
>
> (Maria, mother of a teenager, recalling what he told her when she asked him to participate in this study - Research Diary, 2011)

Undoubtedly, these types of comments as well as the observations of non-verbals, cannot be noted unless the researcher is physically present. That is why I believe that the information collected in the Research Diary enriches the study because it gives the study a more social and human dimension.

3.7.3.2 Field-Notes

> Adding field notes about the setting, the conduct of the interview, and the interviewee, and so on, will help to bring back the context of the interview later in the analysis.
>
> > (Fielding 1993, p. 137)

I am also of the opinion that the use of Field-notes, like the Research Diary, are important tools because, besides the points raised by Fielding (1993), they also give a more human and emotional picture of what is really happening in the participants' environment.

The difference between the collected data in the Research Diary and the Field-notes' documents, is slight, but significant. The difference is this: the Research Diary, among other things, incorporates the experiences and observations I made with only one representative of the participating family not in their home, since the latter were the focal points. On the other hand, in the Field-notes Document, I jotted down the experiences and observations that I encountered during my visits to the participants' homes where all members were present.

In the above sections I have explained in detail the field techniques that I have used in this research whilst giving the reasons why such techniques are particularly important and suitable. In addition, I have also explained what I planned to achieve by using such field-techniques. I have found that these components were the most adequate for this research.

Hence, the next section deals with the narratology concept, while I will explain why and how it is used.

3.8 Narratology

> Produce a research report that gives an accurate, clear, and articulate description of an experience. The reader of the report should come away with feeling that: "I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that".

> (Polkinghorne 1989, p.46)

Among the important things I wished to explore through this study, was how each participant was living this experience. To this end, I was very interested in the way participants related their experiences during interviews. As Polkinghorne (1989), ably explains, the style of writing should lead the readers to step into the shoes of the participants.

It is also important that while the individual experience is analysed to see how it affects the person, one should not forget to analyse also how the same experience is affecting the group, that is, the family as a whole.

To make this study more engaging, I have used a style of writing based on the narrative approach whereby I relate what is happening and not just report, using a journalistic style. By using this narrative approach, I have tried to make the reader feel as if he/she were also living the experience mentioned in this study:

> When it comes to interpreting narratives heard during interviews, narrative researches begin with narrator's voice and stories, thereby extending the narrator-listener relationship and the active work of listening into the interpretive process. This is a move away from a traditional theme-oriented method of analysing qualitative material. Rather than locating distinct themes across interviews, narrative researchers listen first to the voices within each narrative.

> (Chase 2005, p.663)

On the other hand, Chase (2005) and even Bamberg (1997) maintain that, in a narrative analysis, one should hear the recounted experience of the individual in the situation he/ she finds himself / herself, while this is enriched by the writing style of the researcher. In other words, the researcher should explain and clarify what has been said, through his /her narrative account as he/she has been present at the interview. This is enriched by the use of the Research Diaries, as well as, the Field Notes.

> Audiences need to hear not only the narrator's story, but also the researcher's explication of how the narrator's story is constrained by, and strains against, the mediating aspects of culture, and of institutions, organisations and sometimes the social sciences themselves.

> (Chase 2005, p.668)

To reach this end, at first I tried to focus on two things when I came to choose the themes: 1) on what the participant said individually, and 2) on the experience of the family as a whole as suggested by Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan (2005). Initially, I intended to draw out the themes from two sources: from what the individual participant recounted, that is, when they said "I", and draw out themes when they recounted their experiences as a group, as a family, that is "we". However, when I came to analyse all transcripts, I realised that this was not possible because the sample was too large. This method is more adequate for smaller samples. Therefore I opted for a general thematic approach. As I explained further up, it is clear that such inquiry requires particular field techniques that pave the way for the researcher to explore and understand the whereabouts of the subjects under study.

In other words, I, as a researcher, had to immerse myself in the natural setting of the participants, and with the right tools, I have managed to elicit first-hand vital information and eventually I related it in the way I am describing. Notwithstanding this, the researcher must be very careful not to take over what has been said during the interview. It is important for the researcher to make his presence felt during the relating, but must make sure that the report is not oversaturated with references to him. This is in parallel with Clandinin & Huber (2010, p.13). They argue that "It is important that the voice of the inquirer does not write over the voices of participants in the final research texts by using an overly dominant researcher signature"

3.9 Pilot Studies

In studies of certain level a pilot study is important, since it indicates whether the decisions taken are applicable or not and it also hints at the direction the study is taking. I conducted two Pilot Studies: The Longitudinal Study through the Time Diaries, and the Single Question Study aimed at Inducing a Narrative (SQUIN) – Convergent Interview. Besides the fact that I made sure there were no difficulties, particularly, that the participants understood what they had to do, the outcome of the Pilot Studies was very interesting.

Representatives of the six families I identified took part in these Pilot Studies. In all the participants were 16 as shown in the following Table 5:

Table 5: Diversity of Families

Traditional/ Nuclear families	**Father, mother and daughter**
Joint-custody families/ Cohabiting families	**Partner, mother and son**
Single-parent families, (Males and Females)	**Father and two children (male and female)**
Child-free families	**Husband and Wife**
Blended/ Step-families /Reconstituted / Re-established families	**Father, mother and son**
Gay families (Males and Females	**Male couple**

Sample of Families – Pilot Study

3.9.1 Longitudinal Approach– Times Diaries (Pilot Study)

As I explained further up, I decided to study the Key Informant Family sample through the Time Diaries on three different occasions over a period of 12 months. I decided that the first one and the second one, that is, the Time Diary, incorporating the first seven days of January 2013 and July 2013 respectively, would be a Pilot Study.

I personally distributed the Time Diaries to each family after phoning for a convenient appointment. I made it a point to make appointments two weeks prior to the 1st of January 2013 and 1st of July 2014. I wanted to make sure everything was in order, because of the timing.

During my meeting with them, I explained in detail the procedure of ethics I am using, collected the signed letters of consent and went over with them the Time Diaries. I wanted to assure myself that there were no problems. Moreover, two days before the commencement, I rang each family to remind its members and ask them if any problem had cropped up since our last meeting.

I rang two days before, and not the day before, because the first Time Diaries occurred on the 1st of January 2012, and I wanted the families to spend the end of the year in peace. However, I rang again mid-week, to confirm that everything was all right and to ask if there were any problems. Nobody had problems. Just after the 8th January, 2013, I made another appointment with them, this time to collect the Time Diaries. I checked that they had all been filled in and then asked the families to choose a pseudonym. I followed the same procedure for the July 2014 session.

The preliminary analysis of these Time Diaries, elicited very interesting findings. To start with, I have to say that the analysis of these families was made family by family, among 6 different families. I made comparisons within the same individual-families and not with other families. The aim was to find any seasonal differences within the same individual-families. A clear indication of seasonal differences emerged in the amount of time employed using the Internet at home. In fact, when one compares the first week of July 2013, with the first week of January 2013, one notices that the use of the Internet in July decreased drastically. There were long gaps of time when the Internet was not used at home. It is pertinent to point out that participants were asked to indicate only the times when the Internet was used at home. This would show me how much time they spent on the Internet when they were at home.

Besides this, I wanted to find out if, while they were using the Internet, they were also doing something else, and in which room they were using the Internet. Moreover, I wanted to know whether there were other members of the family near them while they were using the Internet. I added a supplementary question to the last question. In this regard, I posed a question asking them whether they were communicating with them as well.

I had mixed answers to my questions. For example, the most common rooms used were the bathroom, the living / dining room and the bedroom. Others used only the study room. The majority of participants maintained that they did something else while they were using the Internet, like studying, and listening to music. When answering the other questions, some said, that sometimes there were other members of the family present, but they not always communicate with them; others said that yes, sometimes they spoke to them too.

Besides, other important data which emerged from these Time Diaries is related to the ages of the participants. It resulted that young people who fall in the brackets of under 30 years spend more time on the Internet than those who are older. Those who are over 60 years spend less time than younger persons. The result was confirmed both by Eurostat (2013) as well as by NSO (2012, 2013). These trends were confirmed even when I held the family group interviews Pilot Study, that I have followed months after the first set of Time Diaries was over, as I will explain in the next section.

3.9.2 Single Question Aimed at Inducing a Narrative (SQUIN)- Convergent Interviews – (Pilot Study)

For this Pilot Study I decided to use the same sub-sample of 6 families who took part in the Longitudinal – Pilot Study. Notwithstanding this, similar to the process I used when I distributed the Time Diaries, I asked again for an appointment with the respective families in their homes. Obviously, it was important that all members of the family would be present for this interview; only one boy missed the meeting as he could not be present. Similar to the previous procedure, I explained in detail the procedure of the ethics I was using, collected the signed letters of consent and went over the key question. I can say that the experiences I had were nearly similar.

It is quite understandable that not everybody shares the experiences of the family with strangers, especially when these are putting the family under study. Notwithstanding this, everything went well. It was a golden opportunity for me to see what type of devices they have and where they use the Internet. As I expected, most families use all types of devices: personal computers, laptops, ipads, net pads, smartphone. They use them everywhere in the house, except for a couple, who keep their laptops in the same place.

I presented them with the key question that of telling me their lived experience of Internet use at home. I reminded them that I needed to record the interview. As I have already mentioned, there were occasions when I did not use the tape-recorder. One of the families, who participated in the Pilot Study, objected to its use.

To avoid having crossed voices in the recording, I asked them to speak one at a time, while I jotted down important points that evolved during the interviews on the Field-Notes book. Immediately after leaving the respective homes, I would begin the transcripts and never stop until I finished them. During the process of the transcripts, I observed certain themes emerging.

When I finished the transcripts, I re-read them many times to draw out the emerging themes and eventually the main themes, and then I analysed them.

Principally, what came out of this Pilot Study, is very similar to the other Pilot Study (Time Diaries) conducted during the first week of January 2013. There is a mixture of experiences of how the use of the Internet in the home is being experienced by Maltese families. Similarly to the Time Diaries findings, the use of the Internet in bed in the evenings, during meal times and in the toilet was common.

However, the most significant themes that were elicited, which did not come out during the Time Diaries Pilot Study, relate that:

- Internet at home enhanced communication and organised family matters better.

- Children have not done so well at school because of the time spent on the Internet - Children and parents are aware that social media are alienating students from the studies versus school enhancement.

- Hindering interaction and communication – participants compromising in the time they use the Internet, so as not to hinder each other.   Lack of communication with children during lunch/dinner.

- Structuring of time: Different meal times due to Internet use - Change in sleeping patterns due to Internet use.

After a brief look at the result of the Pilot Studies, in the following sections, I will proceed to explain in detail the data analysis and interpretation that I have followed, explain the limitations of the pilot study the ethical considerations that I have followed throughout the research, and eventually, I will draw up a conclusion.

3.10 Data Analysis and Interpretation

> Words are the way that most people come to understand their situations…..we create our world with words…. we explain ourselves with words…. we defend and hide ourselves with words………the task of the researcher is to find patterns within those words and to present those patterns for others to inspect while at the same time staying as close to the construction of the world as the participants originally experienced it.

(Maykut & Morehouse 1994, p.18)

Although every part and process of a study is important, yet, I believe that the analysis and interpretation of the collected data are the two elements which finally carry most weight.   It would be futile to conduct a study using the most suitable methodology and choosing the best possible sample, then ignore or, pay less attention to analysis and interpretation.   There are various methods of analysis for quantitative and qualitative studies.   Undoubtedly, the way one analyses and interprets a study depends on the Research Problem which is being researched.   In a qualitative study, particularly, the researcher must ensure that he/she is loyal and faithful towards the genre of the analysed data.

In other words, it is important that the researcher demonstrates, and at the same time interprets, the experiences related to him by the participants in tandem with what he reads in publications, in the light of the respective studies.

Of the many and various procedures of analysis, I had to choose the best one /ones. With the recurring wish to explore how Maltese families were experiencing the use of the Internet in their homes, I looked for methods of analysis that would incorporate the principal tools that would satisfy my aim. As I conducted my study on two binaries: one based on the interview in the home environment and the other by the use of time diaries, I found it wise to use the following two methods:

- **An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith et al 2011; Saldana 2013), which, like other qualitative studies in general, is based on Thematic Analysis, but in this case, with aspects of narrative-ethnography, and**

- **A Qualitative Seasonal Analysis (Kenyon 2008), which in a seasonal way analyses the interaction and use of time alongside daily activity participation**

This study has an aspect of narrative ethnography, so in the analysis I made, through the style of writing, I also recounted those observations I experienced during the course of my study. I incorporated both observations when I met the contact persons for the first time through the Research Diary, as well as when I visited the participants in their own homes, through the field notes. Eventually, I recounted the general analysis and all my writing in a narrative way. In the coming sections I will explain how I used the two methods of analysis. I will start by explaining the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Later, I will explain how I followed the analysis of the Longitudinal Panel-based Diary

3.10.1 An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

> Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences. IPA is phenomenological in that it is concerned with exploring experience in its own terms….. Interested in what happens when everyday flow of lived experience take on a particular significance for people.
>
> (Smith et al 2011, p.2)

The use of the Internet in the home brought with it different situations and circumstances whereby life in the home took on a different ambience. Although nowadays the use of the Internet is taken for granted, we cannot forget that about ten, fifteen years, ago, the experience in the home was completely different.

If one were to compare life in the home today with all the developments in technology with life fifteen years ago, one would surely notice a big difference, especially because of the introduction of computers. I can testify to this from the accounts I collected prior to the commencement of this study.

People related to me changes occurring in families with the introduction of computers and subsequently, the Internet in the home. By means of this study, I wanted to understand the changes experiences by those who lived through them. To be able to better analyse this phenomenon, I thought it would be wise to adopt an approach of scrutiny based on an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

This approach analyses perfectly what I wished, for it explores the person's experiences in his / her circumstances and at the same time looks at how the participant makes sense of these experiences and circumstances around him / her. In other words, "What it means for the participants to have made these feelings and concerns in this particular situation" (Larkin et al 2006, p. 104).

This view is strengthened by the fact that the IPA focuses on the experience of the person in context and the connection of this same person with the concerned issue: in the case of this study, it is the use of the Internet at home by members of Maltese families. As I will explain in the coming sections, the process of analysing the IPA is time consuming and very demanding but it really gives a clear picture of the phenomenon being studied. Meanwhile, a very important part of the IPA is the transcript of the Interviews.

3.10.1.1 Transcription of Data

> It is worth transcribing at least some, and preferably all of the interviews yourself. This is because you have ideas as you transcribe, and transcribing makes you very familiar with the data. It helps you to start making connections and identifying themes for analysis. In fact you should keep a pad handy when you transcribe to write down these thoughts as they occur to you.
>
> (Fielding 1993, p. 137)

There are different opinions whether one should write all the transcripts or focus only on the audio-recording and analyse the sound bites for salient themes. I transcribed everything – verbatim (Fielding 1993; Creswell 1998; Seale 2008; Smith et al 2011, Saldana 2013; Denscobe 2011).

Though I was exempted from doing so, I felt it was more viable to transcribe all the interview for two reasons: firstly, during the process of transcription, I felt more at ease and closer to the participants and secondly, when the script is written down in full, one can easily analyse it holistically and find it more practical to cite quotations in vivo. In this way, when quoting verbatim, I avoided and lessened the possibility of quoting out of context. Moreover, since the analysis involves the process of coding and themes identification, I found it more practical to write manually.

I wrote every transcript on a word document according to the guiding lines of Smith et al (2011), by structuring a template where I included 4 columns, namely: Line Numbering, Emergent Themes, Original Transcript, and Exploratory Comments. Between the 4 columns and the details provided by the participant, I created another space where I jotted down annotations and those observations I placed in the Research Diaries and the Field notes (see Sample at Appendix III). Every line of the transcripts was numbered to make it easy for me during the coding and quoting process. I experienced this especially when I felt necessary to refer back to the transcript to quote verbatim (whole excerpts) of the participants' accounts. This template helped me to analyse the collected data of each participants in the best way possible.

Very similar to the process I followed during the Pilot Studies, I would go home and immediately start listening to the recordings and writing down transcripts. As the sample consisted of 90 interviews, besides the experts' interviews, it took me a long time to fully transcribe them all. Although it was too early to identify any salient information, yet, I highlighted certain words and phrases which I felt were significant. Later on in the analysis, I found this fact very valuable (Fielding 1993; Smith et al 2011; Saldana 2013; Denscobe 2011).

3.10.1.2 Cataloguing and Indexing of Data

I catalogued and indexed every individual transcript, so that the data collected would be organised and easily referred to. At this early stage of analysis, I want to explain that I analysed 90 individual transcripts taken from the 36 interview visits I conducted. These interviews were held amongst 36 family units composed of 3 Sub-Samples:

The General Families Sub-Sample, The Individual-Member's Families Sub-Sample and the Key Informants Families Sub-Sample. I visited these families in their respective localities, both in Malta and in Gozo.

Each family was identified with a pseudonym surname and each participant interviewed, besides being given a pseudonym, was also given a number related to the number of members in the family unit. I did this to make sure there were no double surnames. In all I included 30 pseudonym surnames: 30 were allocated to families who participated in interviews only and another 6 were allocated to those families who took part in the two sub-sample: the Interviews and Time Diaries. However, I had to add 12 extra surnames to allocate them to members of the reconstituted and gay families.

To be able to identify the participants during the analysis of the transcripts, besides the pseudonym, those participants from the General Families Sub-Sample, were identified by a code. This included the initials TS, which is an abbreviation of the word "Transcripts", the first and last letters of the family pseudonym surname and a number I allocated to each participant. To give an example the first family was given the pseudonym surname of Abdilla.

Therefore, the transcripts of its members, who were 4, were identified with the Codes, as follows: TS-Aa1, TS-Aa2, TS-Aa3, and TS-Aa4 respectively. With regard to the family members who participated in the two methods, the Key Respondent Families Sub-Sample besides the name, together with the first and last letter of the surname and the number, I also gave each participant 4 initials in front. Therefore, like the participants of the other sub-sample, I gave these the letters TS, representing the word "Transcripts", plus the initials TD, representing the words "Time Diaries".

To give an example: the members of the Zammit family comprising 3 members were given these Codes: participant TS-TD-Zt1, participant TS-TD-Zt2, and participant TS-TD-Zt3 respectively. I thus eliminated all possible confusion. However, when I used verbatim quotes, I used first names-pseudonyms only at all times.

3.10.1.3 Taxonomy and Typology

The process of coding and categorising is another important step in a qualitative research and merits great attention by the researcher. Therefore, in this section I will explain in detail the route I followed to finally identify a number of codes, which I eventually collected under a number of categories. At the beginning of this procedure I identified many codes and categories, but later on I eliminated those which were less relevant to the research problem.

3.10.1.4 Reading of Transcripts and Preliminary Observation – (Initial Coding)

The process of analysis was long and time consuming. Before analysing in depth the accounts of the participants, I had to read well all the transcripts to familiarise myself with them.

I read them many times and identified words and phrases, according to the way they were said, and by coding them I gathered them into sub-themes.   This eventually led me to find the main themes (categories) of the research.

> To begin the process of entering the participant's world it is important to enter a phase of active engagement with the data. Repeated reading also allows a model of the overall interview structure to develop, and permits analyst to gain an understanding of how narratives can bind certain sections of an interview together.
>
> (Smith et al 2011, p.82)

This process was useful and important to me for, besides giving me the opportunity of re-living the interviews, I could also underline significant words and phrases. I also added my first comments on those salient observations I had noted down in the column dedicated to Exploratory Comments. To be more focused on my observations and comments, I scrutinised each transcript from three aspects as recommended by Smit et al (2011) namely:

- **Descriptive Comments (DC):** Comments that mainly focus on the lived worlds and meanings of participants: Observations about the sense that participants give to everything around them.

- **Linguistic Comments (LC)**: Comments that generally focus on the language participants' use and how they use it: Observations about the use of language like tonality - E' il tono che fa la musica.

- **Conceptual Comments (CC):** Comments that particularly focus on the participant's experience but interpreted from the researcher's perspective: Observations that are based on reflection and personal interpretation as a researcher, but based on the experiences of the participants themselves.

I had to be more cautious about the last aspect, because as a researcher I had to make sure that the interpretation of the observations of the transcript tallied with what the participant meant and said. It is humanely possible to fall into the temptation of interpreting things from the way I perceive them, which would be far from the experience of the participants.

This process of observing salient parts of the transcript and giving my comments was possible only because I first read the transcripts keeping in mind the Descriptive Comments, and then I read the transcript again from the beginning. I did the same when I wrote the observations for the Linguistic Comments as well as for the Conceptual Comments. I wrote these comments under the column titled Exploratory Comments. To these I also added other observations I collected earlier during the interviews, which I had written in the Field notes

3.10.1.5 Evolving Themes

> The combination of interviews and observations from the field, along with reviews of relevant documents increases the likelihood that the phenomenon of interest is being understood from various points of view and ways of knowing. Convergence of a major theme or pattern in the data from interviews, observations and documents lends strong credibility to the findings.

> (Maykurt & Morehouse 1997, p. 146)

The process of identification of themes (categories) is an interesting process and needs a substantial amount of time to analyse. Yet, I admit that this part was more challenging than the one before where I scrutinised and eventually commented on the salient observations of the transcripts. Contrary to the first part of the analysis, I was very faithful to what the participants recounted. So, I was free to make observations and comments about their experiences.

On the other hand I had to be briefer and at the same time specific in the choice of themes. When I listed the themes that were emerging, I kept in mind what Smith et al (2011, p. 27) say that "where the part is interpreted in relation to the whole; the whole is interpreted in relation to the part". In other words, the developing themes mainly reflect the experience by the participants, whilst enlightened with my interpretation.

3.10.1.6 Relations Among Developing Themes

This phase of the analysis is important because it is the basis of discussion of this study. The process proceeded on two binaries: 1) Identifying a good number of emergent themes, 2) Gathering together in groups the emergent themes that more or less were similar to each other, while isolating those which were different. Eventually, I gave every theme a new name, that of Super-Ordinate Theme (Category). In all I have identified 8 Super-Ordinate Themes, which incorporate a number of emergent themes.

The Super-Ordinate Themes are:

- **Allocation of Time - Structuring of Time - Temporality & Spatiality**
- **Internet Use and Multitasking - (Internet use and other activity participation)**
- **Presence (virtual and physical - Relationality and Communication - Isolation versus Interaction)**
- **Hindrance and Interference with schooling versus Educational Enhancement**
- **Reasons for uses of Internet**
- **Insignificance of Internet Use – The Control Group**
- **Excessive Use of Internet**
- **Moments of Solitude**

After I fine-tuned the themes, I focused on one theme at a time. This was possible since all emergent themes were highlighted differently in parallel to the main themes (8 different colours). This concentration, on a theme at a time, helped me to understand and interpret better the accounts of the participants' experiences.

I will now explain how I analysed the Time Diaries which were conducted through a Longitudinal Approach.

3.10.2 Qualitative Seasonal Analysis

Another important aspect of this study that I wanted to analyse is related to the individual's experience of Internet use, in different seasons of the year, in particular, summer and winter. To be able to analyse this situation, I have adopting the qualitative seasonal approach as recommended by Kenyon (2008). For this analysis, the data was collected by the use of Time-diaries.

> A time diary places activities in their natural temporal context. By its nature, the diary provides a record of all the activities during a specified period (day, week) along with the potentially rich array of contextual information.

> (Harvey 2002, p.19)

In all, I analysed 224 Time Diaries which I collected from the 6 Key Informants Families composed of 18 participants. I started analysing these time diaries after the first week of January 2014, as this was the last session when the participants were asked to keep these diaries. All data collected was transferred to a database. Before analysing the findings in depth, I had to read them well to familiarise myself with them. I read them many times and identified and grouped similar words and phrases, and by coding them I gathered them into sub-themes. This eventually led me to find the main themes (categories) that emerged from the Time Diaries.

Through this method, I wanted to analyse the lived experience of Internet use at home of individual members of the 6 chosen families, at different periods during the year, with the purpose of comparing them. I analysed the individual time diaries of each member of the family. From the questions in the time-diaries, I elicited the following themes:

- **The amount of time spent weekly on the Internet and during the three weeks**
- **The peak hours of Internet use**
- **The preferred domestic spaces in which Internet was used**
- **Whether or not other people were present in this space**
- **Whether or not communication took place when in the presence of people**
- **Reasons for Internet use**

My main interest in the data emerging from the Time Diaries, was to analyse the differences, if any, between one season and another. So the principal theme of these 4 sub-themes is Seasonal Use of Internet at Home. I have to remark that the themes I analysed were focused on and illuminated by the Research Problem itself as manifested most clearly in the title of this thesis: The Net at Home.

Eventually, what emerged from the analysis of these two methods, backed by the literature I read, will be discussed in detail, in the next chapter, dedicated to findings and analysis. From the interviews, I elicited 8 main themes and from the Time Diaries there emerged 6 sub-themes which I gathered under one specific theme. Therefore, I decided to discuss the analysis in 5 individual sections, one section per theme. In the following section, I will talk about ethical procedures that I have adopted, followed by the conclusion to this chapter.

3.11 Ethical Procedures

> In many of its forms, social research intrudes into the lives of those studied. While some participants in sociological research may find the experience a positive and welcome one, for others, the experience may be disturbing. Even if not harmed, those studied may feel wronged by aspects of the research process. This can be particularly so if they perceive apparent intrusions into their private and personal worlds, or where research gives rise to false hopes, uncalled for self-knowledge, or unnecessary anxiety.
>
> (British Sociological Association 2002, Statement 27)

In respect of the University of Malta ethical procedures, in tandem with the above policy statement, all participants were briefed about the objective of the research, in particular, that the study will be looking closely at the different aspects of how new technology, in particular the Internet-use phenomenon, is experienced by Maltese families. Participants were provided with all the necessary information about this project and what their involvement would entail.

Moreover, participants were provided with a detailed informed consent letter to sign whilst parents, guardians and other participants, who have children under their care, were also provided with a separate letter asking for their consent to allow me, as researcher to interview children in their presence (Appendix III). Respondents' names, or any personally identifiable information about them, were not included. Pseudonyms were used. Moreover, with the permission of the respondents, the interviews were audio-recorded. I have approached respective participants through my personal contacts and snowball-sampling.

It was envisaged that respondents would risk no harm. In fact confidentiality was highly respected. Respondents were informed that they may decline to answer any of the interview questions during the study if they so wish. Furthermore, they were informed that they had the option to withdraw from this study at any time by advising me as the researcher of the study, without any negative consequences.

All respondents were made aware that the results of the research study may be published or used in a professional journal article or presentation, but their names or any personally identifiable information about them will not be included.

> One of the principal and essential functions of a university is the carrying out of research in all areas of human knowledge and experience. The University of Malta is committed to carry out all research involving human subjects in strict adherence to ethical principles set out in this policy and to all relevant laws and regulations.

(UoM 2007, p.2)

In the light of the above mentioned regulation, an Ethics Proposal has been approved by the University of Malta Research Ethics Committee. As I have already mentioned, I did my best to follow both the University of Malta Research Ethics Committee Regulations and the one stated by the British Sociological Association.

3.12 Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have given an overview of the research problem, and have shared the reasons why this research has been undertaken. In short, I have explained the aims and objectives of the study aimed at developing an understanding of the daily routines of families, their interactions, relationships and communications with each other, within the context of the home and internet use.

Then I gave reasons why such information necessitates the provision and the designing of an appropriate methodology. In addition, I have briefly explained that I used a phenomenological approach with a narrative-ethnography aspect. I gave details and reasons why I have opted to use both interviews and Time Diaries, as research tools. Immediately after, I have given details to the main variables of the study.

Moreover, I explained how such methodology enabled me, as researcher, to make direct contact with the participants in their own environment. In this regard, I have explained that this fact enabled me to build a close rapport with the participants that I have already interviewed.

To further support the choice of the research methods selected, I have referred to a number of literature reviews in particular, Creswell (1998), Moustakas (1994), Atkinson & Hammerstey (1994), Dobash's and Dobash (1980) and Seals (2008), to mention but a few. Further on I moved to expand on the Rationale for the research, which is followed by the Research Question and the Sample Procedure.

I concluded this Chapter by explaining in detail the field techniques that I have used throughout the study. Towards the end, I explained why I included a narrative approach to the research, discussed the findings and analysis that emerged from the Pilot Studies, and finally I made a reference to the ethical consideration. In the following Chapters, I shall discuss the findings and analysis that emerged from the study.

CHAPTER Four

Research Findings, Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

> **Family is complex and dynamic. It forms a core part of our existence. Underpinning family life is family connection: how families not just communicate with each other, but how they share their lives and routines, how they engage in social life, and how they negotiate, being together or being apart…….There are various ways in which family members connect within the same household, across distance and across time.**
>
> **(Neustaedter 2013, p.1)**

Over the passage of time, society went through a number of changes, which in one way or another left their impact. These changes, which the family as an institution has also experienced, followed earlier changes while they brought new experiences to members of society. It is a foregone fact that each change brings with it different experiences, reactions and behaviours among human beings. It is also true that the experiences of members of society, although it is not always the case, are expected to be lived according to the norms and values of respective societies. Moreover, even an individual plays an important role in the way he / she, reacts to changes and experiences which occur around him /her (Sachdeva 2009; Elder & Glen 1995; P. Muscat 2014, pers.comm., 12th September; A. Grech 2014, pers. comm., 12th August; J. Agius 2014, September 19th; J. Avellino 2014, pers. comm., 19th September; C. Azzopardi 2013, pers.comm., June 2013; J. Magro-Konti 2015, pers. comm., 19th October). With all this in mind, I tried through this research, to discover well how the new experience of the use of the Internet in the home, is / has been lived in Maltese society.

It is important to keep in mind that this study has been conducted in a Maltese environment which had a history of profound religiosity, based on social values and the role of social expectations in forming and abiding to moral expectations (Sachdeva 2009).

Moreover, aimed at reaching a better understanding of the main findings of this research, I have also referred to some recent historical episodes of Maltese life. The latter kept on changing along the years because of developments in different areas, particularly those of technology, among which there is the use of the Internet. It would not have made sense if I appraised the findings of this research outside the box.

Therefore, it was important that during this study, I keep the Maltese context in mind. In particular, I wanted to keep note of the changes in technological information which Maltese society went through during the past years, and see how these changes were lived and reflected by the attitudes of the Maltese.

> When asked about their attitudes to change, most of our respondents expressed their willingness to act boldly, experience new ideas and situations. Many were of the opinion that a person will never achieve much unless he or she acts boldly and only a few held the opposite view that one should be cautious about making major decisions in life. They also welcome the possibility of something new happening instead of worrying about the difficulties that such changes may cause.

> (A.M. Abela 1994 in Sultana & Baldacchino 1994, p.260)

One cannot just take the structure of the family and study it on its own. On the contrary it must be considered as one of a number of important institutions of society. Besides this, one must trace its evolution both in the local context as well as in the global sphere (Mills 2014; Castells 2011; Giddens 2000; Watt et al 1999; Abela & Walker 2014). The fact that Malta forms part of the European Union, as well as part of the rest of the world, makes it imperative that, directly or indirectly, it is affected by the decisions taken in these spheres.

Subsequently, these decisions become reflected in the everyday life of families; therefore, the family has an important role in caring for and protecting its members so that they keep cultivating the values and norms of their society which could be easily influenced by various sources, including the media.

Maltese society is constantly evolving and this is mirrored also within the structure of the family. This evolvement is resulting in a shifting of family values (Friggieri 1994; A.M. Abela 1994; A. Abela 2009, Smith 2008: J. Avellino 2014, pers. comm., 19th September; N. Delicata 2014, pers. comm., 9th September). One just cannot gainsay the fact that the Maltese family has gone through circumstances that have, in some way or another, left their impact on it. This has resulted from the present study and also from other local studies.

> The picture that we have of Maltese families today is certainly one where families are changing. Nevertheless, the family remains the most important building block of society. It is a place where solidarity between family members and across generations often manifests itself spontaneously and gratuitously. Many wish to continue to hold on to this idealised image of the family as the best setting for the upbringing of children and a safe place where we can be lover for who we are…At present, one of the greatest challenges that the Maltese family is facing is the change in the traditional family model…...

> (A.Abela 2009 cited in Cutajar & Cassar 2009, p.44)

In this Chapter, this study will clearly manifest that the Maltese family is experiencing a mixture of situations and circumstances at home which are directing it to a different lifestyle, far from the traditional one. Participants were aware that their respective families are evolving with the passage of time, especially through the rapid development of information technology. Moreover, it is clear that the Maltese family is adapting itself and moving along with this development (J. Avellino 2014, pers. comm., 19th September; N. Delicata 2014, pers. comm., 9th September). This is similar to its counterparts in the European Union (Eurostat 2013 / 2014).

To reach the aim of this study, I felt it necessary to focus on a number of objectives. In particular, through the methodology I chose, I tried to put myself in the shoes of the participating families, while analysing their personal experiences, in the light of the information that has been elicited from the experts' interviews, the literature I read and finally, my interpretation.

The literature I read helped me to understand better what the participants revealed to me. I was also helped by the notes of observations I made during the process in my field notes. As I explained in Chapter 3, I had to adopt the methods of analysis which were practical to use and which could accommodate both the information and knowledge collected during the fieldwork. Finally I came to the conclusion that I would follow the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPD) as recommended by Smith et al (2011), where the transcripts of the interview were concerned. As for the Time Diaries, I followed the Qualitative Seasonal Analysis, as propounded by Kenyon (2008). Thanks to these methods of analysis which I applied, I was able to analyse, in the best way possible, the material that was related to me. Although I am aware of the fact that in this type of study, there is always the possibility of not coming up with the whole picture, yet, I still believe that a substantial element of veritable experiences has emerged.

This was possible because I tried to find sense, meaning and an interpretation of what the participants and the professional experts said about the use of the Internet in the home. During the analysis process, I went through the accounts of the participants with a fine-tooth comb. I focused on each and every individual transcript. The principal themes that emerged from the accounts were mostly about the time spent on the Internet at home, the level of interaction that family members are experiencing and the preferred domestic space were Internet is mostly used. In a nutshell how the latter is affecting their home life. To further enrich the study, using the same method of analysis, I studied the reports (transcripts) of the professional experts.

I listed the common themes that emerged from the interviews, while I interpreted them according to the themes that resulted from the participants' accounts and my readings. As I will be explaining in this chapter, from the answers to the general question, I managed to identify a number of categories, based on the challenges of living in an evolving networked home.

I divided this Chapter in 4 parts, which I named: Part 1: Sceptic Qualities of Internet Use at Home, Part 2: Optimistic Views of Internet Use in the Domestic Space, Part 3: Insignificant effect of Internet use (The Control Group) and Part 4: Analysis of Time Diaries, respectively. The first 2 parts incorporate the four main themes. Eventually, I discussed and analysed the the latter, in 4 sections separately, as shown below:

Part 1: Sceptic Reactions of Internet Use at Home

Section 1: Internet Use and Other Activity Participation

- Lack of Presence
- Relationship Interference - Hindrance of Interaction and Communication
- Networked Individualism -Source for Isolation

Section 2: Excessive use of Internet at home (Its consequences)

- Sceptic arguments for Internet use at home–prolonged chatting, social-media
- Digital Gaming; Extramarital Affairs – Pornography
- Hindrance and Interference with Schooling

Part 2: Optimistic Views of Internet use in the Domestic Space

Section 3: Networked Home

- Internet as means for Communication
- Allocation of Time - Structuring of Time - Temporality & Spatiality
- Family Friendly Measures (teleworking)
- An alternative means for moments of solitude

Section 4 Connected Lives - Expansion of opportunities

- Educational Enhancement
- Opportunities for people with a disability

Part 3: Insignificant effect of Internet use – The Control Group

Part 4: Analysis of Time Diaries

As with regard to the Time Diaries, it is to be noted that, as it has been explained in more detail in Chapter 3, I have managed to analyse the trends of the use of the Internet of 6 selected families. Besides this I have also analysed the inclinations of use of the Internet according to seasons. Above and beyond the fact that I studied the families individually on a seasonal basis, I analysed each family, forming part of the sub-sample of the six families, on the basis of: the domestic space preferred for Internet use, the time spent on the Internet at home; the reasons given for the use of the Internet; together with the element of presence of and communication among the members of the same family. I finally looked at what was common among the six families. As I have already mentioned, I have dedicated Part 4 of this Chapter specifically to the analysis of the Time Diaries, where I recount and analyse the individual experience of each family in the light of what the professional experts and my literature readings explained.

In this way I have managed to give an analysis of the common aspects that emerged, as well as a seasonal analysis of six different families

As I have already mentioned earlier, the first 2 parts of this chapter are divided in four sections, which are tied to the main themes that resulted from the analysis of the interview transcripts. The third part is dedicated to the analysis of the findings concerning insignificant effect of Internet use. Eventually the fourth part is allocated to the analysis of the Time Diaries. This part is appraised through a number of sub-sections for each family and others that incorporate common aspects reported by the investigated families.

In the first 2 sections of the first part of the Chapter, I address the themes which are primarily tied to the negative element of Internet use at home. The latter will be followed by the 3rd and 4th Sections in which I address the emerged out themes which are primarily tied to the positive aspect of Internet use at home. This is immediately followed by Part 3 and 4 respectively. I will start this analysis by appraising the main findings that relate to the reasons of Internet use at home

> Paradoxically, the technology that promises to connect people also threatens to overload them with extra work…… it takes them just as much effort and even more time to conduct deeply satisfying electronic communications as it does to conduct person-to-person encounters….. While the Internet puts more potential relationships at their fingers tips and made relationships easily to start, it also made relationships harder to sustain because it brought so many distractions and fleeting interactions into their lives. An environment that spawns more social liberation also demands more social effort when people have desires or problems they want solved. This is where technology is especially useful. A major difference between the past and now is that the social ties that people enjoy today are more abundant and more easily nourished by contact through new technologies.

> (Rainie & Wellman 2012, p.8)

According to the literature I read, the subject of the use of the Internet in the home was and is still under discussion. I have come across literature which gives a mixed reaction to how the use of the Internet is being experienced. There are those thinkers who propound that the use of the Internet in the home is instrumental to the lack of communication and relationship among members of the family.

The latter are also of the opinion that the Internet is actually creating disharmony in families (Livingstone 2002; Singer 2001; Kraut et al 1998; Mesch 2006; Whitty 2014; P. Muscat 2014, pers. comm., 12th September; A. Grech 2014, pers. comm., 12th August; J. Agius 2014, pers. comm., 19th September; C. Azzopardi 2013, pers. comm., 10th June 2013; Meszaros 2004). Yet, I also referred to literature which looks at this subject in a positive way. It portrays Internet use as a means of promoting a sense of presence and belonging (Neustaedter et al 2013; Nauert 2006; Miller & Slater 2000; Galea 2007). In other words, those in favour focus more on what individuals gain from its use. Among the benefits listed by this school of thought, as well as from the findings of this study, one finds the possibility of more contact with friends and relatives. Other positive aspects classified, include the breakdown of barriers of communication with people living abroad and also the possibility of an individual working in the comfort of one's home (Family Friendly Measures - Telework).

Besides all this, one finds another school of thought that takes the middle way. This school of thought maintains that the use of the Internet in the home has its advantages and disadvantages (Mesch 2006; Livingstone & Bovill 2001; Whitty 2014). The participants hold that though they acknowledge that the use of the Internet has brought about immense advances in their lives, yet, they are also very conscious of its perils. Nevertheless, what is the reality of Malta? What more did the participants relate in this regard? Did they affirm or discard the idea that the Internet is affecting their relationships with members of the same family?

What do they understand by presence or lack of it? The answers to all these questions include mixed experiences. This is a clear indication that the debate about the effect of Internet use in the home is on-going, so much so, that it has been reflected in this study. By means of the coming sections I am going to give a portrayal of how the Maltese family is living these experiences today. I will go about it by initially appraising the reasons why Internet is used at home.

Eventually, I will move on to analyse the impact that the use of the Internet in the home is having on the interaction and relationship among members of the participating families.

4.2 Internet Use: The Lived Experience

As Figure 2 indicates, Internet access and its use made rapid progress in Maltese homes. At first, as is the norm, there was some scepticism about the way families would be influenced, but with the passage of time, through the process of domesticisation, Internet use became common place (Cummings & Kraut 2001). This study has confirmed that the process of domesticisation of the use of the Internet in the home has led to a different family experience which is still evolving even today. Everyday rituals, especially those connected with meal times are among the changes the Maltese family started to experience. Before, a number of routine activities were practised within the family, as the participants themselves, and the interviewed experts maintained (J. Avellino 2014, pers. comm., 19th September; N. Delicata 2014, pers. comm., 9th September; C. Azzopardi, 2013, pers. comm., 10th June). With the advent of the Internet, these everday routines particularly those related to meal times, started dwindling and in some cases disappeared completely.

The conclusions drawn from this study prove scientifically that which was tacitly acknowledged through everday use, but not proven, namely, the experiences and circumstances common to the families being studied and others which were not that common. Of particular interest are the domestic spaces and the times which are mostly preferred for the use of the Internet: dining rooms and meal times. Compared to other times of the day, meal times are the most popular times when families get together. This fact does not automatically mean that there is necessarily interaction among the family members.

Participants themselves confess that the use of the Internet is part of the cause of this lack of interaction. Later on I will enter into more detail about lack of interaction when I make known the results of the interviews and the data in the Time Diaries. These will confirm that the Maltese family main meal is in the evening, when the majority of the participants are of the opinion that this is the opportune time for family interaction.

This study has however found a different picture. Contrary to times past, when meal times were the golden opportunities to interact with other family member, now, because of the Internet, this interaction has declined (J. Avellino 2014, pers. comm., 19th September; N. Delicata 2014, pers. comm., 9th September; C. Azzopardi, 2013, pers. comm., 10th June). Besides all this, according to the participants, similar circumstances are being experienced at bed time and even early in the morning. Even at these times, the Internet is taking over and considered a priority over other routines**.**

The participants excused these new priorities explaining that these times are ideal for communicating with individuals who live abroad and that it is the best time to keep abreast with what is happening around. In a way, interaction is also taking place, but with individuals who are away, rather than with family members who are physically present at home.

According to the NSO (2012, 2013, 2014), and Eurostat (2012, 2013, 2014), those of a young age make more use of the Internet than those who are older. This study, however, has found that the 50 years olds tend to use the Internet more than those who are 24 years old and under. Though age is an important factor with regard to the use of the Internet, it was not that salient in this study. However, it must also be said, that because the sample on this study is not representative, the findings on age and the use of the Internet are be looked at cautiously.

I also observed that there was no difference among the different types of families regarding the use of the Internet. I feel the need to reiterate that one of the main objectives of this research was to make sure that a wide range of family forms are incorporated in the sample; that is why I have included six types of families that exist in Malta. As I have explained earlier in Chapter 1, we no longer talk about the family, but about families.

Nevertheless, the most preferred popular sites by the participants are: Facebook, WhatsApp, e-mails, on-line books, news and shopping, among others. On the other hand, the women interviewed tend to use Internet in the morning, on getting up, while men prefer to use it during meals. Families, whose members have a tertiary level of education, prefer to use the Internet to read the news, or to gather information for research, while families with members having reached the secondary level, or less tend to use the Internet to access Facebook, listen to music and watch films. Another important factor which emerged from this study is the type of devices used by Maltese families at home: the Smart phones, tablets and laptops.

As I mentioned earlier, access to Internet is widespread in Maltese homes (NSO 2013), similar to other European countries (Eurostat 2013. This is one of the main reasons that I opted to study Internet use at home. In other words, I want to understand this phenomenon better as experienced by Maltese families. In order to achieve this, it was first necessary to appraise the reasons behind Internet use within the home. My idea, as shall be further explained in the next section, was to provide a holistic look at the reasons as listed by Maltese users**.**

This was achieved by analysing the feedback of the participants of the present study, as well as the results of NSO's survey (2013) as shown in Figure 6. Besides these, I carried out my analysis on the basis of gender, age and educational standards respectively.

Figure 6: Internet access by households by district
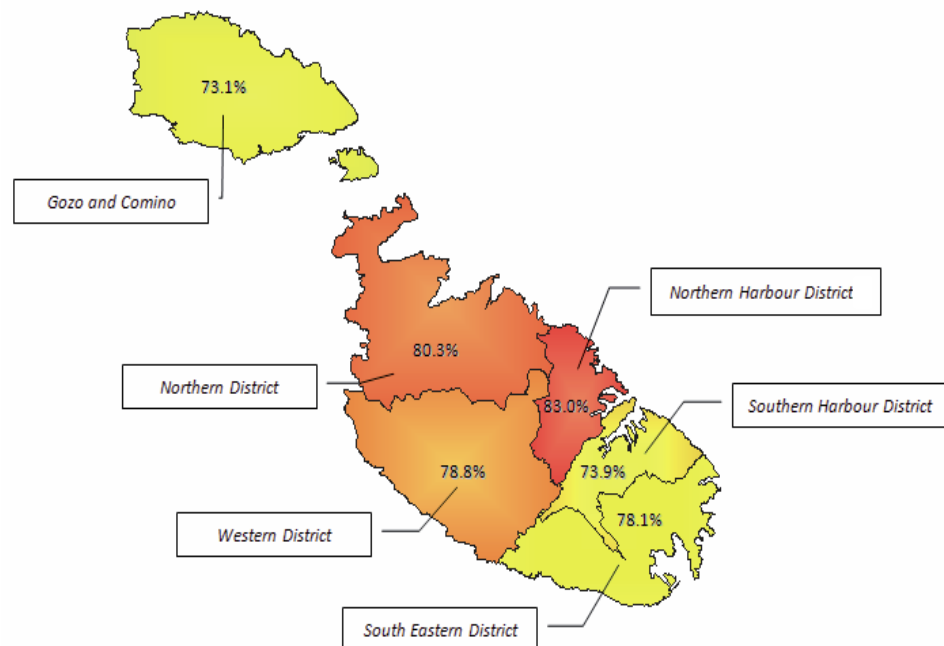
Source: National Statistics Office 2014

4.3 Reasons for Internet Use

> The Internet has created a medium like no other, one that merges the most notable characteristics of traditional media such as broadcast and telecommunications, while also augmenting them in ways that have revolutionised aspects of civil society, business, and government.
>
> (Global Internet Report 2014, p.9)

Internet use has become part of family life. According to international statistics, as indicated in Figure 7: below, it is envisaged that up to the end of 2014 and the beginning of 2015, an estimated total of three billion persons worldwide would be using Internet (Global Internet Report 2014; Statistics Portal 2014). Without any doubt, these figures are food for thought, for the sole reason that they give a clear indication that, with the passage of time, people are becoming ever more dependent on information technology.

**Figure 7: Number of Worldwide Internet users
from 2000 to 2014 (in millions)**
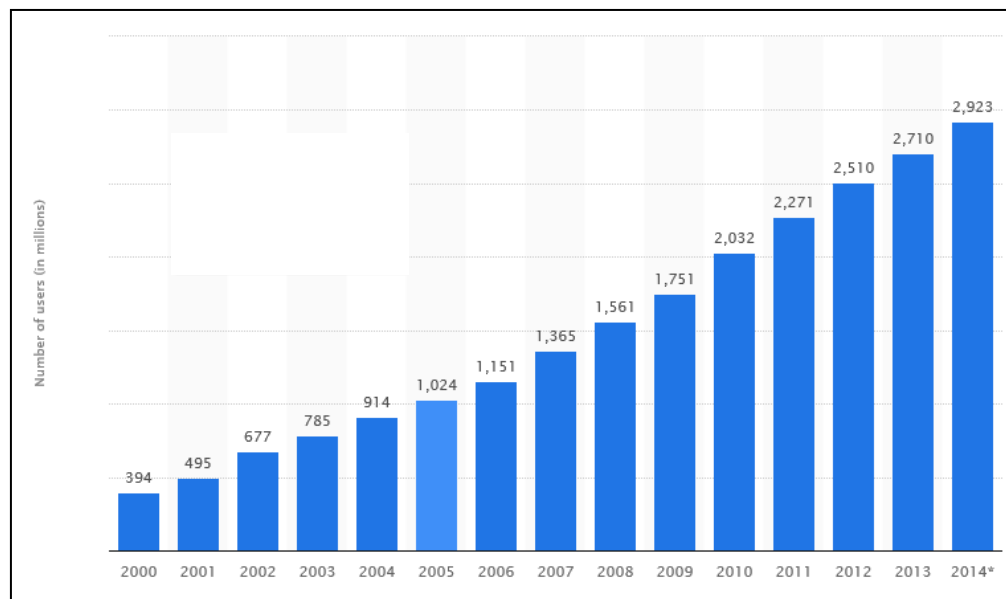
Source: The Statistics Portal 2014

This is evident from the present study that shows, from the results of interviews with participants, that life revolves around the use of information technology. In addition, it is estimated that, up to January 2014, 50% of mobile phones in use were smartphones with incorporated Internet services. This is confirmed by NSO that states that, between 2002 and 2013, the use of Internet by the Maltese has increased steadily from year to year, while its use evolved and became more complex along the years.

In fact, according to NSO's latest figures (2013) published in 2014, and that therefore give us information on the use of Internet during 2013, 78.8% of interviewed Maltese persons between 16 and 74 years of age made use of the computer, while 68.9% of these used Internet. It results, similar to the findings of this study, that young persons are the most frequent users of Internet, reaching up to 96.4%, while elderly persons are the least frequent users, at 24.0%. Middle-aged persons, although not having been born during the Digital Boom, are still frequent Internet users, although not at the rate of young persons.

This also results from this study, while according to NSO, those between 45 and 54 years of age amount to 64.3% of users as opposed to 49.1% in the 55 – 64 age bracket. What is interesting from the NSO findings, as well as this study, is that the great majority of interviewed Maltese persons (91.6%) use Internet to communicate; 81.5% use emails while 73.5% use Social Networks as shown in Figure 8. This proves that Internet is used mainly for communication and interaction purposes. This can be interpreted, contrary to what is usually stated that Internet reduces interaction, that Internet actually assists people in communicating amongst themselves. However, we cannot ignore the fact that, according to this present study, communication among family members living in the same home is being adversely affected. A number of differences, worthy of notice, result from this study. It is interesting to note that there is not much difference in the interaction among members of families with children and others which are childless.

The interaction among all families, except for the Kinds, two 76 year olds and Azzopardi / Rossi couple who are gay, scored very low. Actually, interaction is taking place, but with other individuals who are on-line. The study has shown that the young in age use the Internet to communicate via e-mail and other social media, while those who are more advanced in years use it mostly to read, do research or follow news.

Figure 8: Activities for which the Internet is used 2013
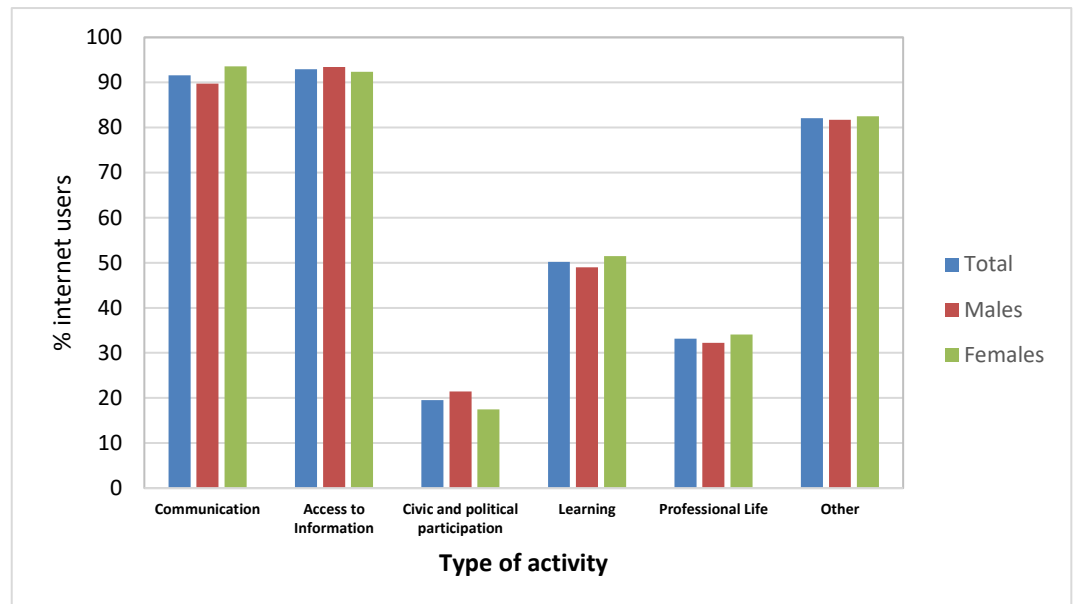
Source: National Office of Statistics 2013

It is evident, from my findings, that Internet is causing family members to ditch personal interaction in favour of Internet use. From the interviews, and the Time Diaries it clearly results that there is an element of opportunity cost even when one considers Internet use. For instance, according to the majority of participants (60 - 62.5%) this is resulting in less time for personal communication among family members in order to dedicate more time to Internet use. It is important to note here that I did not ask the participants how, when and where, they found time, other than that when they use the Internet, to compensate for the lack of communication in the home. It would be profitable for this issue to be studied, as it will throw light on other realities.

Despite the results of my study, a glance at the above Figure 8, published by NSO (2013), shows that the use of Internet for communication purposes is generally most frequent. I am mentioning this in general terms since most studies, including those conducted by NSO, MCA, Eurostat and World Internet Statistics, among others, do not specify whether increased communication is among family members in the home or among other persons outside the home. One may therefore interpret these results as referring to communication in general. In other words, interaction that is not restricted to family members within a household.

In addition, another reason for Internet use, which is also classified as a main reason in NSO's findings, at 92.9%, is linked to access to information by gender. Although my study is exclusively qualitative, therefore it does not include ample collation of data from surveys, I could still, in parallel with NSO (2013), observe the salient differences in Internet use according to gender. For example, from the interviews conducted for this study, it is clear that, amongst those participants that claimed that they make use of social media, there is a tendency for women to use it more than men, (36.4% and 17.7%) respectively. According to NSO's (2013) findings: Social Network Males 68.3% - Females 79.1%; emails 78.8% Males – 84.4% Females. Equivalent to these findings are data on the use of Internet for reading purposes. Both genders use Internet for this purpose, with the difference that males are more interested in news and sport results, while females use it more frequently for research, reading of books and magazines. According to NSO (2013), 70.5% of males and 70.2% of females indicated that, amongst other things, they use Internet for reading purposes without specifiying what type of reading they prefer. One observation that emerges from this study but not from others, including NSO, MCA and Eurostat, is the fact that a number of participants (20-20.8%), stated that at times they use Internet as a means of gossip.

In other words, these persons besides other uses, they spend time on the Internet to get to know what other people are doing, even people they do not know personally. Interesting is the statement made by one of the participants, Berta, 44, who said that the sole reason for her mother and aunt to use Internet is to get to know about other people, and nothing else. Instead of staying outdoors observing passersby, they now use Internet. On the other hand, Mary, 50, and Sandra, 64, admit that they often use Internet to 'spy' on other people's life from the comfort of their own homes.

My study also revealed other frequent uses of Internet such as travel and accommodation reservations, online shopping and selling of goods and services, telephone and video calls, and Internet banking. These are also listed in the NSO (2013) survey, where 89% of participants revealed that they use Internet for various other reasons, primarily the above. Another significant point to which I dedicated a whole section due to its relevance to my study is linked to the education sphere. According to NSO (2013), 50.2% of participants stated that they use Internet to enhance their learning experience, whereas out of the 92.9 (who access Internet for information), 61.3% stated that they search for education-related information.

In general, the reasons given by participants for home Internet use are similar to those published by NSO (2013) and Eurostat (2013). What is different from my study are a few points expressed by participants themselves, primarily that most of them (60 - 62.5%) sustained that most of the time they are connected to Internet, and thus, their lives are greatly dependent on its use. An example of this is the experience of Anthony:

> Internet is something automatic nowadays. I look at my mobile and there's Internet, and I therefore keep up to date with what's happening. I access facebook, see emails and Linkdin, including any updates .... apart from this I use Internet frequently at work for work-related purposes ... then I use Internet again in the evening, I check for updates continuously through my mobile and iPad.

> (Anthony, a 32 year old living with his partner)

A similar experience is shared by Mary, a 52 year-old woman who lives with her partner. Contrary to the latter, she uses Internet for many reasons, especially work-related, looking up recipes, and, she admits, to know what other people are doing. However, Mary acknowledges the importance of Internet for work purposes, since she is able to work from home and improve her quality of life as a result.

> I use Internet a great deal ... that's the problem ... since I use it especially for work. I use facebook to market my work like free advertisements. I am a hairdresser and florist, and I therefore post photos of my work. Many people contact me as a result of this exposure.

> (Mary a 52 year old living with her partner)

Similar to this experience is John's who, contrary to his friends, makes use of the Internet on a continuous basis for several reasons. He states that the Internet has now become a necessity, and it is therefore important to remain connected throughout the day to guarantee immediate action when necessary. In his opinion, life revolves around Internet access and use.

> I use Internet all the time wherever I am ... there are people who tell me to log off ... there are friends of mine who access it when they need it and log off after some time ... but in my case I use it all the time. Perhaps I'll need something, especially searching on google ... not only facebook ... so not logging off means I have instant access.

> (John a 27 year old living with his parents)

It is interesting to note the replies provided by two participants, one of whom is blind. Both of them stated that they simply cannot live without Internet. Life without Internet makes no sense. In their own words, Internet organises their lives, and even more importantly their quality of life was greatly improved through Internet use. "Internet is of utmost importance in my life ... it was through the use of Internet that I reached the standard of living and status I enjoy today." (Paul a 37 year old blind young man)

Another similar experience was that of Tessie, a 41 year old lady living with her partner. Internet use is vital to her life for work purposes, besides her life in general. She spends most of her time out of doors and Internet enables her to carry out tasks that she would normally see to from home. On the other hand, being confined to one's home now enables Internet users to perform tasks that previously would have required being on the spot.

> Internet is an essential tool, especially with respect to my particular job (referring to media) and to hospital work. One must keep up to date with research and developments, and what's happening around us .... I mean, I do use it during meals and I use it frequently. For instance, I spend time reading newspapers too. At my workplace it is not permitted, so I use Internet at home. I spend long hours working so I value my leisure time at home. I therefore use social networking, and since I work on the media, I keep contact with people I work with.
>
> (Tessie a 41 year old lady living with her partner)

These experiences prove that Internet is becoming indispensable in the life of the Maltese. The use of Internet has evolved over time. Although at the beginning, around 20 years ago, emails were the most popular means of communication, today its everyday uses have multiplied. I can safely say that in this day and age we cannot exist without Internet, as confirmed by most participants (77 - 80.2%). Besides the participants to this study, several of my acquaintances and relatives related their experience when Malta had no electricity for 17 hours at a stretch in 2014.

The main problem recalled by the majority of the population was that there was no Internet connection for hours on end, and this was such a calamity that the media reported it extensively. One must acknowledge the fact that Internet use has infiltrated into every sector, including the social and economic sectors, and without doubt, such circumstances of prolonged Internet disruption have a high negative impact.

In addition, other frequent uses of Internet as described by participants are the following: payment of bills through Internet banking; online shopping; leisure activities, including downloading music and films through Android box; Digital Gaming; access to magazines/books; social media; use of Skype; participation in blogs, and education, amongst others. A point of particular importance, as related by participants, is that, despite the fact that Internet is of prime importance in life, a good number of participants (49 - 51%) are still sceptical about its use in the home, as we shall see in the next section.

4.4 Sceptic Reactions of Internet Use at Home

4.4.1 Introduction

In the first part of this Chapter, I will focus on those accounts which give rise to negative experiences about the use of the Internet at home, which, according to them, in particular, is leading to a lack of interaction and presence in the family, isolation and insufficient academic attainment. I complement the latter by analysing with the reactions given by other members of the same family, regarding the use of the Internet at home. Thus, I will have the whole picture of the complex circumstances which are occurring in the participating families. I will do the same when I appraise the positive accounts and those who took the middle way. All accounts are accompanied and supported with relevant literature.

4.4.2 Presence or not? To What Extent is Internet Use at home Hindering, or not, Interaction and Relationships?

> The Internet extends our capacity for presence, extending this capacity just as writing, the telegraph, the telephone, television, and film do. As with all these extensions of human presence, the Internet forgoes some dimensions of actual presence in order to extend a virtual presence. Each successive technology offers a more convincing simulation of human presence that its predecessor does, yet all remain simulations of and substitutions for actual bodily presence.

> This work is not condemning, nor praising the Internet as such. It ony seeks to illustrate how, convincing and compelling as it is, the Internet's virtual presence remains deficient compared to actual bodily presence. This distinction should guide our responsabile choices as we determine the place of this and subsequent technological advances in our lives. We lose sight of this distiniction at our own peril.

(Garza 2002, p. 202)

In this particular section, I collected all those accounts which in one way or another, deal with the effect of the use of the Internet and the concept of presence. In other words, I have included those themes which resulted from accounts which mostly focused on the aspect of lack of relationships, lack of communication and isolation. The latter has been exposed by a group of participants, especially by parents versus children, and one part or another where partners / couples are concerned. I analysed the effects the use of the Internet in the home is creating with regard to relationship and communication among the participants and how these same individuals are reacting to these effects.

An important item of data which emerged from this study, and which, even literature regards as portentious, is that of time, rites and routines associated with mealtimes. It is clear that participants gave particular importance to the time when all the family meets for a short time, at meal-time. Family accounts about this aspect are mixed as are other accounts about different themes.

As I explained in Chapters 1 and 2, the diversity in these accounts is due to the fact that over the years, the family has changed, evolved, and adapted itself to the prevalent circumstances of the times (Mills 2014; Whitty 2014; Abela & Walker 2014; Walsh 2012; Allan and Crow 1989; Cheal 2002; Tabone 1995; G. Baldacchino 2014, pers. comm., 3rd July; J. Avellino 2014, pers. comm., 19th September; N. Delicata 2014, pers. comm., 9th September).

Another observation listed, which I feel is significant to this study, is tied to the activities which take place at three particular times in the home: in the morning, upon waking up, during meal-times (during the week in the evening and on Sunday at noon), and at bed time. According to some of the participants (40 - 41.6%) besides the fact that quite a number of them stated that they are connected all the time with the Internet, the above mentioned are the main times when the Internet is mostly used in the home.

Some of the participants (35 - 36.4%) reported that before they had access to wireless Internet, they did not use the Internet in the morning and in the evening. Instead, in the morning they used to read magazines, books, or newspapers in the bathroom or at breakfast, while in the evening they read books or watched TV. The new phenomenon appeared during meal times. According to literature (Fiese 2006; Megan 2014; Winterman 2012) and participants themselves, there exists a tendency that, people only communicated during meal-times. Still, little by little, the TV made its way into the dining and living rooms as well (V. Buhagiar 2013, pers. comm., 6th January; J. Avellino 2014, pers. comm., 19th September; P. Muscat 2014, pers. comm., 12th September; J. Agius 2014, pers. comm., 19th September; Mousu' 2007).

According to the participants, the use of the Internet starts in the morning when they are still in bed. They have a certain ritual: they go online, especially on Facebook, or other social media and check for updates and whether they have any emails.

Those who like to keep abreast with what is happening, then enter news sites to read the news. This ritual continues in the bathroom while they are seeing to their needs. Others said that before going under the shower, they put on music via the smartphone. The following quotations confirm that the use of the Internet has become an integral component of everyday life:

I spent about half an hour in the bathroom…. Literally using either my ipad or my iphone. I really enjoy reading in the bathroom. I am that kind of person that I hate who speaks to me in the morning. I need about half an hour for myself in the morning. Than the first thing I do I check the news, than facebook and sport online.

(Joseph a 40 year old lawyer, married without children)

I take the laptop in the bathroom… and I tend… just kind of carrying it around everywhere….Even if I'm having a bath or a shower, I'll take it in because I'll be in the of middle watching something.

(Agnes a 40 year old housewife-mother - traditional family)

Sometimes even in the bathroom, in the morning. Yes, until I sit on the toilet bowl, I check if there are any emails (giggling) and so on.

(Edward a 34 year old Gay (Public Officer) living with his partner)

When I get up, I immediately access facebook. She (referring to his partner) uses the ipad while preparing coffee. We take away the ipad from our girl to prepare for school.

(Mario a 33 year old father (Contractor) of a girl living with his partner)

While I am on the toilet bowl, I check the updates on facebook (smiling and changing her voice tone addressing her partner). Else what do you do at that time? In the sense, that I would be doing nothing, no? (laughing).

(Amanda a 31 year old Gay (Teacher) living with her partner)

Normally in the morning I will be doing some research, and if I need to go to the bathroom, I obviously take my mobile with me and carry on with the research …..For example I access Times of Malta and read the news, as in the evening I will not have time.

(Sandra a 35 year old mother (Business woman) of 3 Children reconstituted family)

As soon as I get up in the morning, I open the emails using the tablet and also check the forum of the University and also access facebook as well.

(Dunstan a 32 year old (Teacher) living with his single mother)

The majority of the participants, (60 – 62.5%) maintained that they stay on-line all day-long, checking every now and then to see if there is anything new. When they get home, they repeat the same scenario, with little difference. As I have remarked earlier, the use of the Internet has become an important part of daily life, so much so that it is used even at meal times. J. Agius 2014, pers. comm., 19th September, sustained that: "The Internet is present at table, just like another member of the family".

The majority of the participants said they return home from work at about 18.00 hours. It results, from this study, that at this time, all families (35 - 97.2 %) except for one, that of Kinds, (76 year old couple) tend to prepare for their main meal of the day whilst this is the only time when they all meet together to eat, communicate and interact.

> At its most basic level, conducting the meals involves verbal directives (pass the salt and pepper…. may I have some more). Children are encouraged to tell their news of the day and participate in family-level discussions about what happened in the neighbourhood or to the family cat. When guests are present there is also the opportunity for sharing fables and tales of experience that define family relationships and connections across generations…… meal time conversations are opportunities to discuss sensitive topics and assure others that the family setting is a safe place….. Meal time exchanges provide not only an opportunity to attend good manners but also a context in which members feel that their voices will be heard.

> (Fiese 2006, p.18)

According to G. Baldacchino 2014, pers. comm., 3rd July, today people work on weekends, others work outside office hours, whilst others work on shift work or from home. For him these situations have brought about new lifestyles, in particular where we are looking at situations where on one hand the probability of having people together physically at lunch time, dinner time has fallen and then moreover, even though they may be at home, they may be working or they may be on call.

And therefore, the separation between home and work had become much more diffused and much more blurred. Baldacchino (2014) stressed that: "this creates… competing claims, to the type, the focus and the interest of people, whether they are physically present at home or not".

In this regard, some participants (23 - 23.9%) said that notwithstanding the fact that they do their best to communicate at this time, still there will be some members of the family who will use the Internet – family time versus communication time, Lee & Chae (2007). I noticed that when I was interviewing members of families, other members of the same families, went on using the Internet. On one occasion, a father who was cooking, left whatever he was doing every five minutes to check facebook. Without being asked he said to me "I just can't help it". It seems that he was aware of his "habit". He said that he wanted to be updated all the time.

The rituals of breakfast, lunch and dinner have evolved over time to take on today's format. Historically, these occasions were considered very important, especially in high society. According to Winterman (2012), the main meal used to be held early in the afternoon, while later it used to be served in the evening. Great importance was given to rituals and routines. This went on till the Industrial Revolution which gave another aspect of food rituals and routines.

The new work hours introduced in those times among the middle and lower classes, led to the form of lunch we know today. Besides, the status of the family dictated the type of meals eaten, what was eaten, who was to be invited and what were the seating arrangements (Winterman 2012; Megan 2014).

> Lunch has never been just a meal; the meal most often eaten in public, lunch has a long tradition of establishing social status and cementing alliances. From the ploughman's lunch in the field to the power lunch at the Four Seasons, the particulars of lunch decisions where, with whom, and what we eat—often mark our place in the world.

> (Megan 2014 Review)

Figure 9: Picture of Family Gathering

I personally experienced similar rituals and routines at home. In fact, I remember our dining room well. We had a picture of a family gathering around the table waiting to eat in our dining room (Figure 9 Above). So had all my aunts and uncles. My family gave great attention to the main meal of the day which took place at noon. Everybody had to be in his / her place at noon sharp. We would then stand up, make the sign of the cross and say grace, according to whose turn it was to say it. My mother would then serve the food. She served my father first, then herself, and lastly the children. It was an unwritten rule that nobody left the table before everyone had eaten. If the telephone rang or somebody knocked at the door, my father would answer and say that we could not attend to their needs as we were eating.

Another ritual was the switching-off of the Rediffusion (cable radio) / radio and television. We were not allowed, neither to listen to the radio nor to watch the television during meal times. According to my parents, this would also happen when they were still living in their different homes before marriage. For my grandparents and my parents, the main meal was very special and important in the family. It is interesting to note that I found from this study that the family meal is still given importance. A good number of participants (34 - 35.41%) shared the fact that they do their best to spend this time together uninterrupted. Yet, there is a difference between what one wishes and what happens in reality. In fact, it resulted that this was not possible and hence during most of the meal times, members of respective families did use Internet. If during meal times Internet is used, hence communication and interaction is minimised (Lee & Chae 2007).

When Rediffusion and later on radio and television appeared on the scene, the sets were kept in the dining-room / living-room and were switched on for the news and the programmes which followed during meals (Chircop 1994, Vigar 1993). In this regard, (J. Agius 2014, pers. comm., 19th September) commented that it was like another member, referring to radio and television, had joined the family.

Yet, there is still a big difference from the coming of radio and television to the coming of the Internet. While in the first instance, everybody was following the same programme, nowadays, everybody is following something different and individually, but at the same time interacting. In other words, members of families are alone but at the same time together as sustained by Turkle (2011) and Carr 2011). I was present physically at some of these experiences both during the actual interviews I held and also through the observations I made during my visits at the respective homes. I was welcomed in the kitchen and/ or kitchen-dining room where invariably, the Television was on, while some members of the family were busy with their digital devices and others preparing food or attending to their chores.

I conducted the interviews mostly in the evening as the majority of participants worked, except for a few housewives, pensionsers and children who were still studying. When I arrived, the participants would have just arrived home from work or were preparing their meals. I witnessed how the Maltese family acted when members of the family came home from work.

The experiences were varied, with the common factor being that during the week the principal meal took place in the evening, while on Sunday it was at noon. There were also some who ate the main meal at noon even during weekdays, in particular the most senior participants. Figure 10 portrays a situation where everyone is not communicating during meal while using electronic devices.

Figure 10: Family Eating and Focusing on devices

Dreamstime Collection 2013

Some family members (23 - 23.9%) I interviewed argued that, during meals, some members still used the Internet and watched television simultaneously. Only a few families (16 – 44.4%) said that when they sat down to eat they put away their device. I was told this mainly by parents of teenage children:

> I think that the Internet affects me badly….. When I call them to come to eat and they stay in their rooms. I call them many times before they finally come. During meals I forbid the Internet…. That is the only time they do not use the Internet at home.

> (Edward a 44 year old (Portworker) Single father of two children)

The accounts of when the Internet is used even during meals varied. For instances, Tessie a 41 year old (Manager) living with her partner Gaetano a 40 year old (Public Officer), said that the presence of Gaetano was enough for her. She said that they both worked long hours and so when they got home, they did not wish to live separate ways. Instead they stay near each other moving from one room to the other.

> Many times we have what I call a time of silence….. we both work at places where there are people always talking; so when we get home we are in no mood to chat (giggling). It seems that there is a principle not to use the mobile phone or tablet or laptop when there is quality time for a couple. Our quality time is being near each other…. Sometimes I may be watching a film and something makes me laugh; so I turn the mobile / laptop, towards him (partner) so that he can see too. He sometimes turns on his laptop to watch a football game and there is "Replay" (TV Football programme). I also like football, so when there is a good goal, or when my favourite team is playing, he shares the game with me. It would be a pity if the Internet reduces communication….In this scene, if I need to say something to someone, I will not wait, even if the mobile is activated, 3 TV's are on and 3 computers are being used, I will simply not wait to engage with the person's attention.

> (Tessie 41 year old (Manager) living with her partner)

On his part Gaetano, although in principle agrees with Tessie, he maintains that, in an ideal world, while eating one should just eat and not watch TV, use the laptop or mobile phone. In reality, this does not happen and is not possible, as long as one has priorities. In this regard, the Mamo family had a different solution to this problem. Paula, a 62 year old mother of 2 grown up children, a 28 year old (Salesman) and a 34 year old (Clerk), was very conscious of lack of communication in the home though all the members of the family are usually present. Each of them, including herself, stay on the Internet and nobody speaks to anybody else. Paula discussed with her 60 year old husband Paul and her 2 children, ways and means of having face to face communication when at home.

This is identical to what Lee and Chae (2007) sustain, that families have to distinguish between family time and communication time. The latter, similar to Paula's concern, are aware that although members of family might be physically present at home, at the same time they might not be communicating. Finally the Mamo family found a solution: every week they eat together without using any devices or watching television.

This decision was for a time shelved as, because of the World Cup 2014. They found they could not keep it up. In Paula's words, everyone kept to their room watching different things, one watched a football game on his laptop, another one watched his favourite team playing on another laptop, she watched a film on her computer and her daughter did something else. Still, they were all home, under the same roof. Though they were not communicating, they still felt each other's presence.

Vince and Norman, a gay couple (Both Public Officers) are also going through the same routine. Norman's life revolves round the Internet, both at work and at home. He is connected all the time, for, as he said, he does a lot of voluntary work.

The Internet has become an integral part of his life and just cannot live without it. Both his proper work and voluntary work depend mainly on the Internet. He does not think that the constant use of the Internet is in some way harming his relationship with Vince.

> When we eat together, ok… it's like … I'll have the laptop going on….. Vince also has the laptop going on…. But it doesn't bother me … we still have conversations…. we still can share our interest together… so it … doesn't really affect me…. And I do not think it is affecting my relationship with Vince…. That is how I see it

> (Norman 27 year old Gay (Public Officer) living with his partner)

Vince was not of the same opinion. Although he is aware that Norman is more active than he is, yet he still feels that the use of the Internet is taking over. He says that sometimes he draws Norman's attention to this fact:

> But I do bring his attention like "…illallu….you are on again" you know "the computer again… on emails…" I think it does bother me…. that … you know…. Norman… he has many more commitments, than I have and obviously he is much more distracted by Internet ….keeping up with emails ….. So I think at times the Internet does take over ……. the balance where you have to draw a line where it comes to our relationship, I think it becomes a kind of a struggle …../

> ……..Because ultimately it is taking like a bit of your time from the relationship as well….Ehe and sometimes I feel that the Internet does kind of impose on the relationship… when it takes a bit of too much time more than perhaps it should.

> (Vince 27 year old Gay (Public Officer) living with his partner)

Publius, (Portworker) father of 2 children, living with his partner, had a similar experience to share. He does not use the Internet much, but his partner Gemma, (Housewife) according to him, is all the time on facebook "She keeps on using Internet during meals" he says. She, (his partner) giggles and nods to approve what he is saying. "She nearly does not take care of the children" he carries on. Gemma's mother, Kerry, a 70 year old, confirms what Publius has said. She says:

> I do not know how to use the Internet… but my daughter uses it from the time when she wakes up to when she goes to sleep. I do not know what people see in it. I do all the cooking and washing while she and him (referring to her grandson) are on the computer all the time.
>
> (Kerry, a 70 year old mother who lives with her daughter and her partner and 2 children)

Gemma, admits that she spends a lot of time on facebook, but denies not taking care of the children or shirking housework. However, she confessed that as soon as she gets up, she accesses facebook to check if there is anything new, but she still carries on with her work. Among the sceptics' accounts I met about the use of Internet, I found some people who think that the Internet is a threat to family harmony. A case in point is a couple who were on the verge of separating, as in the words of Peter, a 52 year old (Manager) the Internet had come between him and his partner. He had become exasperated with the situation. He considered the Internet as being of a detriment to relationships:

> I think the Internet is antisocial. I always tell her (his partner) to manage her own time as she likes when I am not here. She has always kept the house clean, always cooked, always gone to work. She manages well. But, when I come home, I ask her to switch off. Facebook, in particular, is worse than cigarettes; who invented it deserves the gallows. To me it is something sleazy and obscene…. it is a means of gossiping.
>
> (Peter 52 year old (Manager) living with his partner)

On her part, Peter's partner, Mary a 50 year old (hairdresser) admits that she spends much time on the Internet for it keeps her company. She says that wherever she goes, she wants to hurry home to access facebook. She says that she is trying to control herself for she does not want to end her relationship with Peter. She says she uses the Internet to promote her profession on-line. While she is speaking, Peter makes facial expressions and moves his head to and fro to express disagreement with what she was saying.

As I have already mentioned briefly earlier, and as I shall be exploring in more detail later on in Section 4.4.3 dedicated to Internet addiction, few were the families whose members were not using digital devices when I visited. It seems that the use of the Internet has become a dominant factor in the homes, to the extent that some members kept up the practice even when I was interviewing them. I add that they themselves (the participants) admitted to carrying on this practice even when they are in the presence of other members of family and friends, though they are aware that it is not right to do so:

> For instance I feel that Internet use during breakfast, does in fact affect our relationship…for example, I really feel uncomfortable when we go out as a family and everybody ends up chatting or doing something on his smartphone…./
>
> ….Either we went out to socialise as a family or we just went out to be physically present. This definitely was not helping our interaction with each other. He, (referring to her husband), has realised that it really upsets me when he spends a lot of time on his mobile / smartphone. So when he notices that I am in a bad mood, he just switches it off.
>
> (Rita 40 year old mother (Clerk) - reconstituted family)

Among the reasons that I listed which encouraged me to undertake this study, I did mention that I observed individuals using digital devices while being in company of friends and relatives in cafeterias or restaurants. I also noticed this practice during lectures at the University, when students accessed facebook while the lecturer delivered their lesson. For instance, (P. Muscat 2014, pers. comm., 12th September) shared similar experiences, in particular that, when he still lectured at the University of Malta, he caught students conducting games on their respective laptops. At the time, I asked myself: Is this situation being extended to the home, as well? If so, how is the Maltese family experiencing it? This study has shown that there appears to be an element of resilience, because this situation has become accepted as normal and forms part of the rituals and routine of the family today.

Some of the participants (33 - 34.3%) that admitted using the Internet excessively are conscious of this reality and some of them have expressed the wish to reduce the number of hours spent on the Internet. "Sometimes I wish that, for example, one day per week, we do not use any Internet, but I do not know how this will affect my family. My boyfriend, for instance, uses emails continuously for his work": (Isabelle 35 year old daughter (Clerk) within a traditional family).

As soon as I finished my interview with Isabelle, her brother John, a 27 year old (Salesperson) who lives in the same house, said that his sister was not saying the truth as Isabelle was an Internet addict and did not really wish to decrease her time using the Internet. He said that she had said so to impress. She reiterated by saying that what she said would be ideal, but the truth was far from what she really wished.

When asked why her dream could not come true, she replied that all her friends and work colleagues are connected all the time and she only makes contact with them via Internet.

J. Agius 2014, (pers. comm., 19th September), maintains that when one is using the Internet, he / she (the user) sort of mentally "leaves" the home and enters the world of the Internet. As soon as one stops this process, one feels as if an intruder has entered one's life, even though it is a member of one's family. During the interviews, the psychological experts recounted that youth tend to comment and make postings about these "interruptions" on facebook by using such expressions as "my mother is bothering me", "she is calling me". I have heard such comments both by the Internet users who were interrupted and by those who actually interrupted the Internet user. Very often parents, and this has been explicitly uttered by parents-participants in this study, try to interrupt the Internet sessions to ask their children to eat or to carry on with their studies.

Figure 11: Family Eating No Devices

Dreamstime Collection 2013

The issue of eating and using the Internet has taken priority in this study and I have tried to analyse it in depth. Figure 11 above portrays a situation where everyone is communicating during a meal with no electronic devices in sight. In this regard, it is appropriate to refer to a publicity slot issued by the Maltese Curia on the occasion of the World Day of Communication, on June 1st 2014 http://thechurchinmalta.org/mt/posts/38553/il-jum-dinji-tal-komunikazzjoni-socjali-2014). The theme of the slot was "Technology: Bridge or Barrier? In short the film portrays 4 members of a family in the dining room a short while before dining, all using their digital devices. As soon as food is served, they place their digital devices away from the table, to make it clear that they are not to be used then. They make the sign of the cross and start eating and talking. More than one interpretation can be given to this slot, but I will analyse it in the light of my study and the literature I have referred to.

For instance, in this study a small number of participants (23 – 23.9%) that I have interviewed are aware of the fact that Internet is taking over during meal-times, the time that they considered as important time for family communication. Moreover, it was evident that this fact is causing family disharmony. This has been confirmed and significantly expressed by all professional experts with family therapy background (J. Agius 2014, P. Muscat 2014; A. Grech 2014; C. Azzopardi 2013; and J. Avellino 2014) According to the latter, the main reason behind this is because, the Internet connection has a 24 hour daily appeal and has become an integral part of our life. The NSO (2014) reported that 87% of Maltese homes are connected to the Internet. This shows that Malta, like other European countries, and other places in the world, is up to date in this sector. (Internet World Statistics 2013; Eurostat 2013). The Maltese are very active Internet-wise. When I watched the Maltese Curia's video clip I felt the need to ask the Curia's Public Relations Officer, (K. Papagiorcopulo 2014, pers. comm., 1st July) to explain further the motive behind this video clip.

He answerd that the main aim of the slot was to instigate a discussion of whether the means of technology were serving as a bridge or alienation in the communication field. On the same day that the Maltese Curia published its video clip, Pope Francis expressed his views on the occasion of the World Communications Day. Besides other issues concerning Media on a wider dimension, Pope Francis spoke about how humanity, including the Church, could exploit Internet technology to approach more and communicate better with people:

> In a world like this, media can help us to feel closer to one another, creating a sense of unity of the human family which can in turn inspire solidarity and serious efforts to ensure more dignified life for all. Good communication helps us to grow closer, to know one another better, and ultimately to grow in unity…..Media can help us greatly in this, especially nowadays, when the networks of human communication have made unprecedented advances. The Internet, in particular, offers immense possibilities for encounters and solidarity. This is something truly good, a gift from God.
>
> (Pope Francis 2014)

In parallel, Sant (2014) queries whether it is still time to talk about Internet use on its own, because it has become a part of life, the same as happened with other technological development. Similar to its counterparts around the world, this has led the Maltese family to take on a new dimension in the way that life is lived.

Some of the participants (36 - 37.5%) claimed that, when individuals are doing different things on the Internet, but are at the same time near each other, is considered as quality time. When I compare the Curia film with my findings in the study, I conclude that the Maltese family is not experiencing the type of circumstances shown in the slot. Many times I found that together with the use of the Internet the TV is also switched on. So some family members were doing four things at once: watching TV, following the Internet, eating and "communicating" with other members of the family.

As has already been mentioned, some participants admitted that this situation was making them uncomfortable. In fact some said they want to find a remedy.

In this regard, (J. Agius 2014, P. Muscat 2014; A. Grech 2014; C. Azzopardi, 2013, and J. Avellino 2014) all maintain that nowadays the use of the Internet in home is given its time and attention. In parallel, the devices used in the home, like the fridge, the cooker the TV, are considered as domestic appliances only. On the other hand, the Internet, and the devices that are used to access it, is not considered so. This is because through Internet, these devices can create online interaction among those who use them. In line with this, those who professed a negative attitude to the Internet told me that they looked on the Internet as an intrusion.

Up to certain extent, they are in agreement with Mesch (2006) where he states that Internet use, removed family boundaries. In other words, the private life that formerly one would give anything to conceal, are now actively posted on Facebook.

In tandem with this (C. Azzopardi 2013; J. Agius 2014; P. Muscat 2014; and A. Grech 2014) sustain that their respective clients assert that Internet has intruded into their homes. The latter do not look upon the intruder as another member of the family, but as a foreigner who is disturbing their family dynamics. From what I gathered in this research, and from the emotions manifested, some participants looked upon the use of the Internet in the home as a "thief" stealing family time, or worse than that, as somebody separating families:

> According to me, the Internet separates the family. I have become separated from my daughter. Before, we used to sit down chatting and talking about what we were going to do. Now, she just says "good night mum…. I'm going to bed and access facebook for a while". I just do not like the Internet.
>
> (Catherine, a 37 year old mother of a 12 year old girl (Manager) and living with partner)

The same mother said that her daughter had become an Internet addict. Even when she is not at home, the girl is continually on facebook. According to her mother, she may be on a bus, near the sea, anywhere…. she just must check her facebook. The situation, according to Catherine, has become intolerable, as the girl has isolated herself from her mother and the rest of the family. The mother was really angry and at the same time upset, for although her daughter was physically near her or her father, or other members of the family, she was not "really" present as she does not communicate with them. This has been sustained also by Turkle (2011). The girl is living in a virtual world with her friends. On the same lines, all psychological experts sustained that they encounter similar experiences during their sessions.

Mesch (2006), Walsh (2012), and Livingstone & Bovill (2001) all agree that because of the introduction of the Internet in the home, family boundaries have been broken, with the consequences that the family is being negatively influenced. The following story of Marisa, a 55 year old single mother of two children, bears the above statement out.

The use of the Internet, in her case, interfered with her family life in a very serious manner. Marisa told me that her ex-husband used to spend a lot of time on the Internet:

> We come home, my ex-husband used to switch on the computer and stay up till 4 in the morning watching pornography. Then he would not get up to go to work. The children realised the consequences of the Internet and use it as they should.
>
> (Marisa, a 55 year old Single mother (Principal) of two children)

Very similar, was Rita's story, though it turned to be solved at an earlier stage:

> I confess that my family went through a bad moment…. This has to do with facebook. I'm all out against facebook. Besides the fact that it is ruining a lot of families, it is also leading families' disharmony …. Facebook is leading to a lot of unwanted hassle, both young families and senior once, are spending a lot of time on facebook, when this time should be used as quality time for the family. My husband and I we do not use face-book… We do not like these types of chats.
>
> (Rita 40 year old mother (Clerk) Reconstituted Family)

However, Silva (2010) was much more subtle in her argument. She sustains that Internet can be a medium for bringing about changes in people's lives, some of which may be felt challenging.

It is appropriate to note here that according to J. Agius 2014, P. Muscat 2014, A Grech 2014, and C. Azzopardi 2013) both extra-marital affairs and pornography have been in existence before the advent of Internet. Yet, now, access has become much easier. Gone are the days when individuals went to rent videos of "Mickey Mouse", while facebook has made new relationships easy.

Back to Marisa's story, although she refers to excessive use of Internet by her ex-husband, the real problem was not directly related to the Internet. The latter was only the means which her ex-husband used to watch pornography. Still, one cannot ignore the fact that the use of the Internet played an important part in the break-up of their marriage.

Another fact which emerged from this story was that, although Marisa passed through these sour experiences, she still uses the Internet regularly due to the exigencies of her work, which involves using the Internet for work even at home. After a day's work, she goes home and starts preparing dinner, yet, at the back of her mind, she is conscious of the emails that have poured in since she last switched on the computer and is rearing to go and attend to them.

She admits that her work emails are taking over her life, but she is adamant that she will not allow the Internet to come between her and her new partner.

Fabian, who is 28 years old (Teacher) and is the son of Marisa, had a similar story to tell about his father's excessive use of the Internet. Speaking very cautiously about the subject, he recounted how the experience has stayed in his mind, even though he was much younger when it happened. However, he stated that he uses the Internet only when necessary and tries not to become its victim too.

Another aspect which emerged from the accounts of the participants, is the fact that some of them (27 - 28.1 %), though not using the precise word, looked upon the Internet as a "competitor". Most sceptic-participants seemed to be concerned about this "competitor". In other words, they seemed to "envy" Internet use for the sole reason that it is "stealing" their time. On the other hand, Internet users look upon any opposition as interference:

> For example, I would be on facebook chatting with my friends, instead of sending messages or calling by telephone, my mother starts calling me…. If I am chatting with my friends, I can't just stop immediately. She goes on: "come and see what has happened" "Come and eat"….. "Come etc…" If I am downloading music just can't leave everything and go to her.

> (John 27 year old son of a traditional family)

What John said with a lot of facial expressions to back up his argument, was repeated by quite a number of other participants, especially those who spend much time on the Internet. Nevertheless, the NSO (2011, 2012, 2013, 2014), MCA (2012, 2013) as well as Eurostat (2012 2013), all recorded that the Internet is used mostly by individuals that fall between the age brackets of 16 and 24.

In spite of the fact that my sample was not a representative one, I still found a substantial number of over 50's (17 - 17.7 %) who use the Internet regularly, in many cases in an excessive way, thus affecting their relationship with other members of the family. In fact, Paula, John's mother, who is 62 years old, admits that she uses the Internet frequently. Yet, she has limited herself access to the Internet three times a week, contrary to her son who is connected all the time and checks the Internet every few minutes:

> I put a stop to my very frequent use of the Internet and made myself access the Internet only three times a week – Monday, Wednesday and Friday or I choose any other three days. On other days I simply stay away from it, unless somebody needs an urgent answer.

> (Paula 62 year old mother of a traditional family)

When talking about John's continuous exposure to the Internet, Paula said that like everything else, the use of the Internet needs discipline. She sustained that though the family members are physically present in the home, yet, there is a lack of communication and interaction.

Mary's story, a mother of 52 (Hairstylist), who lives with her partner (Manager), is similar to Paula's. The Internet has become a very important part of her life. "I just can't help it", she said. She had fallen into the routine of wanting to be connected all the time as she wants to be up to date with what is happening around her: friends, news, recipes etc. Facebook, takes a large portion of her time. She uses it to promote her work, but also for gossiping and to reply immediately to remarks and comments that she feels merits an answer.

Things got so bad that she had to compromise with her partner. He was ready to end the relationship as he felt that the Internet was his competitor. While looking at his partner, he remarked to me and her with a very serious voice "It is not fair on you and it is not fair on me". He was referring to the impending rupture of their relationship due to excessive use of the Internet.

This is much the same as what Oliver & Raney (2014) Mersch (2006), and Turkle (2011), maintain, that sometimes the Internet is breaking family boundaries and taking over people's lives. Even A. Grech (2014), P. Muscat (2014), J. Agius (2014), and C. Azzopardi (2013), admit that the use of the Internet at home is leading to disharmony in the family.

4.4.3 Excessive Use or Addiction of Internet use at home

It is worth mentioning, at this stage, that there is some misconception on the meaning of the term Internet addiction, and this is also evident from the outcome of this study.

As explained by experts in the field, and also in terms of what was described by Young (1999), Caplan & High (2011) and Kimberly & Nabuco de Abreu (2011), an addict may be classified as such if considerable time is dedicated to excessive use of Internet. Other persons, however, may well qualify to being on their way to becoming addicts.

> While time is not a direct function in defining Internet addiction, generally addicted users are likely to use the Internet anywhere from forty to eighty hours per week, with single sessions that could last up to twenty hours. To accommodate such excessive use, sleep patterns are typically disrupted due to late night log-ins. The patient typically stays up past normal bedtime hours and may report staying on-line until two, three, or four in the morning with the reality of having to wake for work or school at six a.m. In extreme cases, caffeine pills are used to facilitate longer Internet sessions. Such sleep deprivation causes excessive fatigue often making academic or occupational functioning impaired and may decrease one's immune system leaving the patient vulnerable to disease.

> Additionally, the sedentary act of prolonged computer use may result in a lack of proper exercise and lead to an increased risk for carpal tunnel syndrome, back strain, or eyestrain. While the physical side-effects of utilising the Internet are mild compared to chemical dependency, addictive use of the Internet will result in similar familial, academic, and occupational impairment.
>
> (Young 1999, p 4)

Despite this, the aspect of excessive use of Internet and its impact on family dynamics, similar to Spiteri (2006, p.26), became very apparent in this research. Certain members of the family especially parents and even partners, felt that other members of the family were isolating themselves through excessive use of the Internet, while others felt themselves neglected, and also lonely. Even though these members were physically present in the home, they felt isolated and this was manifested in lack of interaction.

In addition, according to this study, youth, in particular, stated that they communicate with their friends immediately after having been in their company up to the early hours. For instance, one young person stated that he feels guilty when he fails to communicate with his friends so early in the morning, besides feeling that he risks being left out of certain going on amongst his friends.

> I cannot live without Internet. I usually do three things at one go …. I play games, interact on facebook and watch a film. Even when moving from one room to another I need to keep updated … including the bathroom, where I even have breakfast to remain in touch. When I return from an evening out with my friends, I immediately communicate with them again through facebook up to three or four o'clock. All my life is controlled by Internet.
>
> (Thomas 17 year old living with his grandmother)

The same was reported by Elaine and Lara, two 15 year-olds. The latter, who lives with her father, who is separated, and an elder brother, stated that she communicates on facebook immediately after returning from an evening with her friends. According to her, she does this to spend some more time communicating up to the early hours.

On the same lines, Elaine, who lives with both parents and two younger sisters, stated that she uses Internet all day long, with the exception of the hours dedicated to school and homework.

> I mostly use my mobile and Internet for facebook and communication with friends …. Sometimes also for research … but mainly I use 3G when I take my mobile to school (giggling). When I'm on school transport I'm already communicating with friends, then when I go back home I spend another two hours, I do my homework, then I'm back on Internet again (giggling)….Today everyone uses facebook, even the very young. I complete my homework but I'm soon back, and on weekends I spend even up to two o'clock at night, on an uncomfortable chair. Since I'll be tired, I get up late in the morning and I'm using my mobile within minutes. I spend more time online than with my family. I ignore my parents when they talk to me. I'm constantly on my mobile.

> (Elaine 15 year old young lady living with her family-reconstituted)

Elaine's mother, Sandra, who is 35, realised that action was necessary to prevent her daughter from failing her exams. She regularly draws her daughter's attention to the danger of spending too much time on Internet. It is a family rule for all members to refrain from being online during dinner time, so that, as Sandra points out, the family may enjoy some quality time. However, the mother stated that she frequently notices that her daughter uses the Internet when she should be studying.

> The Internet is a near indispensable resource tool for students seeking to find information; communicate with friends, family and professionals; and as a means of entertainment. Some students, however, find that they begin to use the Internet to fill all their time, and avoid other life responsibilities or neglect normal social interactions. Internet use may become detrimental to their studies, work, and social lives as they grow increasingly dependent on their Internet time and Internet friends.

> (Miller 2007 in Inoue 2007, p. 149)

Besides the above, during the interviews, P.Muscat (2014), A. Grech (2014), C. Azzopardi (2013) and J. Agius (2014), report that excessive Internet use and isolations versus family harmony are issues that frequently crop up during therapy. However, one must point out that the frequency of such discussions are of a low percentage when compared to the whole population of Malta and it is therefore very important to keep this in mind when contemplating this subject. Excessive Internet use is often related to other traits and urges in individuals.

This is stated by Hughes, & Hans (2001), Turkle (2011), Aboujaoude (2011), Griffits (2011) and Caplan (2003), where the latter mentions the repercussions of isolation and lack of interaction: "…studies suggests that lonely and depressed individuals may develop a preference for online social interaction, which, in turn, leads to negative outcomes associated with their Internet use."

In parallel, Leung (2011) carried out a study that discovered that many persons who interact on-line do so because they are loners:

> Analyses revealed that individuals who are lonely and have a lower level of offline social support find opportunities for identity experimentation online more gratifying than those who are less lonely or not lonely. Both loneliness and social support offline were found significantly related to preference for online social interaction, but the relationships were mediated by identity experimentation online.

> (Leung 2011, p.01)

According to Turkle (2011) her experience as a clinical psychologist made her realise that most individuals experience solitude as a result of spending too much time on Internet. This, according to Turkle, results in a vicious circle wherein a person who feels lonely turns to Internet to fill the void, especially by spending excessive time on online games:

> When on line life becomes your game, there are new complications. If lonely, you can find continual connection. But this may leave you more isolated, without real people around you. So you may return to the Internet for another hit of what feels like connection.

> (Turkle 2011, p. 227).

Notwithstanding this, an important element that is related to solitude involves those who, although in company, are still lost in their own virtual world. This issue as also discussed in this study, featured recently on YouTube and is doing the rounds on social media. It is evident that, although young people and even adults are often in the company of their peers, they hardly communicate face to face, but contact others who are online.

They frequently also carry out other tasks on Internet. This results in loneliness since individuals shun face to face interaction and communicate only through the virtual world (Turkle 2011; Aboujaoude et al 2011; Caplan et al 2011; Carr 2011; (J. Agius 2014; P. Muscat 2014; A. Grech 2014; C. Azzopardi 2013).

An identical situation as that described in the feature, also as explained by Turkle (2011), Harper (2012) and Neustaedter et al (2013), is experienced by interviewee Catherine, a 35 year-old mother (Busniess Person). She stated that her daughter, together with her cousin, both 12, are often in each other's company in her daughter's bedroom, but they do not communicate verbally. They use facebook to interact between themselves and with friends. I have experienced this personally while observing others, record of which is kept in my Research Diary. It would have been interesting to illustrate using photographs of individuals in this situation. It would have been unprofessional and unethical to publish such photographs. In a nuthshell, the reality is that some people are frequently in company yet they are still isolated in their virtual world. Without entering into the merits of whether this is positive or negative, I feel the need to mention how disappointed some interviewees are about this situation.

Catherine laments the impossibility of this new phenomenon, which she observes in her daughter and niece. The same views were expressed by 44 year-old Joseph, Lawyer who is married to Doris (CEO), who is also 44. Whilst Doris expressed similar views, her husband states that the use of Internet is threatening their verbal communication, both when they are together at home and even when they go out.

> By and large, I agree with Doris that this situation affects us… somewhat…it limits our relationship since when we're together we spend considerable time on our mobiles or laptops rather than communicating. I am more conscious of this since I regretfully spend more time than my wife in a virtual world.
>
> (Joseph 44 year old Layer married with no children)

Doris, however, seemed more affected. This was evident from her facial expressions that revealed that she regrets the situation she has found herself in. She feels "cut off" from her husband even though he is physically present. She laments the fact that he does not take a stand to control his urge to use his smartphone. She finds herself having to communicate with him through Internet:

> It has effected in the sense that we communicate less and we communicate more……we communicate less..face to face….I think and perhaps shorter conversations ….and we're… in between conversations….Even sometimes we are looking at our phones….but we also communicate more in this sense , that if I am in a different part of the house , which is like not easily … like I can't shout across and I don't like shouting….a type of person I am…. so ……I do much rather sent a message or what's app, which is obviously Internet based and I communicate with Joseph in that way.   So that happens as well…..It changed it obviously it changed it …….I think it is slightly detrimental.
>
> (Doris 44 year old married with no children)

Identical to this is Mario's experience. Mario, 38 year old (Computer Programmer) living with his wife and her daughter, stated that his wife often complains when he uses Internet at home. He admits that he often works from home, but this too annoys his wife Agnes (Teacher), who is 40 years old and who at times encourages him to refrain from using Internet at home.

> I do get work emails at home as well on my phone so ….you know…. I always have a look at what it is coming if there is an emergency or something that I kind of have a look at even though it is part of office files… so I look at that as well…..
>
> That I sometimes work from home…..she says (Laughing) "enough work now, enough work now" (referring to his wife)….but in reality…. Since she is studying…..as well … sometimes on a weekend we spent, both, time working or staff like this…. It is not that…..for what I do I just have to react if something crops up…..
> (Mario 38 year old (Computer Programmer) married – traditionally)

It is important to note that Agnes herself admits that when she is alone at home she carries her tablet from one room to another to avoid missing out on interesting facts. During visits to various families, I have always met at least one family member who spends excessive time on Internet while at home.

A group of participants of this research (46 - 47.9 %) stated that they frequently use facebook and blogs to see what is going on, to comment and to communicate their feelings. Despite conflicting views on Internet use, there are families (8 - 22.2%) that are strengthened by the very use of Internet.

They experience more harmony and organisation, but this greatly depends on the particular family lifestyle. In parallel to Rheingold (2014), Turkle (2011), and Carr (2011), to mention but a few, this phenomenon was revealed during my studies, wherein I discovered that what is an obstacle to one family could well be an asset to another. It would be interesting to carry out a study in Malta on Internet Addiction as a medical condition.

According to studies carried out between 2000 and 2009, both in Europe and in the United States, the prevalance rate of excessive Internet use was between 1.5% and 8.2%. It also emerged that there is a connection between Internet addiction and psychiatric disorders, mostly triggered by personality traits, parenting and familial factors, alcohol use and social anxiety. One therefore questions: besides personality traits that may be pathological, what is leading to other factors such as bad parenting, alcohol use and social anxiety that in turn lead to extreme loneliness?

I shall not be entering into such discussion, since this is in itself merits a completely new study. However, it is important to mention this observation since I have come across it during my studies. It is seems that certain factors within the family, such as conflict, result in excessive use of Internet.

In other words, family members tend to experience loneliness due to family disharmony (A. Grech 2014, pers.comm 12th August; P. Muscat 2014, pers.comm 12th September). Studies conclude that use of excessive Internet in the home environment leads to what is known as cyber widows. According to Young (1996), excessive use eventually points in the direction of family problems:

> Serious relationship problems were reported by fifty-three percent of Internet addicts surveyed. Marriages, dating relationships, parent-child relationships, and close friendships have been noted to be seriously disrupted by "net binges." Patients will gradually spend less time with people in their lives in exchange for solitary time in front of a computer. Marriages appear to be the most affected as Internet use interferes.

(Young 1996, p. 5)

In this context, it is to be observed that the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM) reported that there is a proposal for Internet Addiction to be classified as a disorder as of year 2015 (Weinstein & Lejoyeux 2010, p. 277-283).

This is most relevant to my area of research since parenting and familial factors have been identified as triggering factors resulting in excessive Internet use. I therefore ask what negative parenting skills and familial factors are resulting due to excessive use of Internet ?

According to P Muscat (2014 pers. comm., 12th September), who reports from his personal experience at the clinic, it is evident that young children are giving access to electronic devices from an early age. This is normally done to keep them occupied when the parents are busy elsewhere. Muscat believes that this behaviour is encouraging young children to favour the use of electronic means of communication from a very early age.

> I note several parents who hand over their mobiles to very young children to keep them occupied, perhaps by playing games … even during a session in my clinic … perhaps the mother would have an appointment and brings her very young child …. This child, although maybe only three years old, would already know how to use the mobile. In the past we used to use other means of keeping our children occupied, possibly by face to face communication, but nowadays a parent hands over equipment that curbs communication rather than encouraging it.
> The child therefore learns to isolate himself in a virtual world. I observe this very often … there would be two children, one using an ipad and the other a mobile phone, both engrossed in their own isolated world while the parent is discussing her problems with me … there are therefore three family members in complete isolation from each other, two in a virtual world while the parent proceeds with her consultation.

<div align="right">(P. Muscat 2014, pers. comm 12th September)</div>

Other matters that are linked to excessive Internet use and social isolation, both of which are becoming more common in Malta, are Digital Gaming and pornography. As already mentioned in this study and confirmed by various studies, it was not Internet itself that introduced the latter in society. Internet only facilitated access to people of all ages and backgrounds.

> In the case of compulsive cybersex, the content of display, more specifically pornography, is a specific form of sexual computer-assisted behavioral addiction. Therapists report a growing number of patients addicted to this activity, a form of both Internet addiction and sexual addiction, with the standard problems associated with addictive behavior.

> (Weinstein & Lejoyeux 2010, p.280)

Nevertheless, whatever the cause, it goes without saying that the effect on family dynamics is substantial. I would like to add the observations of Turkle (2011) who stated that excessive Internet use is leading to problems at an individual level, with this eventually affecting the whole family. It is not a problem when a person enjoys some time on the Internet, especially when playing games. It becomes a problem when this takes over the person's life:

> Many people who enjoy computer games, have asked me: "What's my problem? What's wrong with Scrabble or Chess played online or against a computer? What's wrong with the new artistic world of computer games? Nothing is wrong with them. But looking to games for amusement is one thing. Looking at them for life is another.

> We are alone and imagine ourselves together. On networks, including game worlds, we are together but so lessen our expectations of other people that we can feel utterly alone. In both cases, our devices keep us distracted. They provide the sense of safety in a place of excluding concentration. Some call it the "zone".

> (Turkle 2011, p. 226)

What emerges from this study is that participants provided the necessary information on excessive use with regards to their family. Most relevant is the experience of Mario, a 33 year old building contractor, who lives with his partner and their child. In his case, living without facebook and gaming is a tragedy:

> Every morning, my play-station is online, I access facebook on my mobile and YouTube on my ipad…I play games, even during dinner, I access facebook and never stop playing games… nonstop …I sometimes tell my family we had better enjoy some quality time together … but usually we are all accessing Internet …even in the bedroom. My partner doesn't use it in the bedroom, but I do, and I have problems when Internet fails for some reason … I cannot imagine life without it. Today Internet is used for everything, including email at work. I even watch television through Internet.
>
> (Mario, 33 year old (Contractor) father of a 12 year old child living with his partner)

The most common use of Internet is communication as stated by the National Statistics Office (NSO, 2013). In fact, it says that 93.6% of the Maltese population use the Internet for communication. Similarly, the majority of the participants in this research admitted to using communication facilities on Internet, besides email, facebook, what's app. It is evident that participants seek to have access to their friends, to keep them informed of their every step; for example, if they went in to another room they would create a post, likewise if the food was good or if they are having a shower.

Besides the unhealthy lack of privacy this entails, this results in continuous Internet use at all times of the day.

Lily, a 19 year-old Gozitan who is studying in Malta, has had a similar experience. She cannot live without Internet, mostly for research, to communicate with friends and her parents in Gozo using Skype. On the other hand, Agnes, a 40 year-old mother (Teacher), uses Internet to the extreme that the first thing she does as soon as she steps inside the home is to access the web to keep up-to-date. She carries her equipment from room to room not to miss out on anything. Besides, she finds it convenient to communicate with her daughter in the same house since both are continuously using Internet.

> Well I have Internet on my phone as well so usually as soon as I come home …it connects I start hearing …ting…ting…ting….all the messages and stuff……Usually when I'm cooking ……I put on something and watch …..I stream…..usually programmes …..and watch while I'm cooking ……if somebody chats to me I chat….or Jessica (daughter) we are talking from the other room……we tend to communicate like that on facebook more than anything else……I tend to carry my laptop all around the house……I mean if …..I am going to be ……ironing in my bedroom……I take my laptop in there…..and I watch ….I'll stream something and watch while I am ironing….or if I am cleaning the bathroom ……I'll take the laptop in the bathroom….and I tend …just kind of carrying it around everywhere.
>
> (Agnes 40 year old mother (Teacher) living with her teenage daughter and husband –traditional family)

Another identical situation is experienced by Anthony, a 40 year-old single father (Businessman) who lives with his 12 year-old son. Internet has become an integral part of their lives and they cannot survive without it. Both are connected to the web at all hours.

> At home we are connected all the time…we check the computers all the time……in between eating (giggling).   We check all the time…..if emails are coming in …….
>
> We have a laptop each and 2 smartphones, one for each….as well … and we are connected   all the time….we look for news on the Internet all the time…….games on the Internet… news on the Internet……..communication via Internet , via emails….so if we are connected to the rest of the world …..If the Internet stops … we wouldn't know what to do……since nowadays work you may also work from home.
>
> (Anthony, 40 year old (Businessman) Single Father from Gozo)

Finding time to communicate face to face with his son is becoming increasingly difficult, and for this reason, he tries to find some quality time when they are in the car together. Neustaedter et al (2013) and Harper (2012) identified similar observations. These experiences show that most families use Internet at all times at home, and therefore, this is to be considered an integral part of family life today, rather than an external factor as it was in the past.

Gone are the days when equipment was placed in a central place at home, primarily with the aim of supervising minors' use of internet (V.Buhagiar 2013, pers. comm., 6th January; Neustaedter et al 2013; Livingstone & Bovill 2001; Arnold 2004).

> The accessibility and proliferation of these applications means that the family members are increasingly faced with new mechanisms to reach out and connect with their family and friends. For this reason, technology is now rapidly reconfiguring the way we think about and design our domestic spaces and domestic life.
>
> (Neustaedter et al 2013 p. 06)

In other words, today everyone values personal space and privacy, especially when accessing Internet. Whereas previously the family home served as a place to retreat from the hectic life outside in the company of family members, this has changed. Therefore, it is important to observe these developments from a holistic point of view, as also stated by Arnold (2004) who quoted four giants of the technological world:

> The domestic landscape painted by LG, Motorola, Sony, and Microsoft, depicts a multitasking teenager in her bedroom plugged into a streamed music pod whilst texting her friends in the next street to review the day, and keeping half an eye on the "Michael Jackson is Innocent" discussion group. Perhaps she and her mates will swarm tonight at the HiFi bar, or perhaps someplace else. Then again, she hasn't found it necessary to leave the house for quite some time now. In the next room her brother has turned off the DVD on his plasma screen, and is playing an interactive first-person-shooter. Right now he is supposed to be accessing this week's Competency Nodule from the Learning Provider - but he'll come to that later as his electronic organiser sends ever more insistent reminders. The picture continues with mum sitting in the kitchen doing the home-management jobs - checking the week's purchases with the "smart" on-line refrigerator, checking banking transactions with her "smart agent" software, perusing the images of the school concert she missed last week. Dad is in Singapore for a few days but he remotely checks the home fax and his home voice mail for messages, while web-cams and the intelligent security system reassure him that all is well at home.
>
> (Arnold 2004 p. 183)

Most experiences mirror what is stated by Arnold (2004). As mentioned previously, my personal experience in participants' homes revealed continuous use of Internet in the great majority. We are approaching a situation where-in the home is increasingly being furnished with electronic equipment. Family dynamics now include the use of technology, including Internet shopping, online bill payments and holiday reservations, creating events on facebook and many others. It seems that there is now no turning back from this situation:

> The connected home is potentially the next big technology revolution. It could dramatically change many aspects of our daily lives. It is a networked home to which multiple services are delivered over superfast broadband. These connected services range from entertainment to education, home automation and security to healthcare, interacting with government and controlling our energy use.

(http://www.techuk.org/connectedhome/2014)

Figure 12: The Connected Home
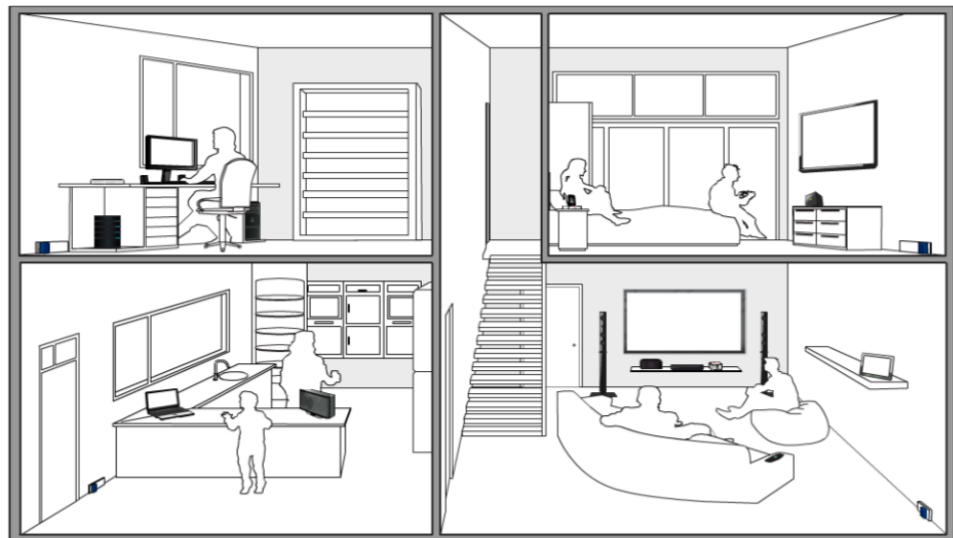
Source: http://www.dabs.com/mini-sites/connected-home/

As clearly depicted in the above Figure 12, all homes I visited, except that of family Kind, composed of a 76 year old couple, have wireless Internet connection, and therefore access to the web in every room.

This means that participants have access wherever they are. What is missing in the figure is access to Internet even in other areas of the home, including the roof, yard and bathrooms.

Related to this is my observation that the National Office of Statistics, Malta Communications Authority and Eurostat only carried out surveys on web access in the bedroom, whereas we now know that Internet is used everywhere in the home.

Connected homes are therefore affecting domestic life to a large extent, but nothing emerges from the mentioned surveys. This is the reason for acknowledging the importance of studying the effects on Maltese families' domestic lives.

As explained by Neustaedter et al (2013), we must look beyond statistics when studying lived experiences in the home. Aspects such as affection, emotions and relationships among family members are important but not readily obvious when conducting surveys.

> When it comes to domestic life we are not just tidying things up, bringing in provisions, preparing food and so on. Rather, we are fulfilling our duty, showing affection and concern for those we care about and making a home in which family identity is expressed and reinforced. In the midst of this, and in fact in underpinning all of these activities, is family connections: how families not just communicate with each other, but how they share their lives and routines; how they engage in social touch, and how they negotiate being together or being apart.

(Neustaedter et al 2013 p. 2)

This is precisely what I tried to realise through this study. Is it that these elements of family life are being adversely affected or not by Internet use? Similarly, Neustaedter et al (2013 p. 03) ask, "Will new technology help strengthen the bonds that already exist, or will they complicate or accentuate tensions? Will it allow to connect more widely with others we care about or will a pre-occupation with far-flung connections simply mean less time for those who are here and now, and closest to us?"

The main answer I received from this study is that Internet use, up to a certain extent, is reducing personal interaction among family members. Besides this, even families that look on with suspicion at the use of Internet in the home eventually use it in excess once they realise that it has 'positive' attributes. These attributes contribute to excessive use since participants, while criticising Internet, know that it is an effective means of keeping in touch with what is going on around them – they cannot miss out.

After giving an in-depth picture and analysis of the negative views of Internet use at home as elicited in this study, in the following Part 2, I shall consider the positive outcome of the uses of Internet and how these contribute to the well-being of the Maltese family.

4.5 Part 2: Optimistic Views of Internet use in the Domestic Space

Section 3: Networked Home

4.5.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I talked about the negative aspects which emerged from this present study regarding the use of the Internet in the home and the effect that this use is having on family relations. I particularly referred to the experiences the sceptics shared with me. Some maintained that the use of the Internet was instrumental to a lack of interaction and communication among family members. In a nutshell, I mostly analysed the less positive interpretations given by the majority of the participants with regard to the use of the Internet. These accounts were also strengthened by the literature which analysed this Internet family phenomenon negatively, as did experts in the field of family therapy. So, one asks; what are the positive aspects of the use of the Internet at home?

What is the meaning given by those who look upon the Internet as a very important instrument in their everyday busy life? How is the Internet creating more interaction and communication among members of the family?

I found the answers to these questions in various pieces of the literature and eventually in this present study. It is evident that the Internet is also bringing positive changes in the life of the Maltese family. In fact, a good number of participants (62 - 64.5%) asserted that it has made life better. They said that they had more contact with each other through the Internet, in particular with friends and relatives who are abroad or do not live in the same household.

Similar views were uttered by Rainie & Wellman 2012; Schmidt & Cohen 2013; Lewis & West 2009; and Subrahmanyam et al 2008. In addition, most participants (59 - 61.4%) sustained that they care for each other by communicating with each other through various methods, including physical face to face encounters, but also via email, facebook or through other social media. Interaction is healthy for human beings because it leads to an increase in the social capital of individuals with regards to both relatives and friends (Coleman 1990; Lewis & West 2009). Moreover, some of the participants, (16 - 16.6%) especially the elderly, those with children or with vulnerable members of the family, maintained that thanks to the use of the Internet in the home, their quality of life has been enhanced. In particular, their views were related to more communication with friends and relatives, education attainment and teleworking. The latter was introduced, as part of the National Policy of Family Friendly measures (Vella 2014; Camilleri-Cassar 2005).

Because of these policies, family burdens have become less heavy because family exigencies were being met better than before. In line with the literature I reviewed, (Clarke et al 2008; Craig Windham 2008; Macho 2007; Kraut et al 2006; Katz et al 2002), the academic performance element in relation to the use of the Internet in the home has been given importance in this study as well. Though certain families with children complained about the fact that the Internet is alienating their children from their studies, yet they were conscious of its importance and therefore, looked upon it as an indispensable tool for studying purposes.

All this was enhanced by accounts of how nowadays there is no need to physically leave home to follow a course in an institution or go to a library to pick up or read books. Thanks to the Internet, one can follow on-line / distance learning courses, conduct research and read books from home at times that are convenient. Before the arrival of Internet, only books in hard copy were used but nowadays the fashion is to read ebooks. I have used this method myself in this study. However, according to (Clark et al 2008), it seems that the Kindle e-book is more used for leisure reading:

> Analysis of the discussions indicates overall interest in the Kindle as a basic reading device for fiction. However, its use in an academic setting is limited due to content availability and licensing issues, graphic display capabilities, organisational issues, and its prohibitive cost.

<div align="right">(Clark et al 2008, p.1)</div>

However, this study has elicited the fact that, though on-line reading has become the norm, yet, the traditional book is still used especially for reading in bed, by the over 50's participants of this present research. Ironically, even Queen Elizabeth II commented upon on-line reading while presenting an award to author Joanne Haris (English 2013). According to the Queen, traditional reading should still be the norm for children; she expressed her concern that children are spending more time on on-line gaming and e-books, than on reading traditional books. On the other hand, Viv Bird, the Chief Executive of the Charity Book Trust, in the United Kingdom, commented that the most important thing was that children read, irrespective of the way they did it. Notwithstanding this, a study in the United Kingdom, established that 50% of toddlers between the age of 2 and 3 years, already make use of the tablet (English 2013). The latter reminds me of how Prensky (2001) argued that today we are living in a society where the majority consists of what he called, Digital Natives. Verified by this research and NSO's surveys, children and youth born during the last 20 years are able to use the Internet more than their parents or carers.

We also know that the teaching of Internet use is widespread in our country, enabling many to use it extensively (NSO 2012, 2013). As I have briefly mentioned, and as I shall be explaining later on in this section, it is evident that people with special needs use Internet and found it as an important "impetus" in their life. The latter expressed that Internet use has changed their lives in a positive way.

Moreover, in this chapter, positive accounts of Internet use will show a completely different perspective from the sceptic accounts. It is a reality that even though people are living in the same environment, they do not always see eye-to-eye regarding the same circumstances; as analysed in the previous part of this chapter, some will say that the glass is half empty (negative views of Internet use) while others will say that it is half full (positive views of Internet use). The latters view will be analysed in this section of this chapter. I will first look at the positive experience of the Internet from the communicative aspect in the family in a general way. Then I will analyse the temporal and spatial aspects concerning Internet use, and how this experience has created differences to those who are living it. I will show how the use of the Internet has brought about family members closer because the barriers of distance and time may be overcome. I will appraise the development leading to a respite from a busy lifestyle for families through the Family Friendly Measures like teleworking. Thanks, to the Internet, parents can communicate with their children who have gone abroad to study by using Skype; Internet Banking, and Shopping on –line are helping family members spend more time at home and hence, use the saved time as quality time with their loved ones.

Eventually I will look at the educational aspect which emerged from this study. How is Internet positively affecting students studying in Malta and those studying abroad? To what extent do families appreciate the Internet in an educational context? Besides all this, I was also interested to find out how the use of the Internet is being lived by people with special needs; What does the use of the Internet mean to them?

How is it affecting their life and their communication with their family and friends? And, how do their relatives view this? How are families and friends interpreting the use of the Internet by these vulnerable people? I felt it was important to delve into all this. It was a great satisfaction to listen to accounts of how the life of these disadvantaged people, and their respective families, has changed thanks to the use of the Internet. Life has become less difficult.

Towards the end of this part of this chapter, I dedicated a section to non users of Internet – the Control Group. Finally, I will analyse the findings that were elicted fron the Time Diaries. After the introduction, wherein I identified the main positive elements of Internet as a tool which has aided the interests of families, I will analyse in detail the accounts collected according to respective themes. These accounts, coupled by literature and the interpretation given by experts will help me analyse in a holistic way the positive aspects of the use of the Internet in the home. I will start by looking at the communcative aspect of the Internet, where the participants shared positive experiences, which keeps them close to their dear ones.

4.5.2 Internet as a means of Communciation in Everyday Life

> Technologies are socially shaped and adoption and use are social processes: cultural biography of things which essentialy seeks to explain how the meaning and value of artefacts, such as technology are negotiated and re-negotiated over time. This approach is useful to incorporate into the wider understanding of how technologies become a part of everyday life, as it is crucial to accept that the meanings that technologies hold do not remain constant but, rather, are fluid and temporary.

> (Hynes 2009, p. 26)

A very important element in a person's life is communication with others, as I have explained in Chapters 1 and 2 respectively. John Donne, the famous English poet, summed it up like this "No man is an island" (Lush 1988).

Although this study has shown that through the excessive use of the Internet, some people tend to isolate themselves from the rest of the family, yet, life dictates that it is essential for people to live and communicate with others. In fact, this research exposed that those family members who "isolate" themselves from other members of the family at home, tend to communicate with other family members and friends online:

> The rise of social media and social networking has affected the way that people think about their friends, acquaintances, and even strangers. People have always had social networks of family and friends that helped them. The new reality is that as people create social networks in technology spaces, those networks are often bigger and more diverse than in the past. Social media allow people to plug into those networks more readily and more broadly – making them persistent and pervasive in ways that were unimaginable in the past. One of the major impacts was that the traditional boundaries between private and public, between home and work, between being a consumer of information and producer of it were blurred.

(Pew Research Internet Project 2013)

It is appropriate to note that in a typical day, there comes a moment, when an individual, whatever his / her social strata, needs to communicate with somebody else, be s/he a relative, a work colleague, a neighbour, a friend, a school teacher, a passing traveller, a bus driver etc. Nowadays, this type of communication has become extended online thanks to the Internet. With the development of information it has become very easy to use wireless devices such as mobiles (Rainie & Wellman 2012; Castells et al 2011; Subrahmanyam et al 2008; Crage-Windham 2008; Thorne 2012; Schmidt & Cohen 2013; A. Azzopardi 2010).

Some participants (26 - 27.08%) went so far as to say that they would be at their wits' end, if for one reason or another, Internet connectivity is interrupted. Similar comments were made by Castells et al (2007) :

> As elements of daily routine, wireless technologies, especially the mobile phone, are perceived as essential instruments of contemporary life. When they fail, users tend to feel lost because of the dependency relationship that had developed with the technology.

> (Castells et al 2007, p. 77)

Similar to what has been elicited in an NSO (2013) survey only a few families I observed were in possession of personal computers or laptops. The majority had mobiles with advanced technological devices including the Internet; such as Smartphones, Tablets and / or Netbooks among others.

According to the NSO (2013), 50% of the participants of the survey declared that they have a smartphone with Internet connection. Moreover, according to Kemp (2014). "The distribution of mobile penetration matches much more closely to the distribution of the world's population, meaning most people around the world now have a realistic opportunity to access the Internet" (Kemp 2014). In addition, studies conducted in affluent countries and in others not so affluent (Mckemey et al 2003; Samuel et al 2005; Craig-Windham 2008) show that the use of the mobile phone is instrumental for people to communicate with family members.

This has also emerged in this study. I heard accounts of family members who regularly communicated with other family members via mobile phones. These participants reiterated that information technology has strengthened the family relationship, has helped in difficult periods in lives of their friends and has resulted in whole families communicating online at the same time, due to the exigencies of everyday life.

> The demand for mobile communication has long existed, as family members always want to stay in touch and adjust their activities to ensure the functioning of the family unit. Thus, while the new technologies bring new means of coordination and of social support, they are appropriated in a way that strengthens existing family relationships instead of causing any revolutionary change.

> (Castells et al 2007, p. 87)

The above has been reinforced by an ethnographic study conducted by Miller and Slater (2000) among the Trinidadian society, an island in the Caribbean. They found a low level of negativity and technophobia, whilst they discovered how the people of this island, made capital of the benefits of the Internet to improve their lives.

Although I met with some criticism about the way the Internet was "robbing" the family of quality time, I still found an element of resilience from the sceptic participants. They seemed to understand that the introduction of the Internet in the home is similar to any other new technology, but there is a difference.

Contrary to other technologies, the Internet is two-way, that is, interactive. Silverstone & Hirsch (1992) and Kraut et al (2002), among others, spoke about the introduction of information technology and said that it has to pass through a process of domestication. They say that any novelty in this sector has to go through this process to be eventually adopted by those at home. In particular, Silverstone & Hirsch (1992) became conscious of the social and economic impact that the development of information technology is having:

> Information and communication technologies are also objects both for their aesthetics, as well, as their function, and valued (or not) in the same way as other possessions are. They are also technologies, and like other technologies they have had and will continue to have an impact on the social and economic order of the household.
>
> But communication and information technologies have a functional significance as media: they provide, actively, interactively, or passively, links between households, and individual members of households, with the world beyond their front door, and they do this, (or fail to this) in complex and often contradictory ways….Information and communication technology doubley articulated into public and private cultures.

(Silverstone & Hirsch 1992, p.15)

This study showed that amongst those who use the Internet the element of interactivity was of the highest importance. According to the majority of the respondents, (78 - 81.25%) the reason why they use the Internet at home is to communicate. In this case, Maltese Internet users are at par with users in other European countries and others world wide. (NSO 2012; 2013; Eurostat 2012/ 2013; Internet World Stats 2013).

Figure 13: Activities for which the Internet is used 2013
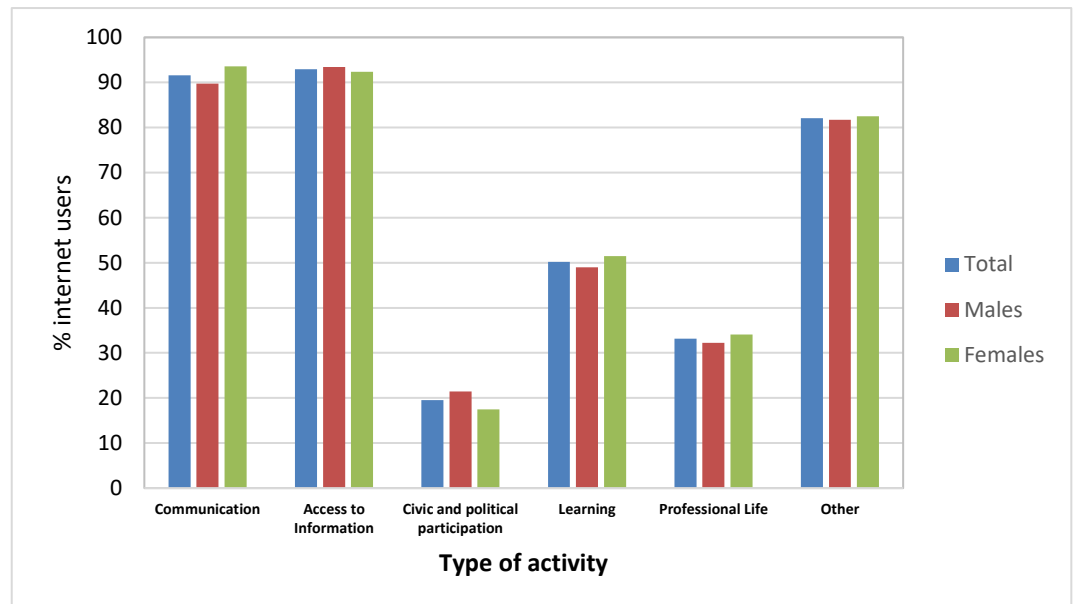
Sources NSO 2013

The participants recounted how most of their life at home is continuously dominated by the Internet for various reasons, in particular, to communicate with other family members, relatives and friends outside the home. Similarly, as indicated in Figure 13, the NSO (2013) reported that the use of the Internet as a means of communication has remained dominant at 90%.

This also resulted in this study. As has already been mentioned, the majority of the participants (78 - 81.25%) maintained that their life was dominated by the Internet in particular chatting via facebook, email, skype, and Whats App, all uses for communication.

> I use facebook mostly to communicate with my friends about the work we do at University or to find out that some lectures have been cancelled from facebook…. If I do not have access to Internet I will not know if lectures are going to be held or not. I communicate with the lecturers and with my parents as well.
>
> (Lily 19 year old student living with her traditional family)
>
> The Internet is very important to me … I use it mostly for emails which lecturers place on their site … I also use it to access facebook.
>
> (Josemarie 24 year old student living with her traditional family)
>
> I do use it to keep in touch with people ….obviously my friends are all there….we use what's app rooms to communicate…you know someone finds something funny and send it and we comment.
>
> (Mario 38 year old living with his wife in a traditional family)
>
> I use Internet mostly as social communication …..then there are times for example when I need to work after work hours ….and I work from home…. It is very effective in the sense that I have all my emails…..coming to me so ….even my work emails, if I need to access … my archive of work emails … I have that as well…….I do voluntary work ……I depend very much on emails …as well for that.
>
> (Doris 44 year old traditionally married with no children)

The Internet has become such a major part of the participants' lives that they would find it very difficult to live without. As it has already been explained earlier, when for some reason they lack Internet connectivity, they would feel lost as they would not be up to date with latest developments.

Nearly all the accounts were similar, but three, that of Persy, (a 19 year old youth), Martha (a 15 year old) and Sarah (a 14 year old), were very specific. They said that if they did not access facebook very frequently, they would feel cut off from their friends and at times other family members. They added that they would feel like strangers to what would be happening if they are not online regularly. In particular, facebook brings them physically nearer to their friends. Nearly all accounts showed that participants looked at the use of the

Internet as a great invention as through it they can communicate with relatives and friends who are living locally and abroad.

Moreover, some of them (28 - 29.16%) also argued that Internet brought forward new opportunities for further education that can be followed easily both locally and abroad via distance learning. Besides all this, according to studies held in a family context (Ling and Haddon 2001; Ling and Yttri 2002; Ling 2004) it appears that families are organising their daily activities better by using information technology.

I will deal with this aspect in more detail in the following section concerning structuring of time and spatiality.

4.5.3 Temporality & Spatiality in Domestic Space

> The Web transforms spatio-temporal actuality by adding flexibility and an enriched set of choices for human action. Web space tends to both expand and limit the notion of physical space. Physical space becomes more discoverable and traceable. Transportation and transaction costs become negligible, creating a new range of potentialities. Some of the human activities through or in the Web are asynchronously, (in part) synchronously and continuously. Networked individuals mobilise part or the whole of their communication systems, operating in a flexible, less-bounded and spatially dispersed environment.
>
> (Vafopoulos 2012 p.4)

The use of the Internet in the home brought new experiences related to a change in times in traditional life and also the change of how one looks at aspects of spatiality with regard to distances. The aspects of time and distance have taken on a new dimension through the use of the Internet. Although in McLuhan's time, the use of the Internet as we know it today was non-existent, he seems to have had an intuition about the extent of the technological development particularly that in the means of communication "….media have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both time and space as far as our planet is concerned" (McLuhan 1962, p.149).

Parallel views were expressed by Judge et al (2011), Neustaedter et al (2010), Ballagas et al (2010), Garaza (2002), Castells et al (2007).

All take the same position that nowadays one can easily communicate by telephone and mobile, as well as go virtually wherever and whenever one wants through technology. But, how is the family living this reality? What are the advantages of virtually communicating with someone else without the need of being physically near? Is this relevant when the person is in the same house? From what I have learned, via this study, I have realised that the aspects of temporality and spatiality have improved the quality of life of those who use the Internet to communicate.

This is very similar to what Miller and Slater (2000) found out 24 years ago in their study, which is still relevant today. They found that thanks to the Internet the Trinidadians have managed to improve the quality of their life in those social, economic and religious aspects which form part of their daily lives. The idea that their life would be difficult without the Internet and that it has actually improved by its use, has been elicited as well. Referring in particular to Skype, and to other similar on-line communication, most participants (69 – 71.87%) claimed that this facility has made communication for them less difficult when they need to communicate with their relatives who are abroad or who are living in Malta itself. The exigencies of the participants are different and these are in line with Hynes (2009):"Technologies find their place in everyday life, routines and habits according to the individual's personal characteristics, wishes, desires, which are set within socio-cultural contexts" (Hynes 2009, p. 27).

An example of this is the story of Tessie, a 41 year old (Manager) who lives with her partner. She recounts that the Internet has made it easier for her to keep in contact with her siblings who live in Malta. She is also keeping tabs on her parents whom she cannot visit:

> I work long hours and so I cannot meet my family frequently. Everybody is married and has a family. The Internet is a good tool to keep contact with them. We use the system known as Whats App. We have created a Chatroom, calling it Sisters' Chatroom. Using it, I do not feel left out.

> As I said I only visit my parents once a week. Now I do not feel cut off from my family as I know what's happening daily in the Chatroom… even what is happening to my parents.

> (Tessie 41 year old living with her partner)

This is similar to what Rainie & Wellman (2012); Kwoen et al (2011); Tsatsou (2009); Van Dijk (1999), say that Internet use enhances communication. It is to be noted that Tessie's story has been repeated by other participants who expressed that they are happy that there is no need to be physically present to communicate with other members of the family or with friends, once they use the Internet. The present study has found significant the fact that the use of the Internet in the context of communication is being used frequently by members of the family. Uhlendorff et al (2011) findings are parallel to this:

> Research shows a range of functions performed by media in households and families, including provision of common focus for leisure and conversation, provision of symbolic resources for family myths and narratives, the regulation of family time and space and a means of seprating or connecting family subsystems within and beyond the home.

> On the one hand, media experience still tends to be shared with other family members. On the other hand media are becoming more personalised, used in private spaces, and supportive of individualised taste cultures and lifestyles within the family.

> (Uhlendorff et al 2011, p. 65)

In addition, according to the NSO (2013) 78.8 per cent of households in Malta and Gozo, have access to the Internet, while, the proportion of Internet users accessing the Internet on a daily basis stood at 85.5%. It is clear that the participants are using the Internet frequently while means of communication are regularly used by the majority of the members of the family.

I found three differences concerning the use of the Internet which are specifically related with age: children and youth use it to communicate with colleagues and friends, those between the ages of 40 and 60 years, tend to use it to contact family and friends and for other purposes, while participants who are over 60, tend to use it as a hobby.

For instance, two elderly people Agnes and Frans who are over 76 years old, look on the Internet as a means of education and recreation. Yet they also communicate with each other via Internet: "I will be downstairs using my computer and he (her husband) will be upstairs, working on his computer. It is not the first time that we send each other emails"….(Agnes, a 76 year old lady 2013).

A significant account is that of Bertha, mother (Teacher) of a 12 year old boy. She lives with her partner in a block of flats in which her family also lives. She finds that the Internet helps her organise her life, from her own home. She can talk to her son in a room a few metres away from her, communicate with her mother who lives in the flat opposite hers and she can also check when her partner is coming home. All this thanks to the Internet.

> I try not use the Internet at home on things related to my work. I use it communicate with my son and partner and with my mother, who lives in the same block. For example, if I want to check on my son in his room, I just ask him and he answers.
>
> If they go shopping (her son and partner) or if Anthony, my partner is still at work, I ask him when he is due home. It is very easy. Even my mother uses the Internet to talk to me. For example, she writes "I am going out to buy milk, do you need anything?" As a means of communication the Internet is very important.
>
> (Berta 44 years single mother living with her son and partner)

Literature, in particular that of Tsatsou (2009), bears out these related experiences. The latter maintains that the use of the Internet has completely changed the aspect of physical mobility.

This means that through Internet, communication via email, or virtual is taking place without the need of travelling from one place to another. For Tsatsou (2009), the various means of communication play an important and complex role in the concepts of time, space, and mobility. He mentions especially that thanks to the development of information technology, many barriers and barricades that were hampering people from communicating in a short time, for longer distances, without the need of mobility, have been broken down.

Similar arguments were expressed by Sang-Hee et al (2011). They remarked that because of the advances in the digital media, the concepts of space and time have been given a new dimension.

> The spatial and temporal dimensions of social life and user perception have changed, and the spatial and temporal boundaries also have changed. The new media has changed the face-to-face interaction and also the cognition of time and space. Digital media has a bearing on the spatiotemporal aspect of social life…..The new media affects the way in which users experienced the spatial and temporal characteristics of daily social life. People experience new aspects of time and space, such as the collapse of time and space, uncoupling of time and space and transformation of time and space. The new digital media certainly reshaped the sense of place and space, and time and tempo; what is here and there; what is now and past, and what is public and private. People experience daily life in temporal and spatial contexts. Therefore, time and space are redefined and pluralised.

(Sang-Hee et al 2011, p. 29)

As I referred to earlier, those participants who praise the ease and importance of communicating with friends and relatives, in particular, through Skype, are aware that this type of communication is only virtually. Nevertheless they found it much better than communicating by telephone or letters. This results from the fact that they can see the faces of their relatives and friends and at the same time they can watch their emotions. In other words, the interaction, therefore, becomes more significant and "virtual".

> One particularly important use of domestic and other kinds of space is for social interaction. In fact space can be seen as a medium for interaction in much the same way as the telephone and the e-mail can. Like these other media, space exerts considerable influence over the kind of interaction that can take place through it……some spaces are more conducive to interaction than others.

> (Frahlich & Kraut 2003, p. 132)

For example the Gozitan participants remarked that "distance" has been abolished, while the time to communicate is real time. The same can be said of families who recounted that they kept regular and virtual contact with their relatives who live overseas.

Notwithstanding the fact that there is physical distance and also a time difference, especially when relatives live in other continents, the use of the Internet has broken down barriers in these areas. One has to keep in mind that nowadays it is very exceptional that we check our letter boxes for letters from relatives who have emigrated. I still remember my parents waiting anxiously for the arrival of at least a card from relatives in Australia, United States of America, Canada and United Kingdom. Today, this is no longer the case.

"Before the advent of electronic communications, people were bound by oral communication and physical travel, whereas today people are able to cross and adjust temporal and spatial distances largely because of the usage of electronic media and communications" (Tsatsou 2009, p.13). My 83 year old mother still wonders how she can talk to relatives who are abroad through a "box" as she calls it, when I connect her to Skype. She says "What huge steps science has taken". In this regard, Gorg's story is interesting and particular. Gorg is a 55 year old Gozitan (Manager) who has two children living in Malta because of their studies. He and his wife shared the fact that they feel close to their children as they speak to them daily through Skype:

> As my children live in Malta, they try to cook meals and use Skype to check with their mother every now and then to see that they are doing the right thing.

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> They then call back and tell her that the meal turned out fine and they would take a photo of it or just show live to her on Skype. We find that this way as if they are still living with us. This is the wonder of Internet, in particular of Skype.
>
> (Gorg 55 year old (Manager) married father of 2 grown up hildren)

Another participant who praised Internet, particularly Skype, for making her feel close to her family, is Emily, a 50 year old (Factory Girl) Maltese-Australian, who lives with her partner. Emily shared the fact that, were it not for the Internet, she would feel homesick as all her immediate family lives in Australia.

She uses Skype mostly, even though there is a time difference: "Internet is good for me because I am Australian, my family lives in Australia ..... and I can communicate on the Internet with them .....I use Skype .....I'm in contact very frequently ......so for me it is very good ......a couple of times a week I speak to them" (Emily, 50 year old - Factory Girl) living with her partner).

Isabelle's story, another participant, is much the same as Emily's. However, she uses Skype with the difference that she talks to her fiance' who lives in Malta as well. She finds the method cheap and says that she and her fiance' see and talk to each other without the need of meeting physically: "We use video calling many times. We ring each other and chat and see each other. Even though we both live in Malta, we use it many times. It is easier for us" (Isabelle 37 year old daughter living with her parents). Similar views were uttered by Namsu (2010). He insists that the Internet leads to more interaction among those who use it:

> The Internet provides convenient channels to increase social contacts with others. Online interaction facilitated by digital connection creates as situation in which users negotiate their time online with real-life socialising. In addition, the spread if social media helps people traverse online and offline social relationships through online interaction.
>
> (Namsu 2010, p.1)

This analysis portrays different aspects of how the use of the Internet in the home has changed the way of life of families, especially with regard to time and space in the home in parallel with spaces outside the home. This argument was ably expressed by Sant (2009):

"The Internet has changed the lives of millions around the world. Some of the change is quite obvious indeed: "extended communication facilities with others who are near or far; access to countless sources of information, some of which were previously unavailable or not as easy to find; the list goes on" (Sant 2009, p. 52).

Of particular interest is the story of a mother and her two sons. One, is Charles, a 44 years old, who is married and lives in Malta. The other son is a bachelor and lives in the family home but at the moment he is abroad for work. Charles relates that he and his wife work at different times. Hence, they find it much easier to talk together through the Internet because their lifestyle has made it difficult to communicate in the traditional way.

Charles shared the fact that many do not understand their point of view. Mary, his 38 year old wife (Clerk) argued that the situation has existed ever since her husband changed his hours of work. In her own words they have had to adapt to this way of communicating which according to her does not create too many problems. Charles does not use Skype to communicate. He usually uses emails or text messages via his mobile, whereas his over 60 year old mother uses it to communicate regularly with her son (his brother) who is abroad. The mother often tells Charles that he is wrong in not using Skype to communicate with her and his brother.

On his part, Charles admits that his mother feels closer to his brother when using Skype. Nevertheless, he adds that he prefers it when his mother emails him and uses few words. He insisted that Skype should only be used for special needs / circumstances and nothing else.

People, other than his mother, have drawn Charles' attention to his "strange" way, but he does not care about the opinions of others.

These accounts and other consistent pieces of literature show that the Internet is creating new opportunities for communication. Through digital connections, social relationships can be created online and offline (Rainie & Wellman 2012; Namsu 2010; Carr et al 2011; Vafopoulos 2012; MCA, 2012). One must not forget mentioning that the use of the Internet is also connected to the field of education.

I have already mentioned experiences some friends shared with me. Although parents and even some youth complained that the Internet was interfering with their studies (Livingstone & Bovill 2011; Whitty 2014; Heim 2007), as this study showed, others confirmed that the Internet gave them opportunities for further studies.

Moreover, they were grateful that through Internet, their children could keep up with school work when they were absent from school as they were kept informed by teachers and friends. Chizmar & Williams (1996) are also of the same opinion:

> The different-time/different-place matrix cell represents true "anywhere-anytime" computing. The freedom to participate at different times and different places lets the instructor and the students plan and control their participation and use of network resources to suit their own schedules and preferences. Electronic mail, of course, is the most widely used different-time/different-place technology.

<div align="right">(Chizmar & Williams 1996, p.19)</div>

As I referred to earlier, what Chizmar & Williams (1996), as well what Gatt (2012); Shklovsk et al (2004); Miller and Slater (2000); Namsu (2010) and even Tsatsou (2009) think, has been contested by other schools of thought. The latter are of the opinion that the Internet and other sources of social-networks are, in some way, a threat to those who use them, because, according to them, they decrease interaction and may even be instrumental in bringing about social isolation (Nie et al 2002; Nie & Hillygus 2002).

Nevertheless, from what emerged from this study coupled with the literature I read, it is evident that the use of information technology, in its various aspects, has reached a very important phase. In particular, that communication and interaction via Internet have become so real, that it is not correct to refer to this type of communication as "communication at a distance" as propounded by Gatt (2012), but to the contrary, this type of interaction is a real and present experience:

> When many Friends of Earth activists engage with each other through communications technologies it is experienced so much as direct presence that it would be empirically incorrect to refer to it as 'indirect' or 'at a distance'. Presence co-generated with ICTs is actual and not virtual presence, and the discourse of virtuality has political implications. The discussion of ICT mediated presence leads me to question the conventional understanding of co-presence, referred to as 'face to face'.
>
> (Gatt 2012, p. 193)

On the same lines, but taken from a different angle, the studies made by Schwanen & Kwan (2008), in two different cities, far from each other, one in Colombus, Ohio and the other in Utrecht, The Netherlands, throw light on the concept of time and space and the use of the Internet and the mobile phone.

> Among the participants in our studies, these technologies primarily allow for more temporal flexibility of activities and thus for a relaxation of time-oriented coupling constraints. The Columbus activity-diary data indicate that the space - time fixity of online activities is lower than for the offline activities……Internet use only enhances the spatial flexibility of work, household and personal needs, and not for social and recreational activities, which reflects that Internet use overwhelmingly takes place in the home and work place….The Dutch data indicate that the mobile phone increases parents' opportunities to undertake multiple activities both when stationary at a physical location and when traveling. In addition, the ability to undertake multiple activities at a single location is not always valued positively, because it distracts people from their primary activities.
>
> (Schwanen & Kwan 2008, p. 1374)

Thanks to the continued and quick development of digital technology, we are living a new important reality: we can remain connected all the time via Internet. Most of those who use the Internet now have continuous access, be it emails, Facebook, Twitter, What's App, or just sms texting, from within the home or outside it without the complication of wires. Before, we had to wait until we reached home to use the Internet; now we can communicate via Internet, 24 hours a day, all the year round.

When before, communication was held only out of necessity, nowadays communication, especially via social media, is being used for health, entertainment, business, educational purposes, and also gossiping, just to mention but a few of its uses.

This has led to the breaking down of further barriers especially where family boundaries are concerned, yet, the latter depend always of personal choice. In the coming section I will analyse the concept of the use of the Internet in the home which is work related.

4.5.4 Internet use at home – Family Friendly Measures

Up to now, I analysed the positive experiences of the use of the Internet as they were related to me by the participants themselves in different contexts in the domestic space. It became clear to me that the use of the Internet in Maltese homes serves as a bridge of communication among members of the family who live both in the same house and also those who are far away. Even the literature emphasises how the use of the Internet is considered as an extension of what takes place in the home, especially as it helps people organise their daily life. Family needs that before were unattainable, have become realities. For instance, the Family Friendly Measures, which were introduced in Malta as of 2004, are of significance.

They provide, among other things, the opportunity for people who, for reasons of child rearing, looking after the elderly or sick, or caring for persons with special needs cannot go out to work. (Golden et al 2008; Lynette 2003; Spiteri, & Borg Xuereb 2012; Camilleri-Cassar 2005; Teleworking Policy 2008; Vella 2014)

The need for the concept of telework had long been felt in Malta, so that families could find a balance between work and family responsibilities. Eventually, in 2011, the Telework Policy for workers in the Public Services (Vella 2014; Camilleri-Cassar 2005) became possible.

This was not automatically accepted by the Private Sector as some participants pointed out. The ability to work from home has become possible because of the introduction of the Internet service in the home. For participants who could avail themselves of this opportunity, this was a step forward in their struggle to keep abreast with work and family. Others used it to accommodate their needs "I use the Internet to research things related to my job. I look for useful information" shared Sandra, a 35 year old mother. Similar experiences were disclosed by other participants:

"There are times, for example, when I need to work after hours and I work from home. It is very effective in the sense that I have all my emails coming to me so even my work emails, if I need to access my archive of work emails, I have that as well…there is nothing wrong with that" (Doris 44 year old married); "I work from home… so I mostly have two screens so I would be drawing on one screen and tweeting on the other one" (Tereza 38 year old gay). Amanda, a 31 year old gay related that she uses Internet extensively, as she works with it and does voluntary work as well. She uses it at home to co-ordinate her work:

> Because of the nature of my work I have to use the Internet. I give lectures, mostly power-point presentations. I also need to communicate with my students via email. I work for an NGO which obviously has its Facebook page, which I have to keep updating and take care of any incoming messages.

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Some messages as for session appointments and I keep myself updated with these or we would lose appointments.

(Amanda 31 year old Gay (Lecturer) living with her partner)

Similarly, I myself, have a positive experience of the use of the Internet at home on two fronts: study and work. It was necessary for me to work and study at home, to look after my mother who is unwell and needs constant attention. The use of the Internet has lessened my burden, for, once I can work from home, there is no need for me to go daily to work. Although, I was exempted from work due to this study, I could still dedicate some time to carry out some of my work duties.

Moreover, as I am constantly connected to the Internet, it was possible for me to move to a quiet place for some time to concentrate on my study, while at the same time checking every now and then via email, what's happening at work. Thus my work, home, and study routine could continue to operate "smoothly" thanks to the Internet.

As one can see, not all participants who opted to telework, did so because they had children or vulnerable members at home. For instance, Anthony, a 32 year old businessman, who lives with his partner, and Joseph, a 44 year old married lawyer, are cases in point. Joseph shared the fact that he can reach his office online is of great help to him, as he can go on working from home, especially if he has a particular case in hand. Nevertheless, he continued that although he works from home, he is within reach of his wife. On the other hand, Anthony shared that he looks on the Internet as an indispensable tool with which he can look after his family needs and also the exigencies of his work through continuous connectivity from his home. This is similar to Shklovsk et al (2004) views:"Because the Internet permits social contact across time, distance, and personal circumstances, it allows people to connect with distant as well as local family and friends, co-workers, business contacts, and strangers who share similar interests" (Shklovsk et al 2004, 120).

The use of the Internet in the home has made it easier to look after vulnerable people. Today, there are systems which enable one to observe children or elderly people who are vulnerable through age or illness, from one's place of work or even when one is at home. Thus, one can carry on with one's routine at work and at home, with one's mind at rest, as the ones being cared for are being monitored all the time. All this is thanks to the use of the Internet at home (Stout 2010; Chan et al 2008).

> In the era of information technology, the elderly and disabled can be monitored with numerous intelligent devices. Sensors can be implanted into their home for continuous mobility assistance and non-obtrusive disease prevention.
>
> Modern sensor-embedded houses, or smart houses, cannot only assist people with reduced physical functions but help resolve the social isolation they face. They are capable of providing assistance without limiting or disturbing the resident's daily routine, giving him or her greater comfort, pleasure, and well-being.

(Chan et al 2008, p.8)

Figure 14: Care of the Elderly and Vulnerable People
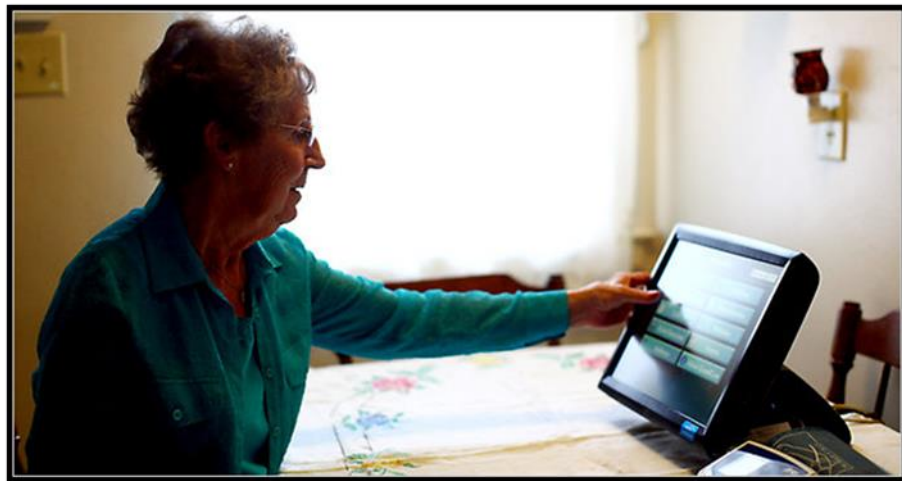
Source: New York Times 2010

4.5.5 Moments of Solitude

After taking a look at some of the experiences I met relating about how the Internet is being used by family members to communicate with other family members who are not physically near, now I will analyse another aspect: the use of the Internet in circumstances when the participants are alone. Home Alone? It was surprising to note, while carrying out this study, that for most persons who I interviewed, Internet use fills the void created by moments of solitude within the home environment. It is evident that, periods of solitude at home, as shown in Figure 14, even while in the same room, without interaction among the family members, tempts most people to log on to Internet, despite the fact that the respective family members are not physically isolated (Turkle 2011).

Meanwhile, as shown by the following extracts from participants' contributions to this study, some people tend to blame the fact that they constantly use Internet while surrounded by family members on the fact that they find nothing better to do. Others do so when they find themselves alone at home.

> Internet was my constant companion when I separated … since I was alone except for my daughter … I had few friends … I was passing through excessive stress and tension, probably depression too, and the only thing that used to comfort me was being online. I would return home, log on to facebook, chat with new people, find new friends……The very first thing I would do after work was use Facebook, even after a football match, I wouldn't even have a shower, I would just log on to communicate and do little else.

> (Michael 54 year old (Banker) single father of a female youth)

Different, but at the same time similar, is Mary's experience. She is 40, works in an office and married to Charles (Policeman) whose job entails working on shift basis. Mary's working hours do not match those of her husband: when she leaves for work, her husband would be returning to sleep, and consequently, when she sleeps, her husband would be working.

This results in Mary having excessive time without her husband, both during the day and night, therefore, she logs on facebook.

The issue of working hours and family dynamics has also been expressed by G. Baldacchino 2014 (pers. comm., 3rd July) arguing that throughout the years we have been witnessing an increasingly reduced separation between home and work in the family, and so we are living in a society where the deregulation of work and employment resulted in a multiplicity of routines, that have to do with work, hence affecting the traditional family dynamics: "In the past most people, if they were employed, would get up to leave the house on Monday morning, and return back on Monday evening……That schedule would continue until Friday evening and they would be together for the weekend" (G. Baldacchino 2014, pers. comm 3rd July). The introduction of flexible working hours, leads to an irregular family time-table.

This paved the way for the advent of moments of solitudness within the family. Moreover, this present study suggests that during solitude moments, some respondents (28 - 29.16%) tend to log on the Internet. This is mostly felt when participants are alone, particularly, during lunch or dinner time.

When one eats alone, it is tempting to seek company in the form of Internet. Among the participants who mentioned this fact, was Albert, 35, (Priest) who lives with his parents. He claimed that most of the time he dines alone because of his work commitments. This leads him to go on-line while dining, for he enjoys being in "company" whilst having his dinner.

Similarly was Rosina's story, a 56 year old gay (chambermaid) who lives with her father. Rosina argued that she uses facebook as a companion while she is eating. She added that the Internet does not affect her much, in the sense that it does not interfere with the rapport she has with her father. She does not normally eat with her father who would be watching television in another room. So, she turns on the Internet in the dining room while eating and also when she is in bed.

It keeps her company just as if there is somebody near her, especially when she is on facebook. Petra, a 44 year old lady (Dental Assistant) who lives with her separated mother, argued that she only goes online at home when she is alone. In her opinion, facebook is the ideal means for people who find themselves alone. However, she does not like to see people using the Internet while they are eating with family members or friends. She thinks that this is a lack of respect and very rude.

Dunstan, a 32 year-old young man who lives with his widowed mother, recounted that when his mother is not physically near him, he enjoys having a chat with his friends online and at times follow the news as well. On the other hand, Sarah, a 35 year old married lady, says she uses the Internet to while away the time, like when the pasta is cooking or while she waits for a a load of washing. She lamented the fact that she spends a lot of time alone at home so the Internet is a form of company while other things are taking their time to be done. In parallel, is Agnes's story, a 40 year old mother (teacher). She confessed that she carries her smartphone with her in everyroom for company because she hates being alone. Up to a certain extent, Eileen's experience is similar. Eileen is 31 year old gay living with her partner. Eileen shared the fact that she hates being alone, therefore, as soon as her partner is out, or doing something else in another room, she promptly logs on to her smartphone to update herself. For her online chatting is a means to occupy her time when she is alone. She says that the group she has in common with her partner, has helped her overcome the vice she had. She shared the fact that when she is alone and feeling down, she goes on-line and posts certain comments reflecting the mood she is in. She recounted that once, when she was about to relapse, her friends talked her back to reason, via the shared-group on the Internet, when they realised what she was going to do.

Quite different was Ivan's story, a 34 year-old gay (Car Attendant) living with his partner. He argued that most of the time when he is alone, he enjoys watching television.

However, he shared that there are times when he goes online to look up recipes as well. He added that when his partner returns home, he refrains from using Internet since he is aware of the importance of quality time together. Ivan admits that the nature of his partner's work results in several hours of aloneness, but he is not one to rely heavily on Internet, although he uses it regularly but within limits.

The above lived experiences reveal that the phenomenon of solitude is instrumental in deciding how much time is spent on Internet, and this is also confirmed by Weinstein & Lejoyeux (2010), Caplan (2003), Turkle (2011) and Leung (2011). Above participants sustained that whereas in the past, when alone, individuals would curl up with a good book, go for a walk or spend some time at a social venue, a new opportunity has now arisen through Internet. In this regard, I am tempted to ask the same question posed by Debono (2011); "Is this country moving towards a new village square for the Maltese community?" – An on-line community.

Today, people have a choice: either interacting physically face to face with friends or meeting virtually through social media. It is no longer a necessity for individuals to physically leave home in order to interact. Thanks to social media, it is now so elementary to get in touch, even with persons on the other side of the globe, with persons in the same building, including one's home and, in the very extreme, even persons in the same room, as discovered in this study!

I am concluding this section with a quotation by Paul, who is 37 years old, blind and lives with his parents. As I will explain later on in the section dedicated specifically for individuals like Paul, who are vulnerable because of their disability, the use of the Internet in the home means a lot to them, especially in moments when they are alone: "At the weekend, I rarely go out. As I am single, one of the hopes in my life is that I may meet someone. The Internet is a means towards this end. I might meet someone" (Paul a 37 year old blind person living with his parent).

Section 4 Connected Lives - Expansion of opportunities

4.5.6 Internet as an Educational Instrument

> The Internet has changed everything. Although it has been around for a while now, we are only just beginning to explore the many ways in which it can enable us to do things differently. The Internet has obvious potential for education…… Various attempts have already been made to rethink education through the experience of the Internet. The obvious affordance of the Internet for education, is becoming a commonplace experience for many of us.
>
> (Wegerif 2013, p.2)

In parallel to the above quotation, it is evident from the experiences related by some of participants, (28 - 29.16%) that Internet is frequently used for educational purposes, especially in families that include members who are still studying. However, this is not so only in such cases. Many adults use Internet at home to increase their personal knowledge.

Although, as mentioned earlier, excessive use of Internet has generally been blamed for resulting in lower academic grades, it still emerges that its use, in appropriate proportions, provides a great contribution to education. As explained above, participants that sustained that they use Internet for educational purposes, report that they use it frequently to carry out research. Moreover, it is increasingly being used by students to communicate with their respective educators and vice versa "Using…….. applications with the Internet, students are actively empowered to look to its use as an effective partner in their learning process" Maddux & Johnson (2013 p. 192). Internet use in education has become so popular that it is now difficult to proceed with studies without this modern means of communication and research. I am in a position to state this since, not only has this fact emerged from the feedback from participants, but even literature leaves no doubt that use of Internet for educational purposes has now become essential.

> The Internet offers a host of ideas, a broad array of information and engaging, interactive opportunities to educators and students. Teachers use the Internet in the classroom to support the attainment of learning outcomes. Outside of school, students go online to complete teacher-directed research and interactive activities. Under the guidance of their instructors, elementary and secondary students benefit from using abundant resources otherwise unavailable to them.
>
> (http://www.ehow.com/facts_5499277_internet-its-use education.html)

(Likins 2014)

Similar comments were made by Morgan (2014), who confirms what was reported by participants, that despite the fact that first impressions may suggest that the use of Internet is an obstacle to time dedicated to studies, it is also beneficial to the educational sector.

> As classroom technology and online courses become more prevalent and advanced, teachers and students alike have new ways to study, plan class activities, and present information. Online classes, interactive teaching, and streamlined research methods are just a few advantages of the Internet's educational grow

(Morgan 2014, p.263)

Today it is no longer difficult for prospective students of any age to pursue an education. As can be seen also from this study, family life, personal needs and other matters need not prevent anyone from furthering their education. This is futher facilitated by the use of Internet at home. As mentioned previously, the obstacles to distance and time have diminished as far as education is concerned

> Networking technologies offer a better learning environment for students while providing opportunities for reducing the cost of the learning process. A key outcome of advances in networking, the Internet, telecommunications and client/server computing is that they are serving to alter the limitations of time and space.

(Chizmar & Williams 1996, p. 14)

Even, when I was much younger, I recall family friends who had to pursue their education abroad, at great personal inconvenience, whereas today, distance learning makes it possible to advance academically without leaving the country. Internet use has therefore become an integral part of education, as stated by the participants themselves

> Internet is very important in my life ... I am a student living in Malta and I therefore use Internet mostly for study purposes and to send emails. I mostly use VLE, that is the electronic site where lecturers post unit notes.

> (Josiemarie 24 year old living with her parents in Gozo)

It is interesting to note the comments of two teachers who stated that they use Internet to communicate with their students. As confirmed by Josiemarie, it is a reality that most students are connected all the time and it therefore has become easy to communicate with lecturers through Internet. In fact, one participant who is a teacher stated that he uses facebook to contact a number of students.

> With respect to my own students ... I sometimes look out for them on facebook to pass on messages .... since I am sure that they use facebook more than email. There was a case when some students had to forward some work to me, I sent them emails and they didn't respond. As soon as I contacted them on facebook they sent an immediate reply.

> (Fabian 28 year old teacher living with his separated mother)

This is similar to the case of Amanda, a 31 year old gay teacher living with her partner who stated that she frequently uses Internet for work. "The nature of my work requires that I use Internet frequently. When I give lectures, I use powerpoint and, moreover, I often need to contact my students via email" It is therefore obvious that Internet has become an integral part of education. Technology has advanced to a level wherein, in the near future, it would be widely possible for students to 'attend' lectures without leaving home physically, especially when they are indisposed.

> The Internet provides up-to-date information on a variety of classroom-related topics unavailable from other sources. The content of textbook, library, and teacher knowledge is enhanced by this new medium. Computer networks are increasingly serving as an aid to communication and to the storage and retrieval of information. The Internet, a global network of networks connecting millions of computers and computer users, is a relatively new resource for educators.

<div align="right">(Kunlesmart 2009, p. 216)</div>

In addition to this, when observing educational institutions one immediately realises that students are equipped with several items of equipment, including laptops, tablets, netbooks etc. This strengthens the argument of the importance of information technology for educational purposes.

Other studies point in the same direction, "One of the most notable trends in recent years is the increased focus on the Internet as a platform for education" (Global Internet Report 2014 p. 69). Information technology has brought about a drastic change in study and teaching methods.

Both the participants who are still actively studying (24 - 25%), and those participants who are in the teaching profession (6 - 6.25%), all mentioned that Internet is a vital tool in education. Morgan (2014) confirms the same view that Internet facilitates study. Not only is it easier and more efficient to carry out research, but everything is presented in a more interesting way:

> Internet communication can make distribution of information easier, as well as increase class community and motivation….For example, having a class blog or website can open up dialogue between teachers and students outside of school rather than confining their interactions to the classroom. Students can download course materials and readings, chat with other students, and share their work, while parents can receive reminders about upcomingdue dates and events.

<div align="right">(Morgan 2014, p. 247)</div>

From participants' feedback, I noted that some of them (28 - 29.16%) felt they should specify that Internet is very important for educational purposes. I have noticed a pattern of feedback to this effect.

In order to interpret this, I looked up other studies to see whether there were similar results, and this has been confirmed as shown in the Figure 15 (Global Internet Report 2014).

Figure 15: The Internet is essential for my access to knowledge and education

Box 2: **Survey result**
The Internet is essential for my access to knowledge and education
Source: Internet Society, Global Internet User Survey, 2014

Although the Internet is considered important for access to knowledge and education globally, the survey respondents in the developing regions perceive it as more important, likely given the opportunity it provides to overcome local shortfalls

100 %

0%

N. America (USA)   Latin America   Europe   Middle East   Africa   Asia-Pacific

Don't know / Not applicable   Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

Source: Internet Society: Global Internet User Survey 2014

Meanwhile, despite the fact that the concerned participants stated that they regularly use Internet for educational purposes, this use varies. For instance, there were participants that sustained that they access Internet regularly to carry out research for assignments and projects, while others use it to read academic literature online. In tandem, others prefer to access Internet from home in order to work on assignments together with colleagues, and therefore search for information concurrently while chatting or using Skype. Among the more interesting feedback was that of Joseph, a 59 year-old man tradesman, living with his partner. With the help of Internet, he has finally achieved a childhood dream of learning music and piano. He believes that it is only those who do not wish to achieve who do not take advantage of the developments in information technology.

He was very excited to show me what he has learned "on his own steam" through online tutorials:

> I am learning music. There are specific exercises online and I use my tablet to search for such tutorials. They assist me in learning to read music by showing the notes and the way they work. I use these exercises as a tutorial.
>
> (Joseph 59 year old tradesman, living with his partner)

Further interesting points were raised by Dunstan, who is a teacher and student concurrently since he is reading for a Masters degree through distance learning. His life revolves around Internet, especially at home, since he prepares lessons to deliver at school and private lessons, besides having to study and prepare his own assignments for the degree. Internet is therefore important to organise his life and carry out his profession more effectively:

> I use Internet continuously. For example, in order to use simulations, my tablet is always connected to the central computer for students to see notes and powerpoints. During the weekend, I dedicate around 3 – 4 hours to prepare school work besides carrying out research for my own studies. If I were to analyse the time I spend on Internet at home, I believe that I spend 50% on studies, including accessing the university website and looking up papers online.
>
> (Dunstan a 32 year old teacher / student living with his widowed mother)

Eileen (a 31 year old Gay / student) is not too keen on Internet but uses it mostly for educational purposes. She uses her laptop only when following a course of study. Sammy, a 12 year-old boy living with his single mother, and Paul, a 37 year-old man with severely impaired vision, related the same story. Sammy does not feel that he uses Internet excessively. However, he makes the most of it for study purposes. This would include accessing homework sent from school and to coordinate projects with classmates. Sammy prefers dedicating his time to other activities rather than using Internet.

On the other hand, Paul stated that he searches for journals and books to help him academically. Despite his special needs, Internet has assisted him in achieving a degree and proceding with further studies. I shall expand on the relationship between Internet and disability in the next section.

On the other hand, Mario, a 23 year-old youth who is in his last year of a course in engineering, stated that Internet has a crucial role in his academic progress. The course is difficult and he has little time to spare on idle Internet tasks; however he spends a lot of time researching for his engineering course.

After having considered the use of Internet from an educational perspective, I shall now move on to another important aspect of information technology; that related to persons with special needs. As stated by the participants themselves, Internet home use has assisted these persons and their families in achieving what was only a dream before the widespread use of technology.

It is to be noted at this stage, that to date no research has been available concerning the experience of Internet use at home amongst people with special needs in Malta. This has been officially confirmed by the National Office of Statistics (NSO), The National Commission of Persons with Disability, (KNPD) and The Foundation for Technology Accessibility (FITA).

4.5.7 Internet Use and People with Special Needs

When contemplating this study, I was immediately drawn to the need for exploring the use of Internet at home by persons with special needs and their families. The relevant literature proved that Internet is a huge contribution to these persons since it helps to boost independent life (Simpson 2013; Mates 2011; Orey et al 2010; Barak & Sadovsky 2008; Dobransky & Eszter 2006; Williamson 2001).

According to Simpson (2013), and in parallel to the findings of this present study, the use of electronic equipment and Internet helps vulnerable persons and individuals with disabilities integrate with society and introduce them to the world of education and employment. Windows of opportunities are being opened, including study and work, and besides this, they are able to communicate effectively with other persons, thus minimising the risk of feeling socially isolated

> Computer and Internet access has been demonstrated to provide social and psychological benefits to individuals with disabilities and has also been shown to reduce social isolation by eliminating physical barriers, facilitating communication and providing a forum for the exchange of information. Computer and Internet access allows older adults and people with disabilities to communicate with friends and families. On line communities can provide support and reduce feeling of isolation and loneliness.

(Simpson 2013, p.3)

Therefore, in order to obtain a clear picture of Internet use in such cases, I chose to include three participants who have special needs. These participants and their respective family members found no problem in accepting to express their views. I was favourably impressed by their willingness to contribute and share their experiences on the unparalleled benefits of Internet use.

The three persons with special needs are: Paul, who is a 37 year old visually impaired, Francesca, age 52 and is partially deaf and Fiorella who is a 16 year old young lady with down's syndrome.

These participants, and their respective relatives, gave me a valuable insight into their experience of life and Internet use. In fact, as I shall describe later, there is no doubt that Internet has been instrumental in assisting these persons to integrate with other family members, with colleagues and other friends.

Paul, a 37 year old, blind person lives with his parents. He is a success story Internetwise. His achievements both academically and personally are impressive. He has used the Internet for his advancement.

It is that much more difficult for those lacking sight to use the Internet, yet Paul's courage and determination saw him through, notwithstanding his disability.

> The Internet is indispensable to me. It has facilitated my progress. I owe my success as an official at the Univeristy with a first class degree to the Internet. I am also studying for a post–graduate degree.

(Paul 37 years old blind living with his parents)

Paul's parents, both of them elderly, do not use the Internet. Yet, they both realised the benefits of its use for their son. I came across other episodes like Paul's experience of Internet use of persons with different disabilities. For instance, Zunica & Clemente (2007) report that persons who lack sight completely or are visually impaired, find the Internet as an instrument of autonomous and instantaneous communication.

On similar lines, the United Kingdom Royal National Institute for the Blind (2014), finds that the Internet is one of the greatest meaningful development in communication:"Internet is one of the most significant communication developments since the invention of Braille. For the first time ever, many blind and partially-sighted people have access to the same wealth of information as sighted people on the same terms" (United Kingdom Royal National Institute for the Blind 2014). Thirteen years ago Williamson et al (2001) found much of the same results. Similar to the findings of this present study, Williamson et al (2001) maintained that though the Internet was in the early stages of development, it was clear that people with disability would benefit in the areas of communication and entertainment: "There is no doubt that the opportunities for communication, information acquisition, and the pursuit of leisure interests by people with disabilities are likely to be significantly expanded through online services, and that this is already happening…..Where distance often exacerbates the isolation associated with disability, there can be particular benefits. (William et al 2001 p.161).

What William et al (2001) and Simpson (2013) as well as Mates (2011) insists on, is similar to what Paul related:

> Other than helping me in my assignments, the Internet helped me on a personal level. I felt that I had matured as a person because of it. It changed the way I looked at myself; I became more positive. The Internet gave me the strength to experience life in a way that I earn my living and also become involved in other activities.
>
>   (Paul 37 years old blind living with his parents)

He said that at first he used to spend much time on the Internet. Now, he uses it for his studies but tries to keep a certain balance. He dedicates meal times to his parents. I also listened to the story of Francesca, a 52 year old gay in a relationship but who lives with her elderly parents. The latter are not computer literate. I also listend to their story. Francesca is partially deaf and at the end of the 70's the family decided to go to the United Kingdom so that Francesca would receive special education.

This measure yielded good results as Francesca learnt how to fend for herself in everyday life. Back in Malta, Francesca learnt how to use the computer. She helps her parents when they need information from the Internet and when they want to talk to her siblings who are abroad. The use of the Internet has become an integral part of her life. It has been the means of her becoming more independent, especially where communication is concerned. This is very much in line with what Barak & Sadovsky (2008) maintain:

> For the hearing-impaired, cyberspace provides extra benefits for two basic reasons: means of communication, which is primarily based on visual (text and images) and not auditory channels, and the convenient possibility of concealing their handicap from other users, thus gaining more security and a sense of equality.
>
>   (Barak & Sadovsky 2008, p.1082)

Francesca related how she spends much time communicating with friends and siblings by chatting on line or by using Skype. Thanks to Skype, she can lipread what those who appear on her laptop are saying. Though she can lipread very well, she prefers to watch a film with sub-titles, when these exist, to be more relaxed.

Though her stay in England taught her many things, yet she feels born again, thanks to the Internet, which allows her to see the world in a different light. She was a little bit disappointed on her return to Malta, as she found things related to communication much inferior to a deaf person than those in England. So, it is no wonder that the use of the Internet opened up a new world to her. Like Skelton and Valentine (2009, p.44) said with reference to the Internet:" It is my umbilical cord to the world.....the Internet).

> The use of the Internet gave me a new life. My life as a deaf person was very difficult. Though my parents love me very much and have always done their best for me, to the extent of emigrating to England so that I could obtain better life skills, yet there are times when things go awry.
>
> (Francesca 50 year old deaf living with her parents)

Francesca said that when she came back to Malta she found it difficult to follow the media, as here subtitles are inexistent. In England she needed nobody to explain as she read the subtitles when she watched television. On her return, it was a shock to her to revert to asking her parents and siblings to explain what was being said on television and the radio. To make matters worse, there was also a language problem, as in England she had learnt everything in English. The Internet has solved nearly all her problems as she can follow it easily. Until the Internet was installed in their home, her parents and siblings very patiently, explained what was being said, missing a lot of what was said until they explained to her.

She uses the Internet in her room; in her own words she says that in this way she is not bothered by anybody and nobody is bothered by her. She uses the Internet in the evenings but never during meals or in bed. She watches the News and films, chats to friends and relatives. Skype scores a point over television because the people she talks to, know they have to speak slowly to give her time to lipread, while this is not the case with television.

However, to be fair, very recently, the three main local television stations namely TVM, NET TV and ONE TV, at times provide sign-language interpretations during news and popular discussion programmes.

However, obviously these are delivered in Maltese. In fact, she appreciates this fact. Although Francesca is connected to facebook, she does not use it much. She prefers watching documentaries abouth health, home décor and read magazines on line. The Internet has helped Francesca immensely, yet, there has been a decrease in the amount of communication and interaction between her and her parents. Pre-Internet, her parents were always there to explain; now she can communicate by herself in her own room.

Without jumping to conclusions, I dare to say that Francesca now seems to communicate more with her friends and sisters on line than with her parents. This has also been confirmed by her parents. However, they seem to be happy for her for she longed for years to be "surrounded" with people with whom she can talk to about what ever she likes, without the inconvenience of exposing everything with her family. At least thanks to Internet use, she may lead her way on private life as well.

In parallel, Valentine et al (2006) in a study conducted in England recorded that deaf people were more likely to use the Internet every day, than the general population. The same study revealed that, like what Francesca said, thanks to the Internet, deaf people have strengthened their communication abilities with those who are not deaf. This has given them a sense of equality with those who hear.

> The majority of deaf people are born into hearing families. Many therefore struggle to communicate with their immediate families (parents and siblings) and particularly with their extended families. Importantly therefore the Internet has also increased the ability of some deaf people to contact, and develop their relationships with hearing members of their families via email and live chat.

Valentine et al 2006, p. 7

In fact, Francesca told me that the Internet had broken down the barriers she had faced when communicating with officialdom; now she had no need for other to talk for her. Notwithstanding this, Valentine et al (2006) study reveals, that deaf people hold little communication with those who can hear:

> The information available on line has also enabled deaf people to pick up greater understanding of wider world which potentially improves individuals' abilities to participate in hearing society. However, deaf people are not using the Internet to develop friendships with hearing people and so are not becoming more socially integrated in, or connected with, the hearing world.
>
> (Valentine et al 2006, p.07)

The last point made by Valentine et al (2006) does not appear in Francesca's account. On the contrary, she communicates more with people who hear than with deaf ones. She likes to meet the latter kind, in place where these people congregate. When I interviewed Francesca's father, he said nothing more than what Francesca shared. He just added that he is proud of his daughter's achievements.

A different story is that told by the Mallia family, who have a 16 year old daughter Fiorella with Down's Syndrome. Her mother Giovanna, says that the Internet has worked miracles for her daughter. Fiorella can use the computer and communicates via Internet with her friends at school; this is a major achievement considering her capabilities. This is in agreement with a number of authors who have written about the subject, in particular Ryba & Selby (2004) and Black, & Wood (2003). What struck me most about my visit to the Mallia family was the enthusiastic way which Fiorella greeted me to explain to me that she knew how to use the Internet and to show me what she likes doing. She had been prepared for my visit so that she would feel at ease in my presence, thereby assuring a welcoming atmosphere for my visit. Though she was very eager and at ease, she opted to use only a few words:

> I use it mostly for facebook. I also talk to my married sister. I chat for a long time. I use youtube as well for music. I cannot do without the Internet…. I listen to music…. I do not like when my mother asks me to stop.
>
> (Fiorella, a 16 year old with Down's Syndrome living with her family)

I really would have liked to listen to more things from Fiorella. But she chose to remain silent while all the time observing what her mother was saying about her and nodding or shaking her head when she approved or disapproved what her mother said. The latter repeated that it was not easy to make Fiorella stop from using the computer. Many times she had to raise her voice to make her stop.

This was nothing new to me; in fact, I had heard the same thing in nearly every family I met. Fiorella's mother was the only member of the family who could spend time with Fiorella when she was using the computer. To be able to help her and follow what Fiorella was doing on the computer, her mother attended a course with her daughter. When I visited them, Fiorella's mother was taking an advanced course as well.

This was not easy for Giovanna, Fiorella's mother, for she had left school for quite a time and found it difficult to start again. Yet, Giovanna is doing quite well in the use of the Internet and can follow her daughter adequately. The Mallia family opted for something I did not meet in any other family. They decided to instal the computer in the kitchen for obvious reasons:

> We decided to place the computer in the kitchen so that I would keep an eye on my daughter. I do not agree about allowing children to use the computer unsupervised. I still watch carefully what Fiorella is doing, even though we have taken all precautions to bar certain things from being shown.
>
> (Giovanna 57, mother of a 17 year old with Down's Syndrome)

Giovanna also said that she has no facebook but created one for her daughter. Giovanna follows facebook continually and when she meets with unseemly comments she answers them. Giovanna is worried as sometimes she reads comments and sees photographs which are not good for her daughter. These are sent by her friends. All in all, Giovanna says that the computer and the use of the Internet have been beneficial to her family. She is conscious of dangers but, same as with everythings else, one can use the Internet well or abuse of it. She makes sure the Internet use does not interfere with interaction among the family members. In the second part of the chapter I took a look at the positive experiences that I encountered with respect Internet use home use. In particular, I discussed the issue from the communications point of view, wherein it was seen that Internet is a tool for the elimination of temporal and spatial barriers. I also discussed how Internet is being utilised for teleworking and as an opportunity for persons who are confined to their home for one reason or another, hence suffering from aloneness

In the previous section, I analysed how Internet is leading to more communication and connected lives, besides being instrumental in educational advancement and as a benefit to persons with special needs. In the next section, I shall analyse the experiences of those family members who, contrary to the majority, live without Internet or use it to a minimum.

4.6 Part 3: Insignificant effect of Internet use

Non-Use of the Internet at Home- The Control Group

4.6.1 Introduction

> **There is also a sizable portion of the non-user population that is not interested in using the Internet. While some of these non-users may be intrigued enough to go online by hearing more about what the Internet has to offer them (both in terms of utility and entertainment), many of them are determined and, in fact, take pride in their non-user status and may be difficult, if not impossible to reach. Thus, universal Internet access may not be a feasible goal for the near future.**

A look at what results from the study of those who absolutely do not use the Internet and those who use it only when necessary, gives a complete different picture of what is happening in the majority of homes of participating families. These experiences should not be ignored, because they stick out in a world which is constantly becoming more technological.

In fact, a small number of individuals, (11-11.45%) out of 96 participants, share the fact that they do not use the Internet at all at home, or try not to use it. I am conscious of the fact that this might be considered as a small control group, as ideally, it would have been better if I had an equal sample of those using the Internet and those not using it. Yet, through this study I still wanted and managed to explore and listen to what these participants had to say about their lived experience in a world without the use of the Internet.

4.6.2 Is it a question of time or is it a question of lack of interest?

According to the NSO (2013) as already recorded, for one reason or another about 26.3% of the Maltese said that they never used a computer whilst 28%, said that they never used the Internet. In addition, according to studies conducted abroad (Internet Usage Worldwide (2014); Global Internet Report (2015); and Pew Research Internet Project (2013), the reasons of the non-use of the Internet are various: lack of money, lack of accessibility, lack of education, lack of interest, among others.

My study revealed that the reasons why the Internet is not used are based on three aspects: lack of interest, lack of education and overuse of the Internet at the place of work. I therefore ended up with two groups: a group consisting of those who use the Internet at home and a control group composed of those who do not use it at all (including those who use the Internet, but preferably not at home, and at limited /minimal levels). This led me to some observations worthy of being analysed.

A particular observation is about the range of ages of the control group, which is between the ages of 33 and 70 years. For instance, Kerry 70 and Johnny 60 years, both insist that the Internet does not interest them. This is contrary to those who are youger, who tend to use the Internet more frequently (Prensky 2001). This is borne out by the research of the NSO (2012, 2013, 2014), as well as by the Eurostat (2013, 2013, 2014), which indicate that the highest rate of the use of the Internet is among young people. In fact, Prensky (2001) refers to those born in the digital epoch, as Digital Natives, while referring to those who were born before this period as Digital Immigrants.

Despite what I mentioned above, there is another reality – there are young individuals, born in the digital era who, nonetheless, do not use the Internet or who make minimal use of it. Though the ages of those who do not use the Internet and those who use it sparingly are different, the reasons given for their choice, barring that of lack of education, are similar: lack of interest, waste of time, a preference to do something else instead of using the Internet at home.

For example, Helen Quattromani, 47 year old married mother, Dino and Carla Agius, both 49, married with no children, and Catherine Incorvaja and her Partner Xandru Pace Tabone, both 37 years old and parents of a 13 year old girl, do not use the Internet because it does not interest them. In addition, whilst all others do have a computer at home, the Agius couple confirm that they do not. They were adamant about not introducing the Internet in their home. For them, the Internet is for those who have nothing else to do with their life

> For us, the Internet does not exist. We have not installed it and never will. When we want to talk to my brothers and sisters we go to my sister's and use Skype there. We have no time for the computer. When my husband comes home from work, we eat and do some jobs together. We tend to watch television more than anything else.
>
> (Carla housewife 49 years living with her husband Dino)

For instance, Helen's and Catherine's comments are clear and particular. The latter said that they do not like the Internet at all; they only use it when really necessary. Catherine says that her partner (Xandru - 37 years old) does not know how to use the Internet and this fact, according to her, has strengthened their relationship. Helen sustained that she would ask her husband or daughter to go on-line if she really needed anything.

On the other hand, two other couples, namely Portelli and Delia sustained that they make too much use of it at work, so once they are back home, they make sure not to use it at all. Saviour and Antoinette Portelli, a 33 year old couple without children, said that they do not use the Internet at home simply because they have enough of it at work. They both use it extensively at work and as soon as they get home, they forget all about it. It does not make sense for them to get on the Internet in the evenings at home as well.

Antoinette says they prefer to do other things: "It is not an important issue….as I said, my job is mostly on the computer at work, so I do not want to spend more time on the computer" she says. Saviour is more elaborate in his answer. He says that there may come a time when his choice of not using the Internet in his leisure time may change. But for now, he prefers to do other things:

> So the Internet per se, even the digital world, per se, I refuse to get a smartphone……Ipad may be. It is getting there, I am getting the edge…..but…..I do not feel that I need it ……So if I do not need it, I am not going to get it. But when I feel that, I do not know, my job or whatever, it would help me, I get it happen, but for now no. I can see the need which is spending time doing whatever you do with a computer screen, and at this stage of my life I do not feel the need for that, I'rather go out, I do rather jog, and what not.

>   (Saviour 33 year old teacher living with his wife)

The Delias, parents of three young children, gave mixed reasons why they do not use digital services. If possible, they will not even look at a computer, or, of course, use the Internet, which they consider it to be a contribution to lack of communication. They maintained that it would be a very rare occasion to use. They opine that they can happily live without a computer or the Internet.

> If possible I do neither use the computer nor the Internet. I have no time for them. If it were possible, I will not use the computer, even for my assignments. I would write down everything by hand and then try to find someone to type everything for me, so that I will not use my computer.
>
> (Tanya, 39 year old Physiotherapist mother of 3 young children living with her husband)

When I interviewed Tanya and her husband, I could see and feel that they both had the Internet in the home against their wishes. The two of them feel uneasy when they have to use the Internet. During the interview, Tanya criticised her sister who sends messages on her mobile asking her to get on to the Internet to see photos and comments that she has sent her.

She comments that her sister has time to spare and wastes it on the Internet. Her husband, Mark, 40 years old (labourer) as I said, is not a great fan of the Internet. He prefers watching a film on the big screen than spending time on the Internet, which he can well do without.

Although these results are trivial, yet, they are an indication that there are those who are resisting information technology, and these are of varying ages. As I have remarked earlier, history shows that man is not always ready to accept development, especially where technology is concerned (Gregoire 2014; Bauer 1997; Lapointe and Rivard 2005). On the other hand, there are cases where the decision not to use the Internet is taken simply because there is no interest, or because individuals choose to have their home Internet free.

> There is evidence that among those who have access to the Internet
> and are able to afford it, there are still many who choose not to go
> online.

(Global Internet Report 2014, p. 12)

A very interesting aspect, and one worthy of a deeper study emerging from this study, is the difference that exists between the lived experiences of those who use the Internet and those of persons who do not use it. It is clear from the findings of this study that those who do not resort to the Internet, tend to have more physical face to face interaction, an aspect which is not very evident with Internet users.

The Time Diaries show, as I will explain later, that some participants stated that while using the Internet they were interacting with other members of the family. Yet, this attention was not too strong, because those using the Internet have no continuous face-to-face contact.

On the contrary, they pay attention to the devices they are using, and every now and then, they take a look at those they are communicating with. Another subjective observation I made is related to the way the participants experienced the interview. I observed that those who do not use the Internet reacted differently from those who use it. I felt that non-users were more relaxed than those who were using the Internet in my presence. In other words, I was given more attention by those who do not use the Internet.

As I have mentioned, this observation is subjective and needs a deeper study to be substantiated. This means that though this is a sociological study, the psychological aspect is felt as well. Agius 2014 (pers. comm., 19th September) refers to the experience of his clients (patients). He recounted that when a person is using the Internet and is interrupted by another member of the family, or a stranger, like I was during my visits, the person using the Internet tends to look at the "newcomer" as one who is wasting their time.

Something else I observed, which I consider as significant and important, is the sense of solitude suffered by those not using the Internet while the other members of the family are using it. For instance, I felt this in the case of Kerry and Johnny, who often ended up watching television on their own. Besides, during meal times both Kerry and Johnny feel this loneliness, even though the other members are at the same table, because the latter opt for using the Internet even while dining.

The Delia and Portelli families experience a totally different reality – life without the Internet is their ideal life. They claim that they prefer to do things together when at home, like watching television together, dining together and even playing games and chatting together.

This is in contrast to the experience of those who use the Internet, who tend to individualise even when there are other members of the family in the vicinity. A perfect example is family meals, where some members carry on using their devices, despite the fact that they are eating.

This doing things in isolation takes place also in the bedroom or living room, with someone watching something on the ipad and someone else watching something else on the laptop. Although it is wrong to generalise, one just cannot deny the reality which emerges from this study. Briefly, the lived experience of non Internet users who live with frequent users is that the former spend substantial time in solitude as well.

In this last section of this chapter, I have dealt with the stories of some participants who are not interested in the use of the Internet in the home, or use it as little as possible. Studies in other countries have also recorded a percentage of individuals who, for various reasons, are not interested in using the Internet. It was relevant to hear their stories which are different, yet real. In the final section of this chapter, I am going to analyse the findings of the Time Diaries.

As I explained in detail in Chapter 3, I chose 6 families, out of the 36 representative families to keep a Time Diary at different periods over a stretch of 12 months.

4.7 Part 4: Time Diaries Analysis

4.7.1 Introduction

> Time Diaries acquire information on, not only the overall amount of time spent on different activities on that day, but also the duration of each activity, the frequency, and the sequence of different activities. Apart from this detailed information, primary and secondary activities can be covered using diary methods. For these reasons and since respondents are requested to fill in the dairy immediately when one activity ends and a new one begins, time diaries are often considered to be the most exhaustive, as well as the most elaborate, method of surveying people's time use.
>
> (Sonneberg et al 2011, p.4)

Since the inception of this study, about 6 years ago, I thought of analysing family experiences over a span of time. This idea was strengthened by the literature I have come across, which emphasised the importance of information that is elicited from data that is gathered throughout a specific time frame. This stems from studies which are based over a number of days, by the use of Time Diaries (Sonneberg et al 2011; Belli et al 2009; Burawoy 2003; Gilbert 2006; Seale 2008; Robinson 2002).

As a researcher I found the use of the Time Diaries very helpful as they gave me a clear picture of the amount of time that the Internet was used. I had the opportunity of following up what was happening during three different periods of time whilst I had the opportunity to compare and contrast the findings of the families understudy.

Besides this, I was able to keep in touch continuously with these participants especially during my visits in their respective homes. Meanwhile, another positive aspect related to this study through the Time Diaries, is that the response rate was 100%. As I explained in Chapter 3, I made sure tht the families chosen for this study of the Time Diares would be responsible and loyal families. In fact, I knew the six families personally, and therefore, the collected data, as already indicated is reliable and valid.

In all, I visited these families seven times: once when I approached them to ask them to participate, three other times when I gave them the Time Diaries and another three times when I collected them. Contrary to what happens in a quantitative diary, where in all probability only a snap shot of what happens is given, in a Longitudinal study, the researcher is in a position to make observation while, going through different experiences. There were experiences I had already witnessed but there were others which were quite different. I must say that my presence in the homes of these participants gave me time to make observations which I duly noted down in my field notes.

Meanwhile, I have to admit that, when I decided to use this approach, I felt a little bit frightened for quite a number of reasons. There was the possibility that some participants might decide to drop out halfway through the study (Seale 2008; Fulcher & Scott 2005; Bolger & Laurenceau 2005; Haralombos & Holborn 1999; Nie & Hillgus 2002; Robinson 2002; Burawoy 2003).

It is expected that a study of this sort takes time. In fact, the Time Diaries were delivered over a period of one year. This in itself was an indication that there would be problems during the process, and in fact there were! Among the families that accepted to participate, in this study, there was a member of one family who had to be taken abroad for medical care, precisely during one week when the family had to jot down the information in the Time-Diary. Though I felt anxious about this, I was glad that everything went well for him healthwise.

Therefore when he came back to Malta, the whole family continued participating in the study on a regular basis, the only difference being that the Time Diaries were filled in the following month, that is February 2014. This in no way effected the routine of the study. Fortunately, it can be said that, even though problems did crop up, solutions were also found. In fact, I can truly say that I am happy with the feedback and cooperation of all the participants. The Time Diaries will show how effective they are to identify the complex ways in which interaction and communication are being experienced through the use of Internet during a specified period of time: "Internet affects interpersonal communication and sociability. Dynamic new time-diary data identifies when and where Internet use impacts face-to-face interaction" (Nie & Hillgus 2002, p.1). All 18 members of these families worked in a committed way with great responsibility. These participants had to indicate their lived experience of Internet use at home during the first week of January 2013, the first week of July 2013 and the first week of January 2014. I could interpret and analyse the collected data by quantifying parts of the data. However, the sample collected by the use of the Time Diaries is in no way representative. For this reason, the appraisal has been qualitative, as explained in detail in Chapter 3. Three databases per family were needed to collect the information in these time diaries. These were further split up over three periods of 7 days each in which the families kept the diary. I have included information collected from every member of each participant family.

The information includes:

- The amount of time spent weekly on the Internet and during the three weeks
- The peak hours of Internet use
- The preferred domestic spaces in which Internet was used
- Whether or not other people were present in this space
- Whether or not communication took place when in the presence of people
- Reasons forInternet use

In all 18 databases were collected (See Appendix VII). First, each family was analysed separately. This was done so that each family's lived experience could be explored individually to find out each family's lifestyle dynamics. Eventually, I was in a better position to interpret and analyse the data of all six families. In other words, I could interpret the general situation and lifestyle patterns clearly in every family. Through these databases, I could have a more holistic picture of the lived experience of Internet use in the home over a period of time.

In the following section I will explain all my findings. Then I will analyse the findings of the individual families.

4.7.2 General Findings and Analyis of the Six Families

In my analysis I have drawn an interesting list of findings which were common in all families and others which were not so common. Of particular interest are the preferred rooms and the schedules in all six families when Internet was used. The Smartphone, tablet and laptops were the most commonly used devices. Another observation of great importance was the time in which communication and interaction took place.

It resulted that meal times was the time most commonly used for interpersonal communication, when compared to other times. The time in which the least communication took place was early morning upon getting out of bed. Most participants agreed that although they are surrounded by other family members, hardly any communication takes place then. The scenario at bedtime is similar to this. The Time Diaries showed that, although family members were at close quarters, hardly any human interaction took place while Internet is being used. Since these observations were noted in the diaries, I have also taken into consideration the age, level of education and gender. These appear to be very significant in this case.

The most popular site on the Internet was Facebook. Writing emails, reading the news, listening to music were also popular reasons to use the Internet. Females mostly used the Internet early morning while males used it during or after lunch or dinner. Families with a tertiary level of education used the Internet for the reading of news and research while families with a secondary level of education or even lower used Internet for Facebook or to download music/films amongst other things. Hardly anyone used it for study reasons. Only two young people indicated that they used the Internet for research while they were studying.

4.7.3 Presence and Interaction at Home

> Social presence defines how participants relate to one another which in turn affects their ability to communicate effectively.

> (Kehrwald, 2008 p.89)

As I have already mentioned in the Introduction, another important data which is evident in both the Time Diaries and in another interview is the presence and interaction amongst family members during Internet use. While family members admitted to having people around them while using Internet, they also admitted that hardly any face to face communication took place.

This phenomenon appeared in all families except for two families: an elderly couple composed of Agnes and Frans and a gay couple, Ivan and Gordon. Since the elderly couples' laptops have a fixed place in the home, mainly the living room and study, the use of Internet is limited. Therefore the problem of lack of communication is not manifest in this household. Ivan and Gordon's situation is different as the latter comes home late and therefore does not resort to the Internet at all. These experiences indicated two very different realities from the other four families. The other four families all agreed that during the three main times of day: upon waking up/at breakfast, during mealtimes or in bed Internet is being used.

The most popular spaces for Internet use for participants under 40 years of age, were the Kitchen / Living Room and the Bedroom, that scored 42.9 % and 38.1% respectively. A keen observation on the Time Diaries showed that the space mostly used for human interaction was the kitchen / living room during meal times whilst the least interaction occurred in the bedroom as shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Internet Location - Persons Under 40 years of Age
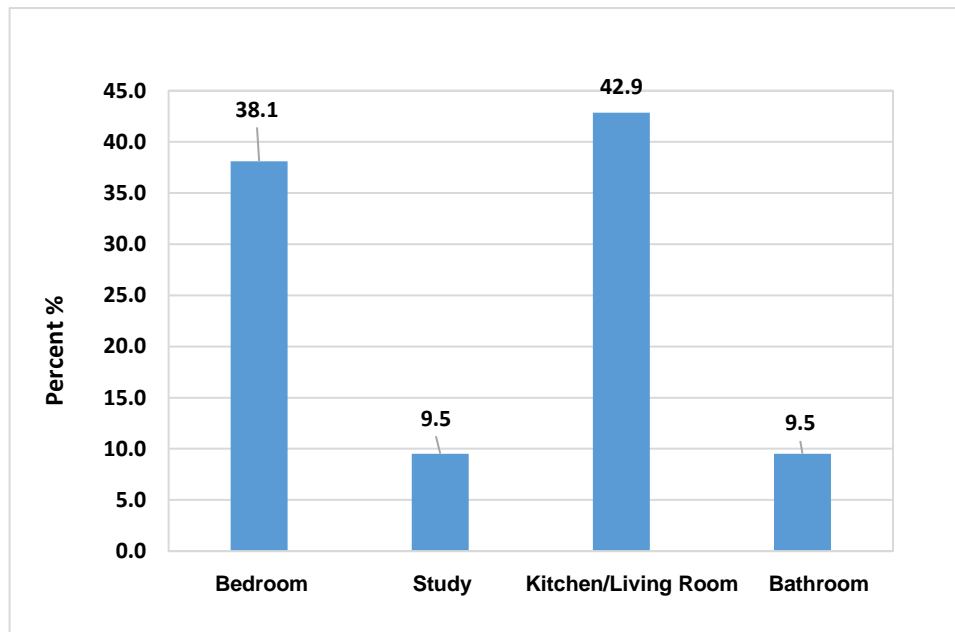
The families under study all agreed that Internet is mostly used during the three main times of day: upon waking up/at breakfast, during mealtimes or in bed. As indicated in the following Figure 17, for participants who are over 40 years of age, the most popular spaces for Internet use were the Kitchen /Living Room at 38.5 % whilst both the Bedroom and the Bathroom scored 23.1% respectively. These participants indicated that they used the Internet in the study as well at 15.4%.

Figure 17: Internet Location - Persons Over 40 years of Age
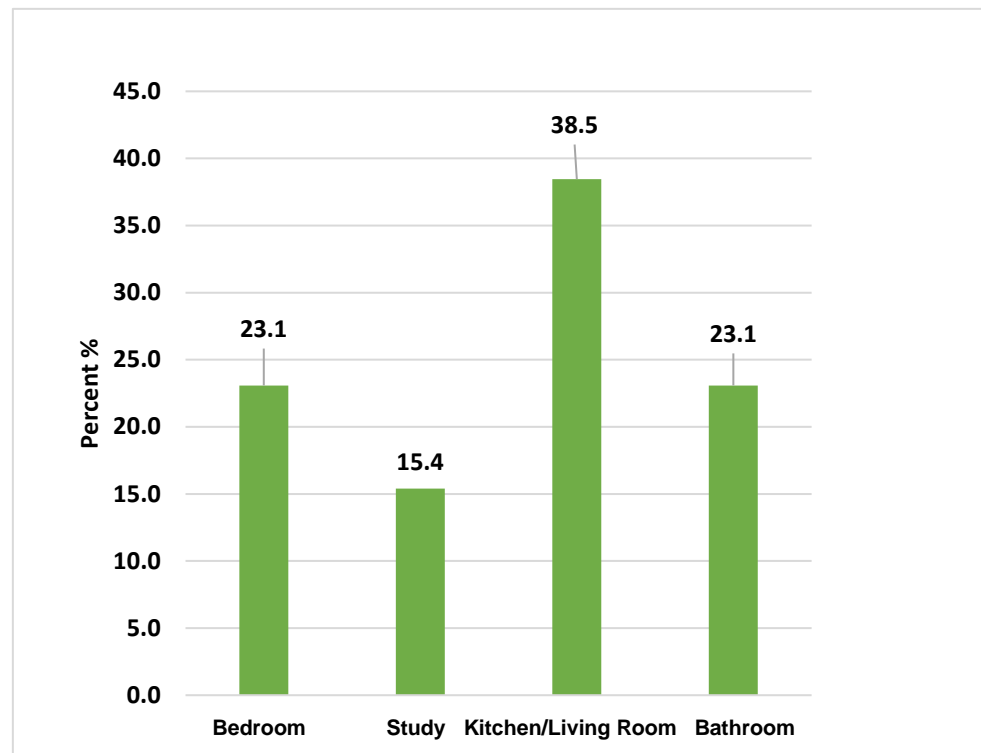
4.7.4 Do the seasons affect the use of Internet in the home?

As a researcher, I was interested to explore whether or not the seasons had an impact on the use of Internet at home. The three periods of time were purposely chosen so that the research findings could be compared. Therefore choosing the three periods of Winter, Summer and Winter again, was not chosen at random. This was done for triangulation purposes. However, two families, that of Kinds and the gay couple Ivan and Gordon, left out some of the information during certain periods. The Kinds family explained that they were away at their summer residence during summer so the use of Internet was limited. In parallel, Gordon and his partner Ivan spent long hours at work from home so that the use of Internet was also very limited. Another salient point is that the periods chosen were either at Christmas time/New Year or during summer recess in which case hardly any study takes place.

This was the main reason why it was so evident in the data collected that hardly anyone uses the Internet for study purposes.

After a general analysis of the main findings which were evident in the Time Diaries, I will be analysing the families individually. My conclusion will follow.

4.7.5 The Kinds Family

This family is made up of a 76-year old couple: Agnes and Frans. Although they are getting on in age they both lead an active and busy life which renders great satisfaction and makes it more interesting. Since they are both ex-teachers they did not find it difficult to learn how to use the Internet. During an interview they admitted to using the Internet as a means of relaxation, like researching different subjects which they find interesting. They also use it to get to know what is happening around them and they also use email to keep them connected to family and friends, amongst other things. There are two main interesting findings in the Time Diaries kept by this family. In the first week of January 2013, while Agnes indicated that she used Internet in the evening, her husband Frans used Internet more often than her and he used it both in the morning and in the evening.
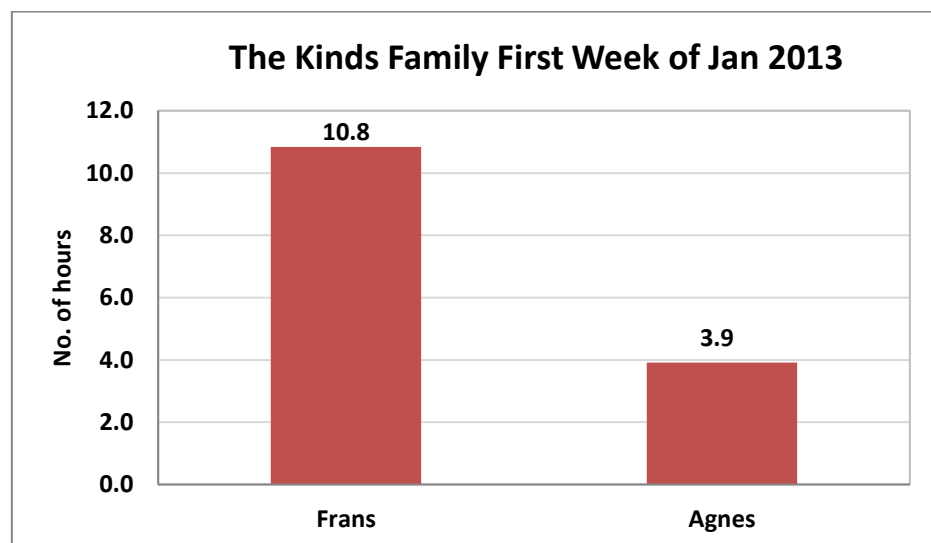
Figure 18: Internet use at Home by Kinds Family in Jan 2013

As shown in Figure 18, during this week Agnes used the Internet for a span of 3.9 hours while Frans used it for 10.8 hours. In the first week of diary keeping, Family Kinds indicated that at the time of Internet use no interpersonal communication occurred. During the interview, they both agreed that they communicate with one another by email. Agnes uses the laptop in the living room downstairs while Frans uses the laptop in the study upstairs, so it is easier for them to communicate by email!

The Kinds Family First Week of July 2013
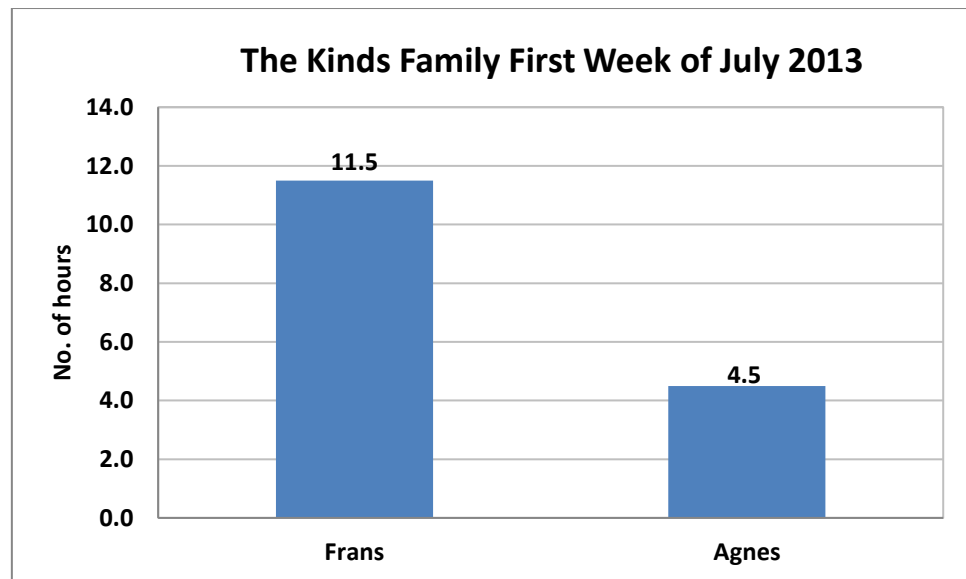
Figure 19: Internet use at Home by Kinds Family in July 2013

As shown in Figure 19, whilst the timespan for Agnes use of Internet was 4.5 hours and Frans' use of Internet was 11.5 hours during the period 1st – 7th July 2013, they both used Internet in one another's presence. However, hardly any communication took place between them. During such time they were also in the presence of other family members or students who sought advice in educational matters. Both Agnes and Frans admitted to using the Internet as a means of relaxation like reading the news and researching areas of interest. They both use Internet in their free time. I have also observed that on certain days of the week both Agnes and Frans did not use the Internet.

As I have already explained, this occurred since they have no Internet access at their summer residence so their laptops are left at home.

The Kinds Family First Week of Jan 2014
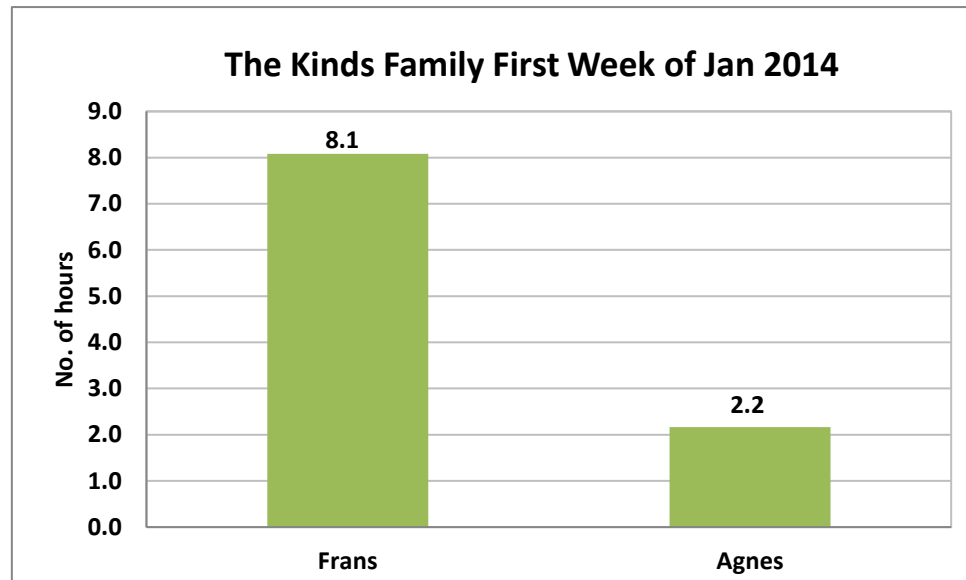
Figure 20: Internet use at Home by Kinds Family in Jan 2014

Figure 20 clearly shows, that Family Kinds mainly used Internet during the month of July. From the total of hours spent on the Internet they hardly communicated with one another. Frans spent 30.4 hours on the Internet, out of which there were only 3 moments of interaction and 4 occasions in which communication could have taken place but did not. Agnes spent 10.6 hours on the Internet out of which there were only 3 moments of interaction and 4 occasions in which communication could have taken place but did not.

4.7.6 The Family unit made up of Ivan Azzopardi and Gordon Rossi

This family's priority was similar to the previous one as Internet use was not frequent either. During the interview they both agreed that they hardly use the Internet. A salient point was that Gordon used the Internet sparingly in the first week of January 2013 since he remained at home.

The nature of his business is such that he is expected to work on feast days. Ivan does not use the Internet much while he is at home. He is not "addicted" as was the case of some of the participants as can be seen later on.
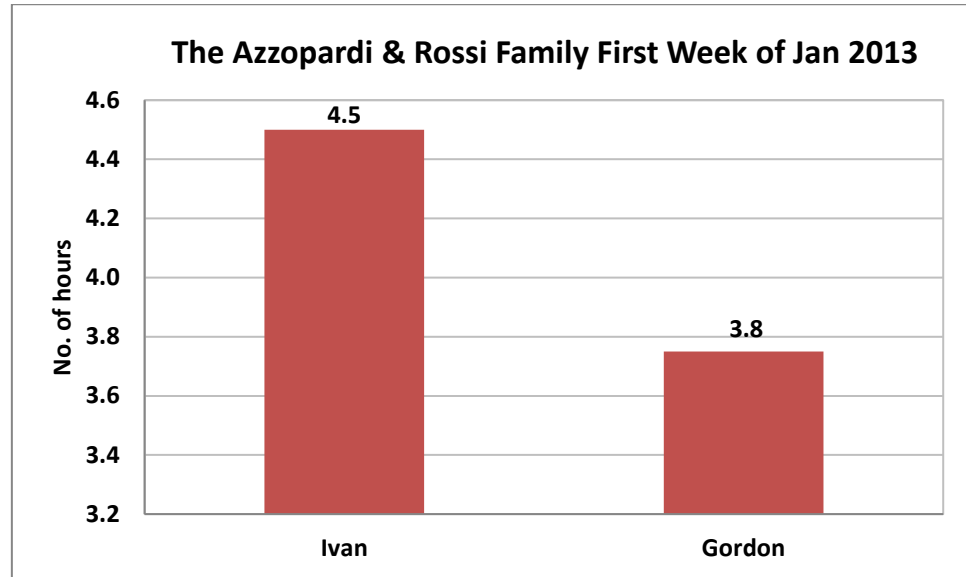
Figure 21: Internet use at Home by Azzopardi & Rossi Family in Jan 2013

Figure 21 manifests that Gordon and Ivan both prefer to use the Internet either in the living room or in bed. Gordon uses the computer mainly for work from home especially in peak season. Most of the time, he needs to place orders as it gets too busy at work and he has to continue working after hours at home. Gordon and Ivan use the Internet together for researching and organising their holiday. They use it to send emails and enquire about lodging, booking flights and gaining other information. Interpersonal communication often takes place while both Gordon and Ivan are using the Internet as they still enjoy chatting to one another. Since Ivan spends more time at home on his own, interaction is not so frequent. He spends some time in the morning using mainly Facebook on his mobile phone. Then he logs into the Internet while waiting for Gordon's return home. Gordon prefers to watch TV in bed and enjoys watching current affairs than using Internet. When Gordon falls asleep, he is online again reading emails and chatting with some of their friends.

The Azzopardi & Rossi Family First Week July 2014
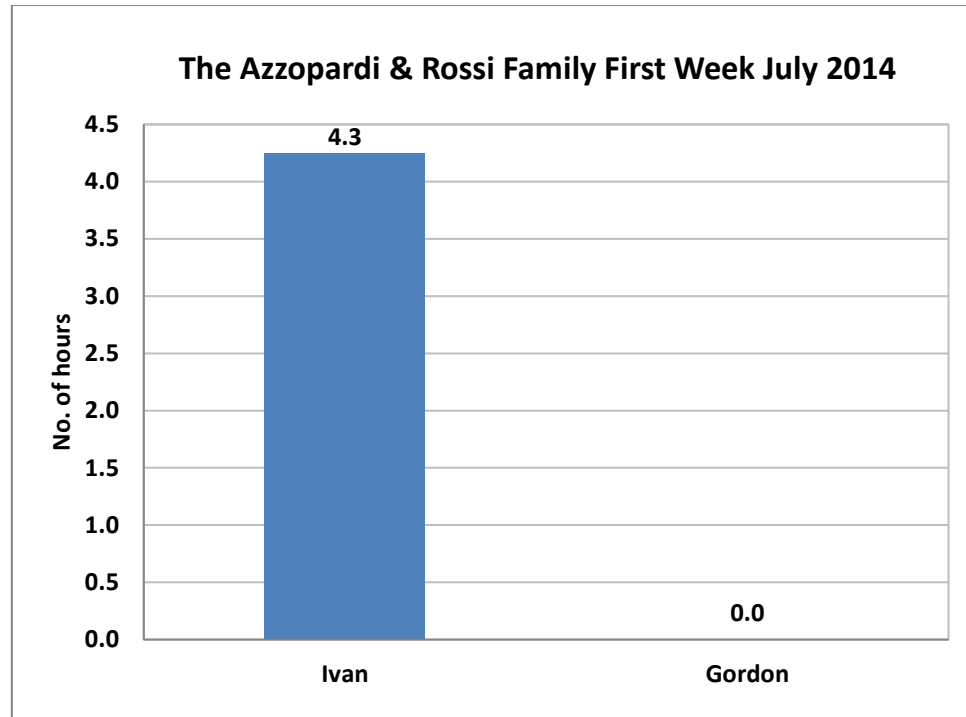
Figure 22: Internet use at Home by Azzopardi & Rossi in July 2013

As shown in Figure 22 and similar to the previous period, Ivan specified that he spends more time at home on his own, and hence once again interaction is not so frequent. Again he indicated that he spends some time in the morning using mainly Facebook on his mobile phone and then he logs into the Internet while waiting for Gordon's return home. Gordon prefers to watch TV in bed and enjoys watching current affairs than using Internet. When Gordon falls asleep, he is online again reading emails and chatting with some of their friends.

The Azzopardi & Rossi Family First Week Jan 2014
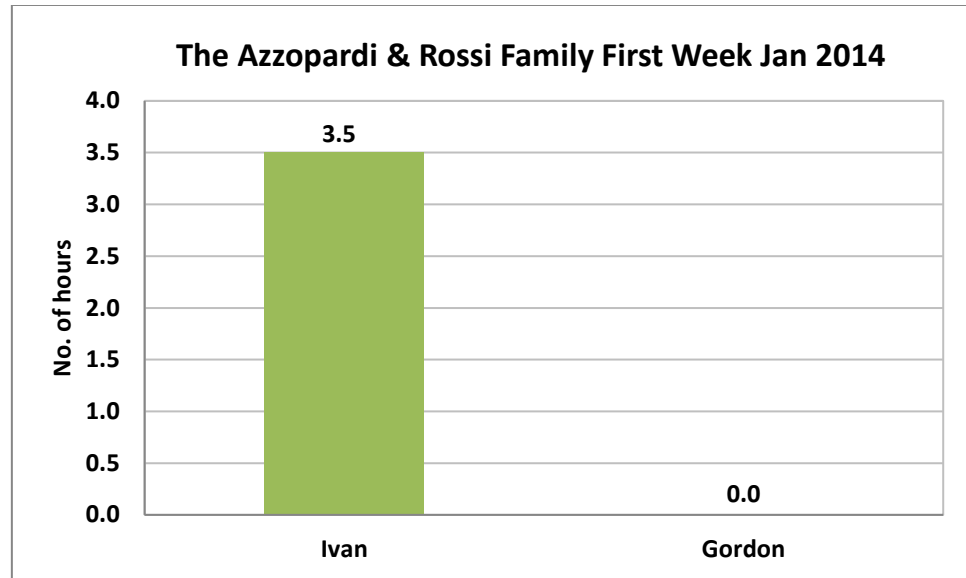
Figure 23: Internet use at Home by Azzopardi & Rossi in Jan 2014

During the weekend the use of Internet is minimal as they do not spend their evenings at home. As can be seen in the Figure 22 and 23, Gordon does not use it at all while Ivan spends 4.3 hours and 3.5 hours respectively. They enjoy going out and spending the time together. They do not use it while they are having dinner so that it does not deter them from spending quality time together.

4.7.7 Family Anthony Dimech, Berta Desira & Denzin Desira

This family unit is made up of a 38 year old mother, Berta, her 12 year old son Denzin and 34 year old Anthony who is the mother's partner. Anthony is a businessman and most of his work is out of the home however he uses the Internet to work from the home too. Berta works with him at the office while the son spends most of his time alone at home or at his grandparents who live in the adjacent apartment.

Whilst this family's routine is very similar to the rest of the families keeping the Time Diaries and being interviewed, yet the time spent on the Internet by Denzin was so disconcerting that I had to speak to the mother about it. The amount of time spent every day at a stretch was phenomenal. From the three tables hereunder of Family Dimech / Desira, Denzin spent 42.4 hours in the first week of January 2013, 86.2 hours in the first week of July and 53.5 hours in the first week of January 2014. This meant a total of 182 hours in 21 days spent on the Internet.

As Denzin himself indicated in the Time Diaries, he was mainly playing games or watching videos on YouTube whilst also indicating that there were 20 occasions during the 182 hours in which he was accompanied but there was no interaction. Whilst his mother was aware of her son's long span of time spent on the Internet, she also felt anxious about this situation. However, she thinks that it is quite normal for children his age to spend all this time on the Internet.

Both Denzin and his mother think that the Internet is an educational tool since he has acquired a lot of general knowledge. When they were asked about his interpersonal communication with his peers, the mother replied that Denzin attends youth meetings regularly in the parish. She still thinks that there is a lot of room for improvement regarding interaction. During her interview she had also insisted about Denzin keeping facebook on so that she may communicate frequently with him so that she put her mind at rest that all is well at home.

The Dimech and Desira Family First Week of Jan 2013
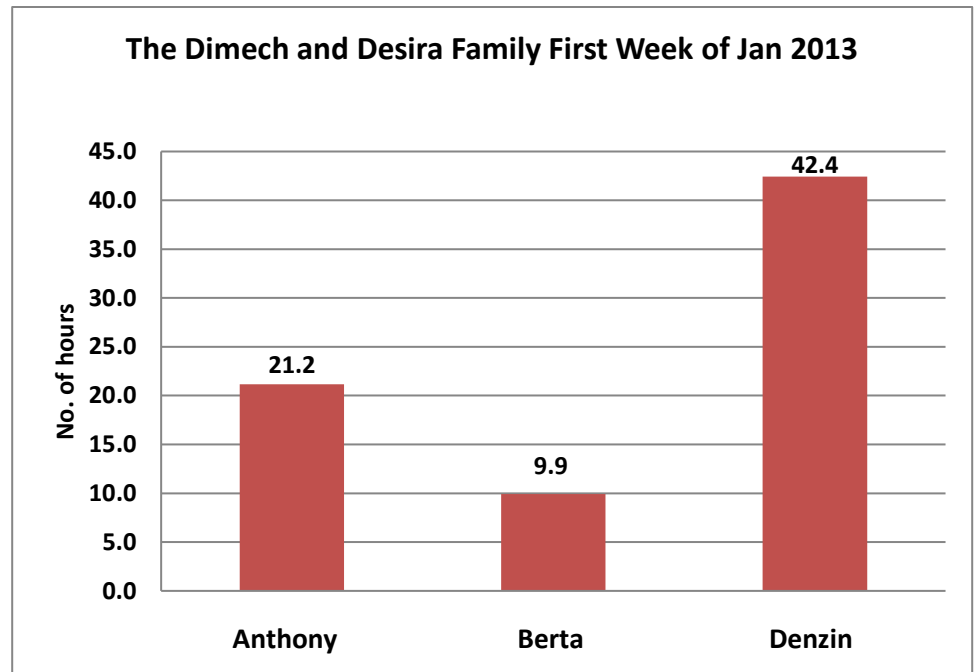
Figure 24: Internet use at Home by Dimech & Desira Family in Jan 2013

Figure 24 shows how Berta also uses the Internet frequently; however she uses it for her recreational time after work. Like all the participants she enjoys using it first thing in the morning or while having breakfast before going off to work. The most convenient time for her is before dinner-time or in bed before she goes off to sleep. She mainly uses Internet to visit Facebook, to answer emails or to watch a film. Out of 43.1 hours of Internet use she has indicated 24 occasions in which communication took place and another 11 instances in which someone was next to her but no interaction took place.

The Dimech & Desira Family First Week of July 2013

No. of hours

Anthony	24.0
Berta	19.5
Denzin	86.2
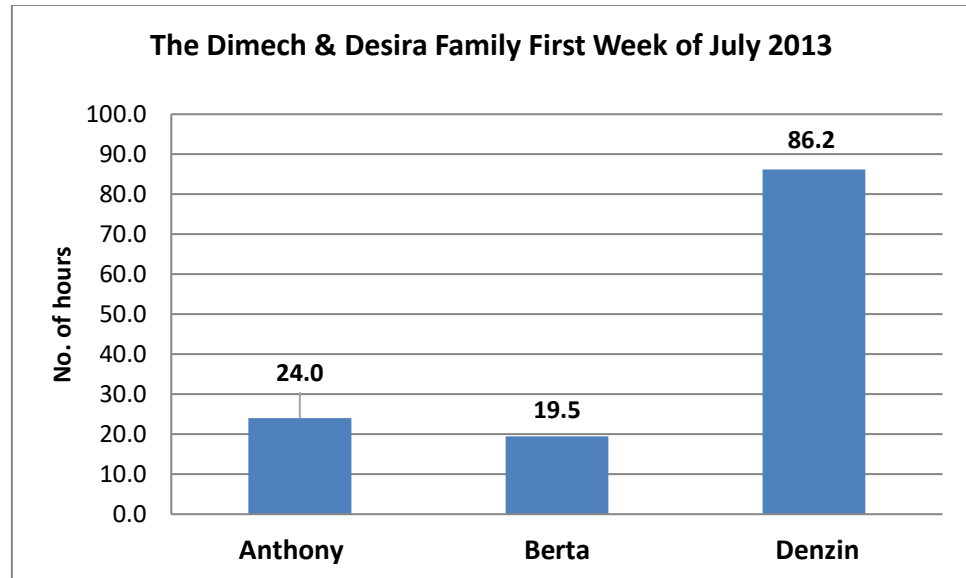
Figure 25: Internet use at Home by Dimech & Desira in July 2013

Anthony's experience of Internet use is similar to Berta's; as shown in Figure 25 however, his home use of Internet is more for work purposes than for relaxation or recreational use. During the interview Anthony related that he uses different devices for Internet and this depends on what he is doing. It is clear from Anthony's account about the use of Internet that his life centres on the use of Internet; this was reflected in his Time Diaries. Often when he is at home Anthony reads emails or enjoys reading. The most preferred times to use Internet is upon his return from the office or around 7pm.

Notwithstanding all this, Anthony spends some time on the Internet in the early morning, during breakfast. Anthony enjoys being updated on a lot of things and he likes to know what is going on all the time. Although this might seem that he is spending much time on the Internet, in actual fact the amount of time is short. As he explains during the interview, he is always connected and there are brief moments during the day in which he checks what is going on.

Anthony used the Internet for 57.7 hours during these three weeks during which he had 19 instances of interaction and another 2 instances in which no interaction took place.

The Dimech and Desira Family First Week of Feb 2014
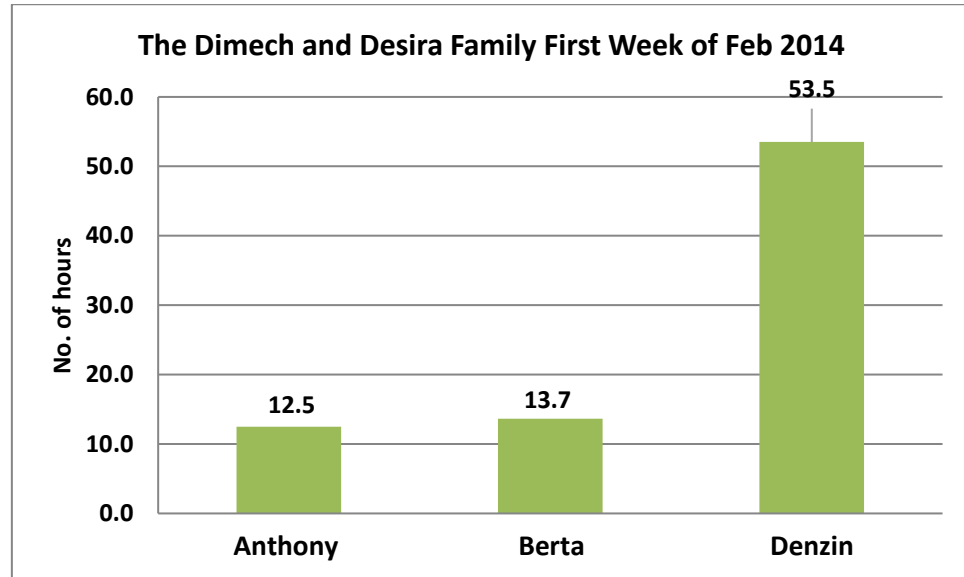
Figure 26: Internet use at Home by Dimech & Desira Family in Feb 2014

As in the other families under study, the week during which the Internet was used most by in the Dimech / Desira family, was in July 2013 as shown in Figure 26.

4.7.8 The Quattromani Family

This family is made up of three members: Giovanna, a 48 year old mother, Dione, a 49 year old father and Jessica their 23 year old daughter. Giovanna does not use the Internet. When she needs a recipe or anything else, she asks her husband or her daughter to access the Internet on her behalf. The very fact that she does not use the Internet is irrelevant to her. This is the reason, therefore, that she did not participate in the Time Diary - keeping exercise. Dione and Jessica use it regularly. The latter uses it more frequently than her father.

The Quattromani Family First Week of Jan 2013
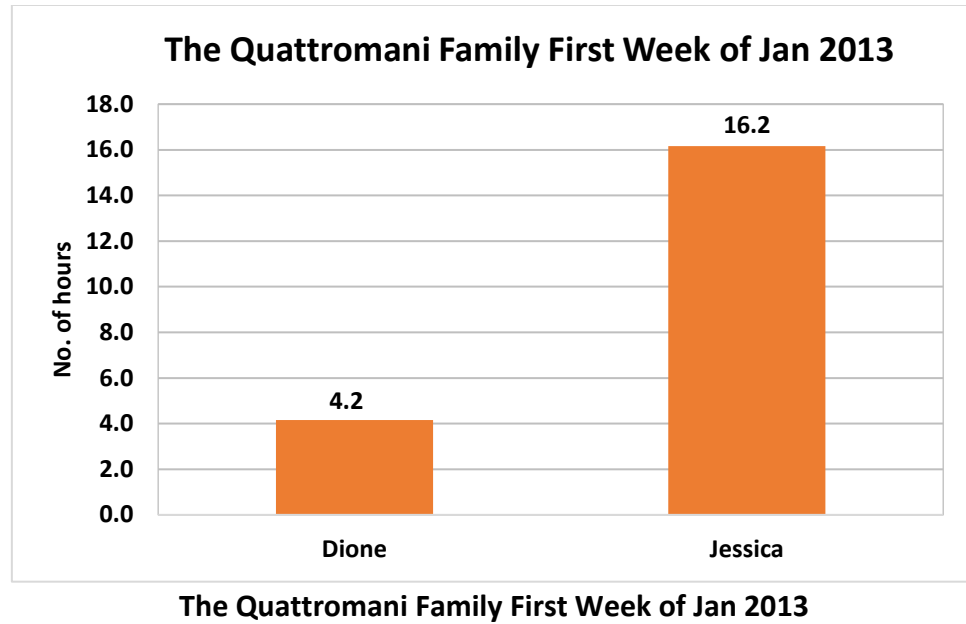
Figure 27: Internet use at Home by Quattromani Family in Jan 2013

Jessica's frequent Internet use is justified by the fact that she is a university student and she mainly uses it for her studies. Jessica also uses it a lot to login to Facebook and also to watch films. In fact her use of the Internet stands out more than her father's as shown in her Time Diary and in Figure 27.

The Quattromani Family First Week of July 2013
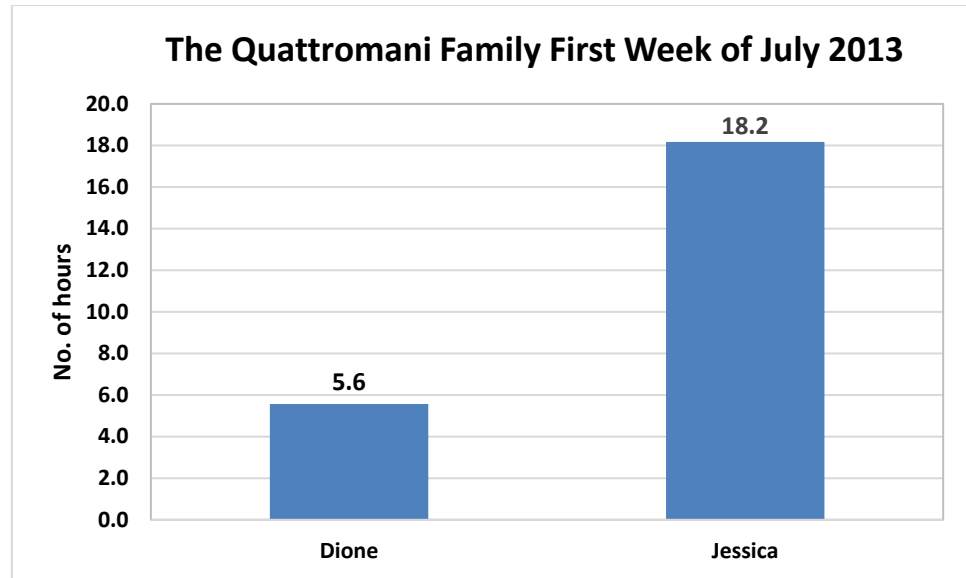
Figure 28: Internet use at Home by Quattromani Family in July 2013

Figure 28 shows that while Jessica used the Internet for 59.2 hours over a span of three weeks, her father only used it for 13.2 hours. Dione uses it to shop, read the news and to browse. Jessica uses the Internet mainly in her bedroom however the kitchen and living room are also used. Although these spaces are her favourite, she also uses the Study.

The Quattromani Family First Week of Jan 2014
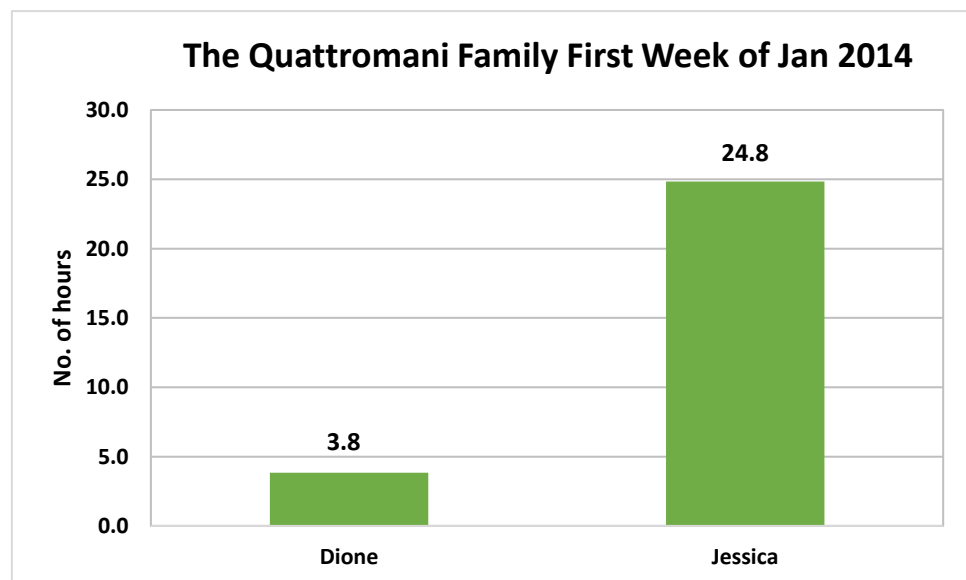
Figure 29: Internet use at Home by Quattromani Family in Jan 2014

The Internet is always on, even during mealtimes. However interaction still takes place. There were 25 instances in which interaction took place with her parents. It was also noted that, while long hours spent by Jessica on the Internet stood out, her father's use was shorter yet more frequent as in Figure 29. When the father's frequent time intervals in minutes were entered into the database, they amounted to much less in hours than Jessica's.

4.7.9 The Abdilla Family

The Abdilla family has also contributed by giving interesting insights upon Internet use in Maltese families. This family is made up of four persons; however the youngest has not participated in the study: Ray, a 48 year old father who works in the maritime sector and works by shift; Rita, a 42 year old mother who works in the educational field and Mario their 16 year old son who is a student.
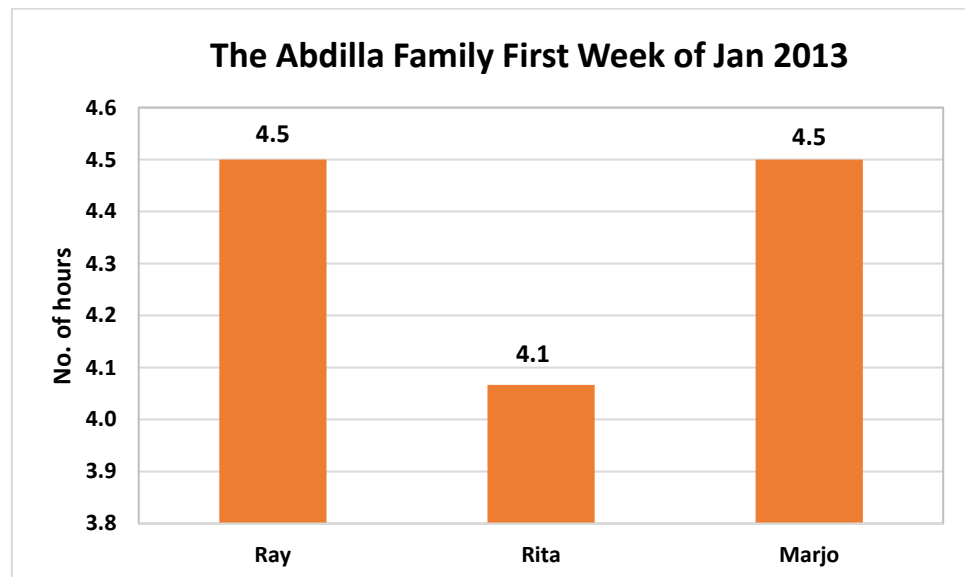
Figure 30: Internet use at Home by Abdila Family in Jan 2013

This family move to a summer residence during the three months of summer and changes in their Internet use may also be noted as shown in Figure 30.

On the other hand, Figure 31 manifests an increase in Internet use both by the mother and son in summer whereas in the father's case, there was a sharp decrease.

The Abdilla Family First Week of July 2013
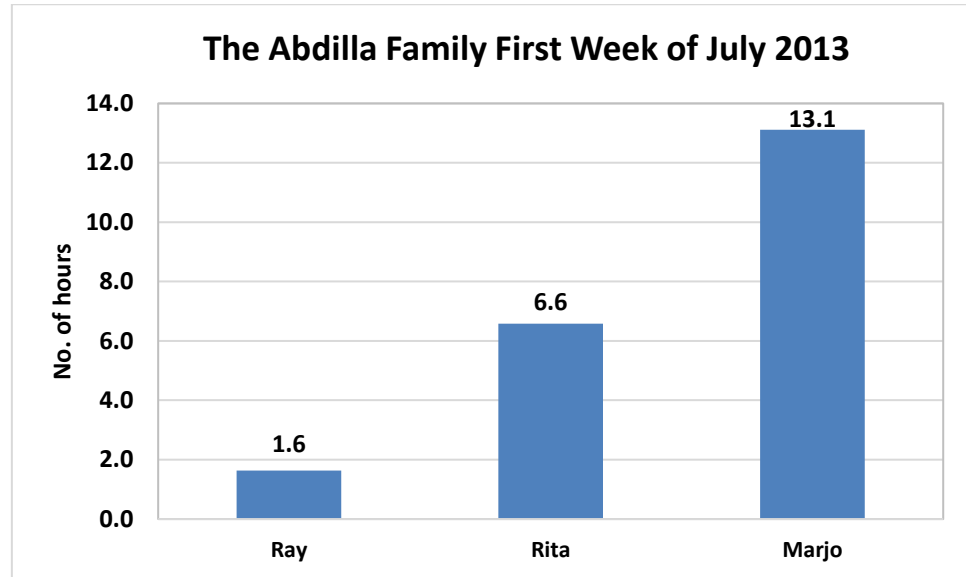
Figure 31: Internet use at Home by Abdilla Family in July 2013

The mother's main use of the Internet is for browsing, reading of books on Kindle and reading emails. In an earlier interview she had stated her disapproval of those people who spend too much time on Facebook. She did not use Facebook much. This was different as in the case of her husband and son. This is well noted in their Time Diaries. Another observation noted here was that while Rita spends 45 minutes on the Internet daily, both her husband's and son's use is shorter (20 minutes) but more frequent. In fact, when her husband was interviewed he had stated that he does not spend too much time on the Internet. His main use is for news updates, Facebook, emails and then he goes back to his daily routine. Mario uses the Internet more frequently. He enjoys browsing and chatting on Facebook. This family's favourite space for the use of Internet is the Kitchen / Dining whilst the bedroom is the second favourite place.

The Abdilla Family First Week of Jan 2014

Figure shows bar chart with No. of hours axis (0.0 to 25.0): Ray 3.4, Rita 2.6, Marjo 20.3.
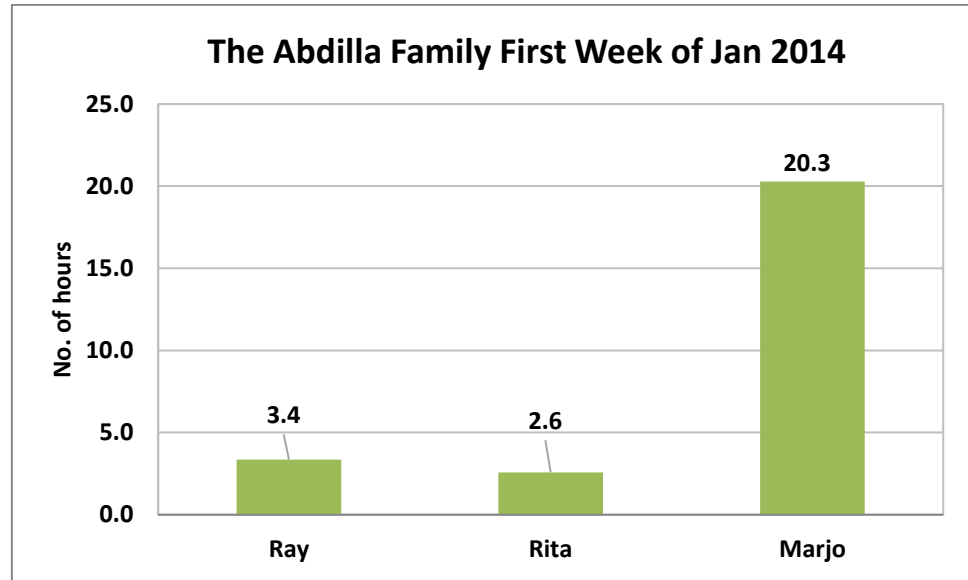
Figure 32: Internet use at Home by Abdilla Family in Jan 2014

Whilst Rita had indicated her preference to sit on the kitchen sofa whilst using the Internet, Ray preferred the terrace during summer as shown in Figure 32. As in most cases, this family liked to go online in the morning to update themselves whilst mealtimes and bedtime were second and third preferences. Although Rita stated in her Time Diaries that most of the time there was someone nearby, she hardly ever interacted during the use of Internet. Out of the 13.2 hours spent on the Internet over 21 days, there was someone nearby on 5 occasions but no interaction took place. In another 4 instances interaction did take place. Rita's husband works by shift, so he is hardly there while the children are there; however, interaction still does not take place. Ray spent 9.5 hours using the Internet; in 28 instances in which the family was present, he communicated with them. He does not say whether or not he did interact while being surrounded by people. Ray mostly uses the Kitchen / Living room, the only difference being in summer when he extends the living room in the terrace.

Mario, the son, spent 37.9 hours out of which he had 45 instances of interaction and 5 instances of being accompanied but no interaction took place. The Abdilla family as in all the other families agreed that most of the interaction took place during mealtimes.

4.7.10 The Tanti Family

This family is made up of Edward, a single father of 49 and his two children Lucio and Sasha, 19 and 16 years old respectively. Edward works in the maritime sector. Lucio is a full-timer in the health department whilst Sasha is still a student. The family meet up daily and regularly at mealtimes but mainly dinner time. During an interview with Edward, he was adamant to keep mealtimes free of Internet use as he considers it a "sacred" time in which most communication takes place. Lucio showed that this was a different story as recorded in his Time Diary. In fact, Lucio indicated that he used the Internet sparingly but for short periods during this time. Sasha shows that she enjoyed using the Internet for a short while before and after meal times as did the father, Edward.
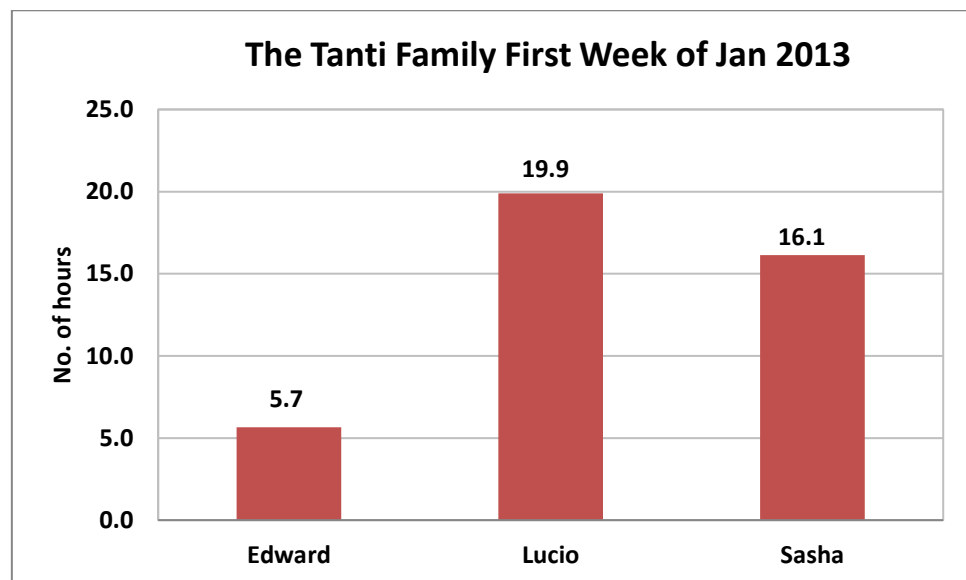
Figure 33: Internet use at Home by Tanti Family in Jan 2013

The three members of the Tanti family indicated that they mainly use Internet for Facebook, browsing, reading emails, getting updated with the latest news and to watch films. Edward and Sasha prefer to sit on the sofa in the Kitchen / Living room after mealtimes whilst Lucio prefers his bedroom.

As previously stated during an interview, Edward always tries to communicate with his children. In fact in his Time Diary and as shown in Figure 33 it appears that out of 19 hours spent on the Internet over three weeks he had 9 instances in which he interacted with his children and another 4 in which he did not interact at all in their presence.
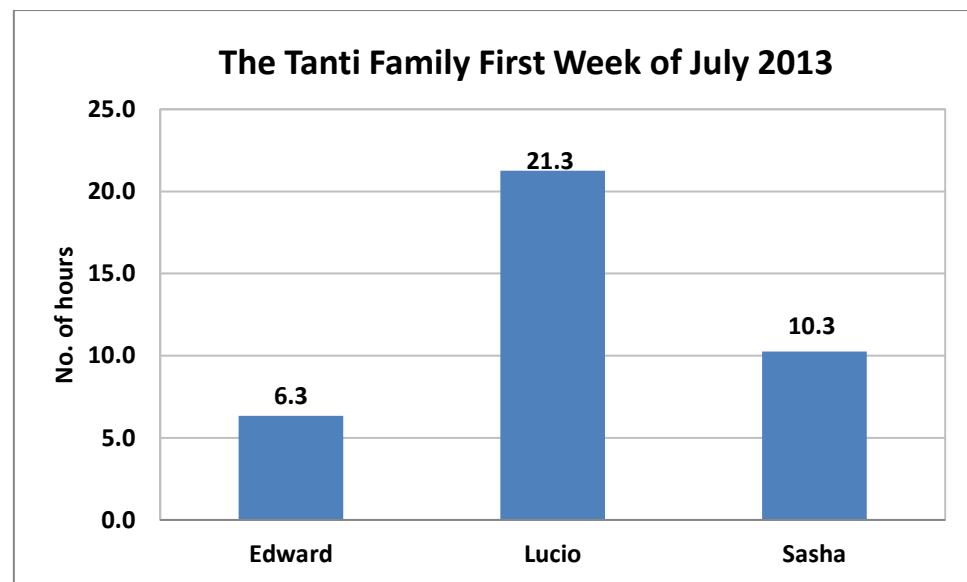
Figure 34: Internet use at Home by Tanti Family in July 2013

On the other hand Lucio spends the most time on the Internet. In fact during the three weeks under observation, Lucio indicated 53.5 hours. During five instances he was accompanied but no interaction took place. Sasha spent 47.1 hours in three weeks and in 6 instances she communicated whilst in another 2 she did not even though she was always accompanied. The study shows that Lucio spent most time on the Internet whilst the father spent the least time.

The Tanti Family First Week of Jan 2014

Figure showing a bar chart. Y-axis labeled "No. of hours" ranging from 0.0 to 25.0. Bars: Edward 7.0, Lucio 12.3, Sasha 20.8.
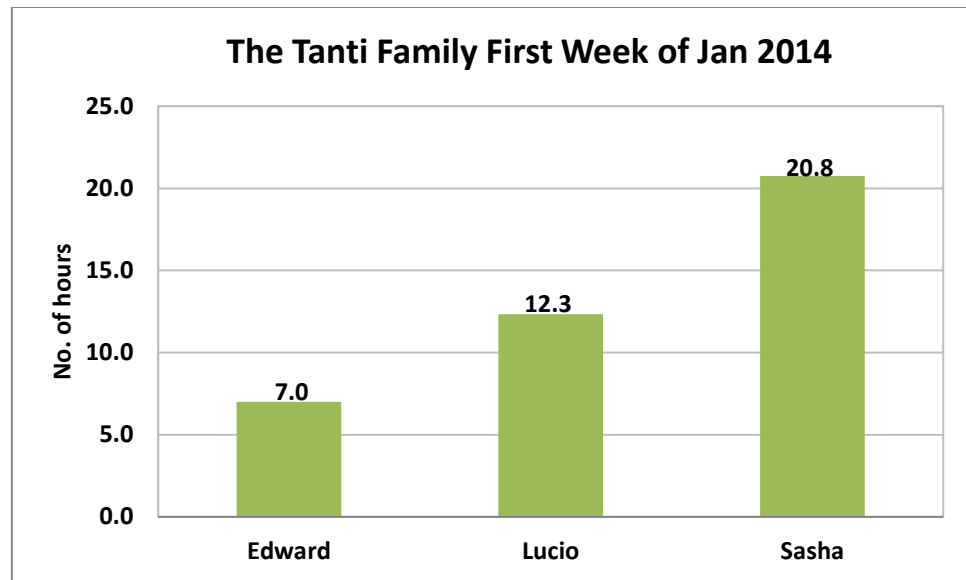
Figure 35: Internet use at Home by Tanti Family in Jan 2014

Even though as a family they meet during mealtimes due to work and other commitments this shows that they all have to make an effort to interact especially during Internet use. Although the father does not use the Internet much yet he still feels the need to use Facebook even though for a short period of time. On the other hand his children use the Internet more sparingly, this causes some friction as the father has to call them more than once and even get angry at them as they tend to remain on Internet during mealtimes. However, even the father admitted to using the Internet during mealtimes.

4.7.11 Time Diaries Conclusion

> Interconnectivity is what gives network time its power within culture and society. It stems not simply from the Internet, but from a whole raft of connectable applications and devices that can and will use the Internet as the "backbone" of interconnectivity. The suffusion into daily life of networkable devices is already impressive if compared with only a decade ago. In many ways the nexus between neoliberal globalisation and the ICT revolution, represents a triumph of instrumental reason, (albeit probable provisionally), so comprehensively is its logic inserting itself into everyday life. Information technologies are central to this process.

> (Hassan 2003, p. 7)

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30 years ago, Figley (1985) and Wakefield (1985) in their respective studies already indicated that the introduction of the computer in the home would make the family progress at a fast rate and would take on a new dimension. In fact, Figley maintains that, "Even today, computers impact nearly every facet of our life, including the intimate environment of our home" (1985, p.2). He states that, through the use of the computer in the home, the family dynamics would be affected while the family would be more autonomous. Wakefield (1985) also foresaw the changes in the family, the use of the computer would bring, so much so that he recommended that the advent of this technology should not be ignored but given the attention it merited: "Continuing family and social changes suggest an urgent need for much greater understanding of the impact of home computer use on families" (1985, p 19).

These observations made by Wakefield (1985) and Figley (1985), were also made by me to prove whether the reality predicted by these thinkers is being experienced today in the context of the use of the Internet in the home. In fact, that is what I did. I tried to find out and explore how the use of the Internet is being lived at home.

I want to say that since the very beginning of this study I thought of basing it on two areas: one based on interviews with participants and professional experts and the other on Time Diaries. I took the decision so that eventually I could complement the findings from the Time Diaries by the data compiled from the interviews. Primarily my interest concentrated on the way the use of the Internet was being experienced in the homes, over a period of time. At the same time, I wanted to find out the impact this experience was having on the interaction among family members.

In other words, I wanted to know when and where the Internet was being used; in which rooms, the type of interaction existing during its use and any difference in its use during the summer and winter. Through this study I was in a position to assess how access to the Internet was being experienced at different times of the day in 6 homes of Maltese families (Kehrwald, 2008). The data I collected enabled me to observe how the use of the Internet, at different times and in different spaces, is contributing to the family everyday life of the respective families (Kwoen et al 2011; Tsatsou 2009; Castells 2006, 2011; Turkle 2011).

The emerging information is very valuable as it throws a light of how over a period of time and in different season, the families under study are experiencing the use of the Internet at home. In a nutshell, this useful information about how the respective members of the family are using their time, within the Internet context, reveals the quality of life lived, especially the social aspect.

> Scholars are now beginning to question the impacts of Internet use for the study of time, considering both its conceptualisation and the patterns of its use. Whilst the field is in its infancy, such research suggests that the way in which we conceptulise and use time is changing in response to widespread Internet use.

(Kenyon 2008, p. 288)

Through both the interviews and the Time Diaries, I was able to obtain new information about the aspects of time and space within the context of Internet use in the home. This study, probably a first of its kind for Malta, succeeded in exploring the experience of the Maltese family in the digital era. I admit that the sample of participants taking part in the study through the filling in the Time Diaries is small compared to the sample of participants who were interviewed, which was much bigger.

As I explained in detail in Chapter 3, the interviewees consisted of a wide range of participants coming from different walks of life. With the data collected from both samples, I had enough material to draw a clear picture of the everday behaviour of the families studied.

The findings which were listed as a result of the Time Diaries opened a new window on the experience of the use of the Internet in the home. The six families using the Time Diaries reconfirmed the regular use of the Internet at home that was elicited from the interviews, thereby also revealing clearly that this use decreased the interaction they enjoyed before the advent of the Internet. Maltese family life had different needs and rituals from those being experienced today through the use of the Internet in the home (J. Agius 2014, pers. comm., 19th September; J. Avellino 2014, pers. comm., 19th September).

On the contrary, today most members of the family, both males and females, work in the morning and children attend schools. Often the main meal of the day is taken in the evening. Not so long ago, there was more time for the family to dine together and share the day's experiences. Nowadays, though there is the same opportunity and there is also space available for this socialisation, the study has shown that this opportunity is not being made use of enough (Putnam 1993; Mesch 2007; Turkle 2011; Namsu 2010; J. Agius 2014, pers. comm., 19th September; J. Avellino 2014, pers.comm., 19th September).

What transpired from the Time Diaries rather than from the interviews were the family dynamics during two particular seasons mainly that of summer and winter. I could particularly observe whether interaction was taking place amongst the family members during the use of Internet. However, it was difficult for me to interpret in depth the data, as it was impossible to record what went on minute by minute, whether interaction was taking place or not, minute by minute, while in the company of others or whether they were being cut off completely from those around them.

The Time Diaries indicated that people using the Internet were, up to a certain extent, interacting with those around them. However, interaction was very limited and minimal. It was also evident that the most popular rooms for Internet use were the kitchen /living room and bedroom.

The data analysis also showed that there were marginal differences amongst the families during the three weeks under study. I would have thought the use of Internet would decrease during summer; however, there was a significant increase in Internet use. This is evident in the recorded data during the month of July as opposed to the recordings of January 2013 and 2014. Another important observation noted in the Time Diaries was that young people use Internet more than adults.

The two families which used it least were made up of an elderly couple and a gay couple. Facebook was the most accessed.

Another salient aspect was that some of the participants were able to do more than one activity at the same time they were using the Internet, multitasking (Kenyon 2008; Baron 2005). In fact, those who said they used the Internet in the dining /living room confirmed that while eating, they carried on using the Internet communicate with those near to them and sometimes, even follow television programmes. The dining / living room is the most popular for using the Internet whilst it is the mostly used room by members of the family to meet regularly. For obvious reasons, this area contrast sharply with the bathroom, which as recorded, is also used for the regular use of the Internet.

The aim of this study has been to know what is happening behind the closed doors of Maltese families. Understanding how technology, through the use of the Internet, is influencing the lived experience in the home, shows how families are evolving, with the possibility of throwing more light on the lived esperiences of future families.

Thanks to this study, the participants of the Time Diaries themselves had the opportunity to analyse how they were living the Internet experience over a period of time. In fact, there were participants who shared the fact that they were amazed about the amount of time they spent using the Internet. In their opinion, if it weren't for this research, most probably they would not have noticed. On the other hand, as a researcher, I had to evaluate the six families and compare and contrast their experiences. The analysis showed that the amount of time spent on the Internet by the families under study, is different and nuanced. This is because, as indicated by the same families, the use of the Internet in the home has become an integral part of the routine of the family.

Besides being used for leisure, the Internet is also used for educational purposes, for work, for on-line shopping and for communicating with relatives and friends who are or live away from home, among other things. As I have mentioned earlier, the Time Diaries revealed that youngsters spend more time on the Internet than older people. Notwithstanding this, it is certain that the Internet is considered as a means of socialising among those who use it. I can ascertain this, because earlier on, during the interviews, the same participants maintained that the Internet had given them another possibility of socialising. According to the Time Diaries, the participants use the Internet mostly to communicate with others through e-mail, facebook, or Skype if the persons they want to communicate with are away from home.

> One particularly important use of domestic and other kinds of space is for social interaction. In fact space can be seen as a medium for interaction in much the same way as the telephone and the e-mail can. Like these other media, space exerts considerable influence over the kind of interaction that can take place through it……some spaces are more conducive to interaction than others.

> (Frahlich, D. & Kraut, R. 2003, p. 132)

While traditionally the family routines were similar in many families, (J. Agius 2014, pers. comm., 19th September; J. Avellino 2014, pers. comm., 19th September), experiences started taking on new aspects because of the use of the Internet. Therefore, it was important for me in this study to trace how the family evolved over the years, particularly through the development brought about by technology (Leppanen, & Jokinen, 2003; Frahlich, & Kraut 2003; J. Avellino 2014, pers. comm., 19th September; C. Azzopardi 2013, pers. comm., June 2013; J. Magro-Konti 2015, pers.comm 19th October).

The assessment of the Time Diaries showed that the time when the Internet is used and the rooms most preferred, are the same for the six families. Moreover, the length of time dedicated to the Internet by families with children is greater than the time spent on the Internet by those families with no children. This has been confirmed by the results of the interview of this study and also those of the NSO studies (2011, 2012, 2013)

The fact that some form of interaction takes place during meal times is quite significant. Contrary to what was the norm before the introduction of the Internet, when families used meal times to communicate and interact with each other, (J. Agius 2014, September 19th; J. Avellino 2014, pers comm., 19th September; C. Azzopardi 2013, pers. comm., June 2013; J. Magro-Konti 2015, pers. comm., 19th October), today it is a different story. According to the Time Diaries, all the participants, except for Kinds family and Azzopardi /Rossi family, continuously use the Internet during meals. This means that the Internet has consolidated its position in the home, leading me to say that living together at home has taken on a new dimension. The lived experiences at home changed from the way they were 20 years ago. This new reality is creating an element of individualism, a contemporary concepts that merits a study on its own. Today, though family members are near each other in the same room, they are each doing their own things, what ever they might be, without any imput from other family members. As I said, this provides an area for deep study.

In this study, I could not go deeper, as the sample is small. Yet I am convinced that there is room for a study on this phenomenon – a study on the use of Internet and individualism.

In fact, the study shows clearly that though the participants had other family members near them when they were using the Internet, there was very little communication. Still an elderly couple and a male gay couple maintained that at no time of the day did the use of the Internet lessen the communication or interaction between them.

In this section I have analysed data collected from the Time Diaries of six families which I have chosen. I have observed the lived experience of Maltese families' use of Internet over a span of time. The information collected during the interviews and the Time Diaries shows that Internet has become an integral part of Maltese families. There is clear indication in this study that families mostly use Internet from the early hours of the day, and as soon as they get back home from work till the time they get into bed.

Apart from all this, the findings collected from the Time Diaries, give a new picture of how time and space are employed in the home during the use of the Internet. Though admittedly the sample is small, yet, there is a clear indication of the lived experiences of the participants. It would be appropriate if another study like this were to be conducted, with the difference that the sample would be bigger, but the period of the time would remain the same. One would then be able to compare the new study with this study and also discover new phenomena which have not emerged in this study. It would be interesting if similar studies are undertaken regularly, so that the family can be explored within the context of the use of the Internet.

4.8 Research Implications

This study is based on the Symbolic Interactionist Approach, which focuses primarily on the sense and interpretation which people give to the experience of the world around them (Mead 1934; Smith 2001; Moustakas 1994; Blumer 1986). This approach enabled me to concentrate on one of the spaces where people communicate – the home. Contrary to other theories and approaches which focus on the social system, the Symbolic Interactionist Approach draws attention, as Newman (2008) maintains, to the relationship among people. I strengthened this study by adopting the Phenomenological qualitative approach which was instrumental in helping me to cancel any prejudgment, while allowing me a free hand to observe and listen to the participants in their own home. By using this method I succeeded in analysing the reason the participants gave for using the Internet in the home, as well as, their own interpretation of this lived experience. I was interested in exploring the everday happenings in the Maltese family within the context of the use of the Internet in the home, and, at the same time, like Smith et al (2011), find out the significance of the use of the Internet at home to the participants.

My choice of approach was of considerable help when I compared the experiences of those using the Internet with those others who do not. Although I found common factors among the participating families, like the preferred times the Internet is used and the favourite rooms for its use, I also found different interpretations of the lived experiences. For instance, some participants were sceptical about the use of the Internet at home, yet, they regularly used it. There were also similarities in the way measures were taken by some family members who realised that the use of the Internet was hindering interaction among them at home, particularly banning the use of the Internet at meal times.

This study highlighted the reality of an evolving family lifestyle with the passage of time. Technological developments bring about new experiences in the family. There normally is some type of resistance to new technology (Gregoire 2014; Bauer 1997; Lapointe & Rivard, 2005; Global Internet Report 2014), but in time, these new developments tend to be accepted and become an integral part of society. However, this is not always the case. Still, there always remains an element of resistance.

Through this study, I sought to explore how the participants managed to actively construct their own social life in the context of the use of the Internet in the home, as well as, evaluate the interpretation they gave of the use of the Internet in their everyday life. I had two sources to gather data from: those participants who use the Internet at home and those who do not use it or who use it minimally – the control group.

I could observe in both groups how the participants themselves tried to give a meaning to the use or non-use of the Internet in their respective homes. It is evident that users have different interpretations to non-users. The latter give a negative interpretation though they are aware of the need of the Internet and that it is here to stay. The users think that life will be difficult without the Internet; if they cannot get connected, they would feel deprived. In fact, as I mentioned earlier in this study, when there was a total power failure in Malta and Gozo for quite a number of hours, news bulletins gave priority to the lack of connectivity of the Internet in those hours. This is rather significant and worthy of interpretation. Some participants mentioned this incident and remarked that they were at their wits' end being unable to connect to the Internet.

This study, the statistics of the NSO (2013, 2014) and the Eurostat (2013, 2014) all reveal that among the many reasons the Internet is used in the home, there is that of communication, be it e-mails, or social-media. This proves the importance of communication relevance of the Internet in everyday life. In fact, Internet users who contact others on-line, form a significant figure as shown by the data collected in this study. This means that interaction to these participants is important, though with a difference. What is different is the fact that, as this study reveals, most interaction is done on-line and not off-line with people who are not present in the home.

The only exception to this, were four participants who confirmed that they communicate with each other in their own home by Internet. The different interpretations given by members of the same families are salient. There are participants who looked at the Internet in a negative way, condemning it and taking certain measures against it in their respective families. One made a tentative time table for herself to limit the use of the Internet at home, while there were others who compromised about the length of time using the Internet when there were other members of the family. These measures also merit attention.

These findings give a clear sign that Maltese family life is evolving due to Internet use at home which is leaving an impact and, which is being interpreted differently by members of the same families. Internet users consider these measures as restricting their lives and this is also confirmed by the professional experts I interviewed (P. Muscat 2014, pers. comm., 12th September; A. Grech 2014, pers. comm., 12th August; J. Agius 2014, September 19th; C. Azzopardi 2013, pers. comm., June 2013).

Nobody can deny that the use of the Internet has increased at a fast pace during the past 20 years, in a way that, as this study has shown, it has become an integral part of everyday life. Today, we are living a new experience of how to interact with each other.

We can say that through the development of information technology, contrary to the past, it has become easy to contact others who are away from home; this facility has meant the breaking down of time and distance barriers and the creation of new rituals and routines of communication. There is, however, another reality; that of those who, for one reason or another, have opted not to use the Internet, like the rest of society. These also have a voice which should be heard. This entails a study on its own.

CHAPTER Five

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

> Online media have begun making significant inroads in people's lives. The continued expansion of high-speed home Internet access, the proliferation of television content available online, and the development of compelling new applications such as social networking and YouTube, have all contributed to the increase in the amount of media….. people consume each day.
>
> (Rideout et al 2010, p. 3)

It is evident that the use of the Internet at home has increased and changed significantly over the past 10 years NSO (2014). As has also been exposed by this study, Internet use has become an integral part of everyday family life. Today we are living, and at the same time witnessing, new experiences of how we interact with each other within the home and far away. The findings of this study have established that there is a difference between the experience and reason of those using the Internet at home and those who, for one reason or another, do not. Both groups live their experience of the Internet differently.

It has also become evident that, although some stated that when they are on the Internet they seem to be in another world, in other words, cut off from the rest of the family, yet some interaction does take place. This research shows that the Maltese family is using Internet sparingly at home and that it is having both positive and negative effects on the family dynamics. According to the participants, the positive aspect of Internet use is related to communication with friends and relatives who are abroad or away from home; for keeping abreast with education, to do on-line shopping, and to do other tasks, to mention but a few.

However, it also true that the participants complained of lack of interaction due to Internet use at home. In other words this reflects the lack of presence and relationship which the use of Internet brings about. Various other studies support this, particularly Carr (2011), Whitty (2014), Silverstone & Hirsch (1992), Livingstone & Bovill (2011) and Turkle (2011) amongst others. The latter, in her publication Alone Together, stresses the point on the effect that the Internet is having on family relationships. Similar to what Turkle (2011) found out in her study, the participants in my study recounted the same experiences upon the use of Internet in the home. These stated that some members in the same family were absenting themselves at peak family hours by dispersing into other rooms, or being physically present but no interaction takes place. In certain situations, this would cause friction and problems.

Besides all this, contrary to the experiences that we have lived in the past, through the development of information technology, social contacts with relatives and friends, who are away from home, have become much easier to occur. Distance barriers and time constraints are abolished while new rituals and routines were created virtually. However, there is another reality, among those who do not use this technology: there are those who for one reason or another chose not to make use of the Internet. The latter also have experiences to share which are worth analysing in more depth through a similar study.

Notwithstanding all this, the main aim of this study was to evaluate the use of Internet in a Maltese family setting. Bearing this in mind I have spoken to a group of Maltese family members who are living this reality in their homes with Internet access. To reach the aims of this study I had to take theoretical action based on a Symbolic Interaction approach, based on a Phenomenological direction.

Eventually, I analysed experiences narrated on a Thematic Approach. Besides, I wanted to analyse these lived experiences over three different periods during the year. The methodology used had to incorporate methods which would enable me to collect and analyse data.

This led me to apply a longitudinal approach through the use of the time diaries. After evaluating the best methodology through some readings I identified 36 families as ideal samples for this study, since they represent the Maltese families. The readings also led me to choose six types of different family units. For validity purposes, interviews with a number of professional experts from a background of psychiatry, psychology, ethics, philosophy, sociology, architecture, and archaeology were made. The narratives of these experts continued to shed light on the main question of this study, that is: What is the lived experience of Internet use in the home of Maltese Families?

Eventually I was able to analyse the situation in Maltese families by the use of the Time Diaries kept by 6 families. This study has exposed me to realities which would never have come to light. The use of Internet in the home has changed routines and rituals previously experienced. The majority of the participants shared the same experience of a negative impact on their family dynamics. However, others said that the Internet has had a positive effect as their lives have improved through its use.

I have found out the peak hours and the most popular rooms in which Internet is used, what type of communication went on, if any at all, what impact Internet use is having on the relationships of the family members and friends and families living overseas, and the experiences of people with special needs and their family. Differences according to age, gender and level of education were also noted. The category of Internet non-users, the Control group, was mostly made up of people of a lower level in education whereas people under the age of 40 used it sparingly. However, the control group also included a teacher and a public officer.

The main use of the Internet was for communication outside the home through social networking or sending emails. This data is also confirmed by the NSO (2013; 2014). It was also evident that women use the Internet mainly for reading books, magazines and social networking whilst men use it mainly for local, international and sports' news updates. The elderly mainly use the Internet to read newspapers, books, to research and to receive news updates.

These key conclusions could only be elicited through a long and intense process. Difficulties were encountered along the way, as when a participant gay couple wanted to withdraw from the study or one of the participants needed to go abroad for health reasons in the last week in which the time diaries were to be used. Finally I can safely say that my dream which started in June 2008 became a reality.

It was during this time that I started thinking seriously about the best academic way to investigate Internet use in Maltese families. In the first chapter I have given reasons which led me to follow this course of action. Many friends and relatives were sharing their experiences about how their lives were changing with Internet use. These experiences were reinforced by my own observations of how my friends were spending their free time. I could observe that instead of spending time conversing, both friends and family were typing on digital devices. Two of my friends who should have been socialising with the rest of the group were literally lost in another world by the use of Internet on their mobile device. I kept wondering whether Maltese families were experiencing similar situations or not and whether this was having an impact on their relationships. Before starting the research I went to look up whether or not anybody else was carrying out a similar study. Most of the studies focused on Internet use but I could not find one which dealt specifically with the user.

There were some quantitative studies which focused solely on Internet use rather than the user's experience of how life was being lived surrounded by Internet. However, I also found other studies which shed light upon my current study. Thus it was of importance for me to recount the sense and meaning of the participants' lived experience of their use of the Internet at their respective homes (Blumer 1986; Slattery 1992; Moustakas 1994; Giddens 1992; Stryker 1959; Newman 2008). All participants were very clear in their accounts which they embellished with expressions and emotions during the interviews I held in their respective homes (Creswell 1998; Seale 2008). For some of them, as I said earlier, the use of the Internet in the home meant disharmony in the family. In other words, according to these participants, the use of the Internet in the home is weakening the family dynamics, to such an extent that some described the Internet use as an "intrusion" and as "alienating members from the rest of the family". The element of excessive use of the Internet, with all its repercussions, was described as a threat to the family.

This was a salient feature in many pieces of foreign literature, among whom: Aboujaoude (2011), Young et al (2010), Griffiths (2011), Scoville (2009), and Weinstein & Lejoyeux (2010) to mention but a few. Moreover, these issues were also elicited during interviews that I held with professional experts, in particular, Dr. Charles Azzopardi (2013), Dr. Peter Muscat (2014), Dr. Anton Grech (2014) and Dr. John Agius (2014). Amongst other issues, according to these experts and some of the participants, the Internet was facilitating the process of polarisation between members of the same family and at times it even paved the way for extramarital affairs. I referred to accounts which asserted that excessive use of the Internet was leading to the isolation of its users, thereby bringing about the lack of face to face communication. Similar to what Thorne (2013), Livingstone-Bovill (2001) and others hold, there are experiences that show that the excessive use of the Internet is contributing to some students not attaining the required levels of education.

On the other hand, what transpires from the study is also of benefit to the whole family. Some of the participants could not envisage life without the Internet. Some of the positive aspects of the Internet were making life easier and thus allowing the family to spend more quality time together. Some of the participants sustained that they use the Internet for educational purposes. It has become a necessary tool for distance learning and the possibility of having student and tutor forums. People with a disability or those taken ill may still be present for their tutoring without the need of attending classes. It becomes clear how these experiences, which were also supported by literature I read, besides strengthening the previous ideas, gave new insights on the Maltese family which have so far been hidden, especially the type of interaction going on amongst family members. Finally it was also important for me to listen to experiences of participants who do not use Internet much or not at all. This information also shed a ray of light, the main reasons being the lack of education and interest.

5.2 Main conclusions in this study

5.2.1 Sceptic Conclusion of Internet Use at Home

As I have explained in detail in Chapter 1, one of the main reasons which made me take up this study was the negative experience which friends and family alike were encountering with the use of Internet in the home. This reaction is particularly tied to the fact that the use of Internet is minimising interaction among them. The excessive use of Internet is also causing people to isolate themselves from others as stated by Weinstein & Lejoyeux (2010), Caplan & High (2011), Kimberly & Nabuco de Abreu (2011), and Young (1999). These studies shed light upon the situations being encountered in Maltese families too. In this study the majority of participants commented upon the fact that family dynamics were being affected.

Certain comments like "the Internet has robbed me of my own daughter" or "Whoever invented Facebook should be hanged" were expressed.

Another two experiences which I have come across during the analysis of data is that of Mauro, a 15 year old boy, who refused to accept a mobile phone with Internet access that his parents wanted to give him on his birthday. When asked for the reason behind this decision, he was quick to reply that, although he has an older brother, he hardly knows him because he is always on Facebook.

I asked him to elaborate further and he stated that, although a lot of time is spent in each other's company especially during the summer months, his brother "deserts" him and does not communicate at all with him because he is always on Facebook. This was unacceptable for Mauro and he did not want to fall into his brother's trap.

Similar experiences were shared by experts which I interviewed, namely Muscat (2014), Agius (2014), Grech (2014) and Azzopardi (2013), and supported by other literature referred to in this study.

More recently, I also had the opportunity to observe two hairdressers in a salon who kept stopping to look at their Internet devices whilst cutting their clients' hair. These situations are fast becoming a reality and an integral part of our everyday life as wherever you happen to be, you will observe someone who is looking at an electronic device.

The most common complaint was based upon the lack of interaction in families especially during mealtimes. According to the majority of interviewees, the use of Internet was mostly frequent during breakfast time, meal-times, and bedtime.

This result was similar to the data collected from the time diaries, in which the participants indicated that, in the past, these times were used for interaction. Presently, little or no interaction was taking place. This situation is similar to the literature reviewed and in the interviews carried out with some of the experts. Mealtime was the time in which most interaction usually took place but with the use of Internet this was decreasing drastically (Lee & Chaie 2007, Fiese 2006, Megan 2014, Winterman 2012, (G. Baldacchino 2014; pers. comm., 3rd July; J. Avellino 2014; pers. comm., 19th September). Nevertheless, the time diaries give a clear indication that hardly any communication or interaction took place during Internet use.

This also emerges from my study: some participants claimed that they were on the verge of splitting up from their partners / spouses because of the excessive use of Internet. Others stated that, although members of the same family would be physically present, yet no communication would be taking place as they would be online with someone else.

Although no cases of separation were recorded in this study except for one, which was related to pornography rather than the use of Internet per se, experts in psychiatry and psychology stated that they were being sought by many clients having problems due to excessive use of Facebook. Notwithstanding all this, these experts stated that, rather than leading to extra-marital affairs, the Internet facilitated the process which led to it. The same is happening in pornography (Agius 2014, Muscat 2014, Grech 2014, Azzopardi 2014; pers.comm.).

Another finding in this study is related to parents and in some cases, even children / young people who agreed that the use of Internet is being a deterrent in obtaining good results in their studies. This happens because while they should be concentrating on their studies they are also following what is happening online. Some of the young people admitted a craving to go online from time to time.

In some instances they feel peer pressure and even bullied and in others they feel they are being cut off from their friends if they do not go online.

5.2.2 Optimistic Views of Internet use in the Domestic Space

5.2.2.1 Internet as Means for Communication

I have dedicated the second part of the analysis to the positive aspects emerging from this study. I focussed particularly on stories which describe experiences in which Internet use in the home has facilitated progress in their life. Although these experiences were few and far between, they have reinforced other literature, that if Internet is used well and in a balanced way, it could be for the good of humanity (Rainie & Wellman 2012, Schmidt & Cohen 2013, Lewis & West 20019, Subrahmanyam et al 2008).

Amongst the most important uses of the Internet, the participants have identified communication as the first. As has already been said, this is shown repeatedly in NSO surveys of 2011, 2012 and 2013 in which the aspect of communication is highlighted especially through the use of emails and the social media. This is also confirmed by other studies like Eurostat 2013 and Internet World Stat 2013. In my study the use of Facebook is the most commonly used and this is recorded in both the interviews and the time diaries. What is most interesting to note is that Maltese families have made use of the Internet to fit their requirements. Some of the participants substantiated this and related how the Internet has facilitated communication amongst other family members, friends and colleagues.

An interesting fact surfaced: some interviewees insisted that the use of the Internet in the home created opportunities for members of the family to spend more time together at home. This led to a better organisation of the family routine; it was also said that there was better communication with those members of the family who were abroad on study or work. Others maintained that they could not imagine life without the Internet.

This study has brought me closer to the participants who shared their experiences with me and which were enriched with their emotions, their body language and all that is non-verbal, as these often elicit very important information which sometimes is more significant than verbal answers. Salient points emerged from this study among which was the concept of structure of time, multitasking / activity-participation, presence / communication, and hindrance of schooling, all through the use of the Internet.

The conclusion is clear: the use of Internet is very important as a means of communication especially to those who cannot do without. In fact, and this is shown in both my study and in literature reviewed, in the eventuality of a connectivity problem, many participants feel lost without it.

Earlier on I had referred to John Donne, a famous English poet who said that: "No Man is an Island". This is proved true in this study. The fact that the use of Internet is being considered instrumental in people's lives, as shown both in this study and also the NSO (2013) which states that 90% of interviewees use Internet as their main means of communication, shows that people crave regular contact with others.

Although there is another school of thought, which states that Internet reduces communication between family members, local sceptics in this study agreed to the positive element of the Internet especially in its use across distance and time, however, they still think that it is being detrimental in family settings.

5.2.2.2 Allocation of Time - Structuring of Time - Temporality & Spatiality

As can be seen through this study, Malta is on the same level as other European countries as regards to the population's regular use of Internet. This is confirmed by the NSO 2014/2013, Eurostat 2014/2013 and Internet Worlds Stat 2013. This study besides confirming this aspect, not only discloses information which is quantitative but also participants' feelings. The data collected from the participants through the use of the time diaries and via interview with both participants and experts, shed light on a wider and more holistic area of Maltese family experiences about the home use of Internet. There is also data collected regarding time and distance.

Since the beginning of time, people felt the need to organise themselves and follow a routine. It is also the reality that time is fast becoming very limited. It is for the same reasons that the participants stressed the importance of having Internet at home. Life is becoming too hectic and we must keep up with its pace. Maltese people use the Internet frequently and sparingly and they do this for a lot of reasons mainly: to communicate with one another, especially through Facebook, shopping, recreational purposes as in playing games, listening to music and watching videos.

However, this is not all! Some of the participants stated that they use Internet for work from home. This can be seen as time taken from the family; however those using the Internet for this purpose see it as time in which can they be together with the family while still working. The access and availability of Internet has made it possible to communicate at all times. Participants who use it for this purpose are using time and putting it to better use.

Another conclusion which has emerged from this study is tied to the aspect of solitude. On one hand there are people who describe the Internet as keeping them company when they are alone while others want to be alone so that they may have use of the Internet as much as they like, with the possibility of isolating themselves. Others seek the Internet to communicate with one another or to spend some time in the company of others (Namsu 2010, Neustaedter et al 2011)

Another important aspect which emerges from this study is linked to the educational field (Likins 2014, Morgan 2014; Global Internet Report 20; Wegerif 2013; Maddux & Johnson 2013; Chizmar & Williams 1996). The salient positive aspects of the Internet have all been pointing to the educational field. Most Maltese families stated that their children's education was the main reason for bringing the Internet into their homes (NSO 2005). Whilst this factor was confirmed in this study, the argument in favour of the Internet at home became more important especially in the case of a tertiary level of education. This has led me to conclude that while there is much argument against the use of Internet which could lead to distractions while studying, it could also be an effective tool which helps people to learn.

This is particularly true in distance learning, online libraries, scholarly articles and journals available online. The Internet is also used for practical reasons especially in the coordination amongst students and / lecturers, tutors especially when either party find it difficult to meet.

The wider use of Internet is also found in the field of special educational needs. There were significant experiences recounted in this study which alluded to the essential use of the Internet. This has made it easier for many people with a disability to continue and persue their psychological, social and emotional formation. The same experiences were recounted by parents who stated that it would have been impossible for their children to acquire skills and abilities without the help of the Internet.

There is much literature which supports this (Simpson 2013; Skelton and Valentine 2009; Barak & Sadovsky 2008; Zunica & Clemente 2007; Williamson et al 2001).

5.2.2.3 Insignificant effect of Internet use - The Control Group

Important information and significant data has emerged from this study relating to non-users or participants who hardly use Internet. The main reason given was that since such people use Internet regularly and for a long span of time, once they get home they would want to relax. Those who do not use it at all were elderly and middle aged, and stated that they do not know how to use it. Whereas a 48 year old couple with a secondary school education stated that Internet does not interest them. They prefer to go out or watch television when they are at home.

The conclusions drawn from this part of the study suggests that there are people in Malta, as in other countries (Pew research 2013) who do not make use of the Internet. This is either attributed to their lack of education or because the Internet does not interest them. Another aspect emerged from this study, even though the sample was too limited. What happens to those people who do not use Internet when they are in the presence of those who use it regularly?

5.3 Contribution to the Body of Knowledge

In the world of marketing, research is amongst the most commonly adopted tool by companies to evaluate the progress of products and services. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are generally used to scientifically analyse the progress of products and services and to ascertain whether there are demands for them or not. An academic study is generally conducted to create a body of new knowledge, according to the particular science: medicine, anthropology, psychology, sociology, etc.

This study, is an attempt to create a body of knowledge which I felt lacking in Malta. It became clear that the lived experience of Maltese families is going through a different style of living prevalent 15 to 20 years ago. Part of this change is the result of the use of the Internet. I was convinced that the outcome of this study, with its new body of knowledge, would fill this lacuna. Hopefully, this study would help policy makers and other stakeholders to understand better a part of the daily life lived by Maltese families.

Policy makers and all those concerned need to refer to such studies to be aware of new realities encountered by Maltese families. Hence, they would be in a better position to plan policies in this respect. The concept of time within the family versus the time spent on the Internet and interacting with other members of the family, has taken a new dimension.

5.4 Limitations of the Research

> Exploratory studies do have a few downsides, however, the main shortcoming is that they rarely provide satisfactory answers to research questions, although they can hint at the answers and provide direction as to which research methods could provide definitive answers. The reason why exploratory studies themselves are rarely definitive is because the people studied in exploratory research may not be typical of the larger population of interest. That is, the sample is likely not a representative one.

<div align="right">(Crossman 2013, p. 1)</div>

Like any other study, even this study has its limitations. One of the limitations is ably expressed by Crossman (2013) in the above excerpt. Crossman clearly states that this type of study is limited where people representation is concerned. It is difficult for a sample to be representative because it is time-consuming.

The qualitative method may also contribute to the study's limitation with regard to validity and reliability. In qualitative studies there is the probability that the researcher's subjective opinion may bias the analysis, as the final analysis depends greatly on the interpretation the researcher gives it.

In this eventuality, instead of valid information, the study ends up being a reflection of the researcher's opinion. A qualitative study may also limit a study especially where reliability is concerned. There is a possibility that if an identical study is conducted, to check whether the results are the same, one may find that they differ (Smith 2013; Key 1997).

Another limitation is the fact that part of it is based on the Longitudinal Approach. This type of approach is expensive as well as time consuming, with the probability/high risk, that the participants, for one reason or another, opting to stop participating. If this happens, part of the data is missing.

There is also the possibility that the data is influenced, as happens in other approaches, when participants become aware that they are being investigated. They may then change attitude or stop participating (Seale 2008; Cherry 2013; Pill 1995; Taylor et al 1997; Haralambos & Holborn 2009).

I find that another limitation, with regard to this research is the fact that I interviewed only 9 professionals, coming from different professions: Psychiatry, Psychology (Family Therapy), Sociology, Architecture, Philosophy, Theology (Moral Ethics) and Archaeology. Although the information they shared with me is of great importance, as it sheds more light on the research problem, yet, I suggest that if ever there is a similar study, more experts should be interviewed. If the sample is larger, different findings might be elicited.

Another aspect of the matter needing investigation is related to the moments of interaction. I explored the time spent on the Internet and its impact on the interaction among family members. But, I did not find out whether the members using the Internet compensated their lack of interaction by being accessible for communication at other times.

Another limitation relates to the fact that participants were not invited to share how they were compensating for the lack of communication in the home, caused by Internet use. In other words, I left out a lacuna which could have exposed an important aspect of the lived experience of Maltese families within the context of Internet use.

5.5 Methodological Implications - Implications for Future Studies

Whilst I was planning the proposal for this study, its research method was meant to be quantitative. I had also intended to take a sample of 1500 households which is the number stipulated by European standards. However, when I tried to follow literature to find out what other studies were conducted locally I realised that both the NSO and the MCA carry out quantitative surveys to measure the use of Internet in Malta.

This was already an indication as to which methodology I was to use for this study. After analysing both studies issued by the NSO and the MCA I found out that there were no questions posed which shed light or indicated the participants' personal experience of how home use of Internet effects them or not.

In order to strengthen my belief in using qualitative methodology, I tried looking up other studies carried out locally which were related to Internet use in the home. I could not find any except for first degree studies which focussed on trends of Internet use.

So together with my Supervisor I decided to choose a qualitative method which besides being original I wanted to give a different twist to the study so I could achieve deeper meaning from the data. This is what happened. I have thus chosen a phenomenological study with aspects of narrative-ethnography. What does this approach mean?

My decision was based on the fact that part of my study required the participants to relate their experiences on the use of the Internet in their respective homes. This meant that the participants were studied in their natural environment, as happens in an ethnographic study. I also wanted to analyse the experience of Internet use over a period of time.

As a matter of fact, I chose three weeks over a period of one year: At the beginning of 2013, at the end of 2013 and at the beginning of 2014. This has been achieved by the use of the time diaries.

Although, as mentioned earlier, the Time Diaries were crucial for the collection of data which I could analyse quantitatively, this does not mean that the method of this study is quantitative. This type of approach requires a proper database which processes data in a quantitative way. Hence, I have also adopted a thematic analysis approach for data that was elicited from the time diaries, because respondents were provided with open-end questions, aimed at sharing their views in more detail.

By using Time Diaries over a period of three weeks, I could better evaluate and interpret patterns in the use of Internet. It had to be done meticulously and in a detailed way. It was also very time-consuming but it was all worth doing as the results yielded a new light on the Maltese family.

It was worth using Time Diaries too, as through them interesting details emerged. By using these approaches in this study, I was able to explore the experience of families, both through the personal stories recounted by members themselves, as well as through the data exposed in the time diaries.

Nevertheless, the right choice of Research Design enabled me to analyse, not only how time is structured in the home with regard to the Internet, but also to evaluate how time is being experienced by the participants themselves, both individually and as a family.

Notwithstanding that the research methods adopted for this study were ideal for this type of study, I realised that there were also limitations in this regard. It was difficult for me to analyse minute by minute, the interactions that the participants themselves were involved in while using the Internet. When I came to analyse the duration of interaction, I realised that it was impossible to calculate in minutes how much time was spent in communicating with one another. I thought it was too much to ask from the participants to record the time they were actually in contact with the people around them.

I still succeeded in gathering all the minutes that the participants were in contact and eventually these were translated into hours. I have included those intervals of five minutes and longer which the participants engaged in interaction.

Another limitation in my methodology was the fact that the interviews were not conducted privately except for six of them which were thus conducted upon my request. In fact, nothing new emerged and six participants out of ninety six was too small a sample. In another study it would be wiser to interview the participants on their own so that when data is compared and contrasted with this study and even with others, one would be able to check for variations. Another limitation was the amount of families who participated in the Time Diaries. It would be ideal to conduct a study with a larger sample and analysed in a quantitative way to shed more light on findings.

As I said, were I to conduct another similar qualitative study, I would opt to do it on a larger scale so that it would be more representative and would include a control group of participants who never use the Internet. An important factor I would actuate would be an equal sample of those who use the Internet and those who do not (the control group). This I did not do in this study.

This happened because the control group emerged from the data findings of this study and not before. In a new study, from the first I would be able to analyse the lived experiences of Internet users and that of non-users. I would then refine the same research design I have used in this study. For example, I would pose a set of questions instead of one general question. I would organise another longitudinal study employing sample representing Maltese society, instead of only six families. Thus I will have more data which will give a truer and wider picture of the Maltese reality.

Persons living on their own merit a study all to themselves. In my study I left out households composed only of one person for the simple reason that I wanted to study the impact of Internet use had on family dynamics. I believe that such a study will throw more light on the lived experience of those living alone, in the context of the use of the Internet. Obviously, these studies I have recommended need to be conducted in conjunction with a research agency in order to reach representative levels.

5.6 Sociological Significance of the Study

If we stop to think for a while we quickly realise that our life, from morning till night time, has fast become dependent upon digital media. If we look around us we realise that we are living in a digital world. Through this sociological study I have managed to analyse an important aspect of daily Maltese family life - its use of Internet at home.

Since the use of Internet is so present in our daily social life it must also be having a significant effect. This is what a sociologist does, observing and analysing people's social lives through the experience of diverse circumstances and situations which surround them, as in the case of this study.

So as to gather more information which may shed more light to be in a better position to interpret and analyse findings in this study from a sociological perspective, as is explained in detail in Chapter 2, I have also referred to other literature which has analysed both the family and the Internet from a sociological perspective.

Another reality exists, in which for various reasons, no Internet is being used (digital divide). However, it is clear that the use of Internet has become a major part of most persons' social lives. The development of information technology has become part and parcel of our life, particularly in its social and economic aspects, therefore it is directly affecting us in our everyday life.

We are living in a digital world, in which we have no choice other than to form part of it or risk being excluded. What is not being digitalised? Hospital appointments? Bank accounts? Shopping? Children's homework? University assignments? Travel booking? Chats with friends or relatives? Billing systems? The list is endless. All this proves my point. Malta is a small country and that 85.5% use the Internet daily is in itself a statement (NSO 2013). This means that Malta, as in most developed countries (Eurostat 2013; Internet World Statistics 2013), is living social experiences which are significant in their impact on our daily lives. In this sense, through this study I have tried to see the social implications of Maltese society, in particular the family, which is an important societal structure.

The findings of this study have established that the participants exposed a mixture of experiences and views of Internet use at home. Moreover, they rationalised these experiences in different ways, because they interpreted them, differently and according to their own perception. This is how the philosophy of Symbolic Interaction explains the way people give sense to the world around them, while being conscious of how other members of society look at them.

In line with this study's theoretical direction, both Carrington's and Finch's notions are in parallel with the Symbolic Interaction Approach, People tend to find meaning and interprets what goes around them so that eventually things make sense for them (Blumer 1986). This is what happens in the context of family as explained by Finch (2007) through the concept of family displaying and, up to a certain extent, by Morgan (2009) with their notion of family practices:

> Symbolic Interactionism sees meanings as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact…… The use of meanings by a person in his action involves an interpretative process….. Interpretation should not be regarded as a mere automatic application of established meaning, but as a formative process in which meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action. It is necessary to see that meanings play their part in action through a process of self-interaction.

> (Blumer 1986, p.5)

This study explored two main perceptions based on two central experiences that were interpreted differently by different groups of participants: Internet users versus non Internet users - The phenomenon of Internet use at home. According to the Symbolic Interaction Approach, an individual normally tries to make sense of the world around him and understand the people in his life by putting on their shoes.

It seems that this happens for two reasons: firstly to try living someone else's experience and therefore attempting to understand the latter's experience and secondly, at the same time attempts to see himself / herself through the eyes of someone else.

The participants of this study tried to interpret each other's experience of Internet use at home from different angles. Both sides looked at each other differently, yet, they both were conscious of the interpretation given to Internet use at home by the other members of the family.

In fact, the interpretation of non-Internet users was more salient than that of the Internet users. It became evident from this study that non Internet users looked upon the Internet users as wasting time which can be better used within the family. The Internet users, on the other hand, seemed to understand the position of their opposers and have "accepted" their opinions. Yet, they have not refrained to react to the criticism levelled at them.

Examples of this reaction are the ways Internet users have justified or defended themselves from the accusations that through their use of the Internet, the family dynamics of rites, up to a certain extent, have taken a different dimension. Giddens (1992), explains that when we interact with others, we constantly try to discover factors to justify the way we are living at the moment and how this way makes sense to us: "Symbolic Interaction directs our attention to the detail of interpersonal interaction, and how that detail is used to make sense of what others say and do (Giddens 1992, p. 700).

This is exactly what this study has established: the participants had the opportunity of relating their experiences, and how these have a meaning in their everyday life in the home through the use of the Internet.

These experiences are living witness of how these two groups of participants are defining their situation, that is, those who use the Internet and those who do not, and how they act and react accordingly. This all depends on the individual.

> The world is never experienced directly, but always through the ideals that we hold about it. The meaning of reality is, in a fundamental sense, the meaning that we choose to give to it…... actions of men and women, depend far more on how they define situations than on the situation itself.

> (Fulcher and Scott 2005, p, 53)

This is precisely what I did in this study; I have analysed the lived experiences which are part of the findings, and interpreted them in the light of these theoretical perceptions, also in line with George Herbert Mead (1934), Blumer (1986) Moustakas (1994) and Smith et al (2011) respectively. Up to certain extent, even Strauss & Corbin (1990) are of the same opinion. Mead, who studied the differences that exist between humans and animals, noted that the former have the ability to think. Mead (1934) gives a clear and concise explanation of humans' capacities to analyse, negotiate, adapt, interpret and even express their emotions.

On the other hand, the Phenomenological approach I used in this study has shown clearly that the participants have tried to understand how, the use, or the non-use, of the Internet in their respective homes is affecting them and the other members of the family. Through their accounts the participants have laid bare their everyday life, which they have often taken for granted. At the same time, other members of the same family have drawn attention to the empty corners of the everyday life that need to be filled. An example of this is when there is no interaction because of the use of the Internet, hence creating a phenomenon, that has to be interpreted by those present, in this case the respective family members.

Using this approach was therefore important as it served as a means whereby the participants could understand what was, or was not happening around them, from their point of view. The recounted experiences were directed in such a way to make sense to the same participants. This emerged from the fact that what makes sense to one group of participants does not necessarily make sense to the other group. This is similar to Smith et al (2011, p.01). The latter maintain that "...researchers are especially interested in what happens when the everyday flow of lived experience take on a particular significance for people." In other words different experience, to different people.

These differences enrich this approach because they make it free from any biases of the researcher, who let the participants recount their experience according to the way they see them, live them and make sense out of them.

5.7 Overall Conclusion

Maltese society has undergone major changes in its set up which have continued to evolve along the years. As we have seen, by this study, one of the changes was brought about at a very fast rate due to the aspect of information technology. In fact a lot of people view it as evolutionary. Undoubtedly, that which emerges from this study is giving us a holistic picture of another reality that the Maltese family is being faced with.

It is a reality that Maltese families are encountering through the use of the Internet at home.

There was no other local researched citations using a qualitative methodology before this study. Therefore, this study gave a voice to the many experiences encountered by Maltese families. There was not even a longitudinal study carried out which could shed a light regarding the pattern of the use of the Internet over a period of time.

Hence, this study sought to give Maltese families not only a voice to relate their experiences and share their lifestyles as surrounded by Internet use at home over a period of time, but also gave me a chance to listen and explore the professional experts' views about this phenomenon. The experts who worked in the psychiatric / psychological field shared their personal experience of the many times that Internet was cropping up during client therapy sessions.

On the other hand, experts in the field of sociology, philosophy, ethics/theology, and archaeology, view the Maltese family as evolving as time goes by and therefore the social changes are leaving their mark. The Maltese family is thus reacting and evolving according to the signs of the times.

As has explicitly been exposed, this could have both positive and negative effects which can then be interpreted from different perspectives. The general conclusion of this study is that nowadays, the Maltese family is passing through experiences which are very different from those of twenty years ago. It is experiencing all this in the light of the phenomenon of Internet use.

Through the analysis of the time diaries it has been elicited that presence is taking place regularly amongst family members while using the Internet, though communication is rather limited. In addition, this was significantly experienced during the interviews.

The majority of interviewees, which amount to ninety-six, have argued that interaction has decreased by the use of Internet. Breakfast time, mealtimes and bedtimes were the peak hours in which interaction usually took place and which now has decreased significantly. Although the most popular rooms for Internet use are the most frequented rooms by all families as is the kitchen, the living room and the bedroom, still little or no interaction ever took place while its members were on the Internet.

Another important aspect which emerged from this study is that barriers of time and space regarding communication amongst family and friends, who live abroad, have been removed, for example via social media and Skype. This has become a comfort zone for most families. It has eased the trauma of separation caused by long distances.

5.7.1 Concluding note

I hope that this study will be taken up as a means of reflection by the reader. I am open to any constructive criticism whilst looking forward to other attempts made by other studies to help better understand the situation of Maltese family life vis-à-vis the use of Internet. I particularly recommend that a qualitative study be carried out on a national scale so that we may have a better understanding of the extent that home Internet is impacting on Maltese families. A quantitative study would only yield statistical data which would not incorporate emotion and feelings of participants.

Nevertheless, in this study I have collected other information which would not have been possible to derive through a quantitative method. In dealing with experiences, emotions and general observations, my study took on another important dimension which should never be taken for granted when dealing with human lives.

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APPENDIX I

Information Consent Letters

Information-Consent Letter

(General)

Date:

Dear Participant/s,

I am an M. Phil. /Ph.D. candidate at the University of Malta and this letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting entitled: *The Net at Home: A sociological inquiry into Internet use, family and the domestic space.* This study is part of my degree in the Department of Sociology under the supervision of Professor Mark-Anthony Falzon and the Co-Supervision of Dr. Toni Sant. The focus of my study is to determine how Maltese families are living side by side with Internet technology. The criteria for participation in this study are that you must be at least living with another member of your family in a household.

This study will extend previous research by looking more closely at the different aspects of how Maltese families engage and think about Internet use and the impact, (positive or negative) that this might have on respective families' members. Hence, I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail should you decide to take participate.

Study Overview

Technological revolution, in particular, Internet use, has moved at such a pace that humanity cannot catch up. In such a background, I ought to analyse how Maltese society is responding to this technological process. Available research is more directly related to access to internet rather than to how and why families are adjusting their lifestyles to it. In addition, there appears to be conflicting views within the limited studies carried out in Malta. The few observations of the way Maltese families are adjusting to Internet use have, unfortunately, been rather insignificant Hence, it is appropriate to study whether there is correlation or not between Internet use and interpersonal relationships between members of respective Maltese families, and appraise how and why such correlation is affecting them. In brief, the research will attempt to study in-depth the possibility, or otherwise, that Internet use is taking over Maltese families and creating barriers for personal interaction. In a nutshell findings of this research will shed light on how Maltese families are living side-by-side with internet technology use.

What You Will Be Asked to Do

As a participant in this study you will be asked to answer one general question: What is your lived experience of Internet use at home?

Participation and Confidentiality

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 3 hours of your time. It would be very much appreciated if the interview takes place at your residence. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions during the study if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time by advising me, without any negative consequences. The results of the research study may be published or used in a professional journal article or presentation, but your name or any personally identifiable information about you will not be included. The risk of loss of confidentiality is minimized through the use of pseudonyms.

Moreover, published results will be presented in a thesis document and your identity will not be associated with your responses in any published format, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained for 3 years. Only researchers associated with this project will have access. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a/ participant/s in this study.

With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of information. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 21 487056 / 79894546 or by email at tano_vella@yahoo.co.uk. You can also contact my supervisor, Professor Mark-Anthony Falzon at 2340 2978 or email mark-anthony.falzon@edu.um.mt

Personal Benefits of the Study

Participation in this study will not provide any personal benefits, but it will provide you with an opportunity to learn about research in sociology in general and the topic of this particular study. The information obtained from the study may benefit society in general by providing a better understand of how Maltese families are adapting and coping with Internet use. If you wish, you will receive additional background information about the study.

Research Ethics Clearance

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University Research Ethics Committee at the University of Malta. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Ms. Victoria Perici at 2340 2810 or victoria.perici@edu.um.mt

Whilst I thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this study, I look forward to speaking with you in the near future.

Esteemed regards

_____   _____

Gaetano Vella   **Professor Mark-Anthony Falzon**

                                                                         Head Department of Sociology

Informed Consent of Participant

I / we have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Gaetano Vella under the supervision of Professor, Mark-Anthony Falzon, Head, Department of Sociology at the University of Malta and under the co-supervision of Dr. Toni Sant, Senior Lecturer in Performance & Creative Technologies, Director of Research at the University of Hull. I / we have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my / our questions, and any additional details I / we wanted. I am / we are aware that I / we may withdraw from the study at any time by advising the researcher of this decision.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University Research Ethics Committee at the University of Malta. I was / we were informed that if I / we have any comments or concerns resulting from my / our participation in this study, I / we may contact Ms. Victoria Perici at 2340 2810 or victoria.perici@edu.um.mt

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I / we agree, of my / our own free will, to participate in this study.

Participant/s Name:_____

Signature of Participant/s:_____

Dated:_____

APPENDIX II

Parents / Guardians Consent Form

Parents /Guardians Consent form for the participation in an academic research

(Under-aged Children/Brothers/Sisters)

Date:

Dear Parents/Guardians,

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Further to the attached Information Consent letter you are kindly invited to consider to allow your under-aged children/brothers and sisters to participate in the study as well. Allow me to remind you that I am an M. Phil. / Ph.D. candidate from the University of Malta and as part of my requirements for the degree, at present I am conducting a study called: *The Net at Home: A sociological inquiry into Internet use, family and the domestic space.* The focus of my study is to determine how Maltese families are living side by side with Internet technology. I am conducting this research under the supervision of Professor Mark-Anthony Falzon, Head, Department of Sociology at the University of Malta and the co-Supervision of Dr. Toni Sant, Senior Lecturer at the University of Hull.

PROCEDURES

This study will include an interview with your children/brothers/sisters about their interaction with parents/guardians in the context of Internet use. The respondents will be audio-taped for one hour and at no time will they, he/she be separated from his parents/guardians.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

All information will remain completely confidential. No respondent will be identified by name. You are able to remove your children/brothers/sisters from the study at any time.

Confidentiality: Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, my records will be handled confidentially. Only Professor Falzon and Dr. Sant will have access to these audiotapes. When the research project is complete, the audiotapes will remain locked for three years and then destroyed. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study.

BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefits to your children/brother/sisters from participating in this study. However, the information gained from this research may help society to better understand how and to what extent are children/brothers/sisters interacting with their parents and guardians within the context of Internet use.

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions or concerns about participation in this study, I recommend that you communicate with me on 21 487056/ 79894546 or via email: tano_vella@yahoo.co.uk. Should you or your children/brothers/sisters feel discomfort due to participation in this research, you should inform me immediately.

Esteemed Regards,

_____   _____

Gaetano Vella   **Professor Mark-Anthony Falzon**

                                       Head Department of Sociology

PARENT/S / GUARDIAN/S

CONSENT

Participation permission to be granted for under-aged children/brothers/sisters

I / We have discussed this research study with my / our children/brothers/sisters and explained to them the procedures that will take place.

I / We will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

1) I / We give my/our consent to allow my / our children/brothers/sisters to participate:

2) I / We give consent to allow my / our children/brothers/sisters to be audio-taped:

_____

_____

_____

Names of children/brothers/sisters

_____

Signature of Parent/Guardian A

_____

Signature of Parent/Guardian B

Date:_____

APPENDIX III

Sample of Time Diary

The Nature and Impact of Internet Use Amongst Maltese Families

DJARJU TAL-HIN - L-EWWEL GIMGHA TA'JANNAR 2014 (bejn l-1 u 7 ta' Jannar)

Isem u Kunjom originali tal-Partecipant :_____

Isem u Kunjom fittizju tal-Partecipant :_____

Il-gurnata tal-gimgha:_____

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
L-Università ta' Malta

Fakulta' tal-Arti

Dipartiment tas-Socjologija

Hin Bidu	Hin Tmiem	Tul ta' ħin f'minuti	Attivita' (Waqt l-ikel, Waqt l-uzu tat-toilet, mistrieh fis-sodda, mistrieh fuq sufan ecc.)	Lokalita' (Liema kamra fid-dar)	Tipi ta' apparat uzat għall-uzu tal-Internet (pc, ipad, netpad, netbook,mobile, laptop ecc.)	Hemm persuni ohra prezenti hdejk waqt il-hin li qed tuza l-Internet? Jekk iva, f'dan il-hin qieghed tikkomunika maghhom ukoll? Wiegeb biss iva jew le jekk hemm persuni ohra. Jekk ma hemm hadd ikteb mhux applikabbli (N/A)

Hin Bidu	Hin Tmiem	Tul ta' ħin f'minuti	Attivita' *(Waqt l-ikel, Waqt l-uzu tat-toilet, mistrieh fis-sodda, mistrieh fuq sufan ecc.)*	Lokalita' *(Liema kamra fid-dar)*	Tipi ta' apparat uzat għall-uzu tal-Internet *(pc, ipad, netpad, netbook, mobile, laptop ecc.)*	Hemm persuni ohra prezenti hdejk waqt il-hin li qed tuza l-Internet? Jekk iva, f'dan il-hin qieghed tikkomunika maghhom ukoll? Wiegeb biss iva jew le jekk hemm persuni ohra. Jekk ma hemm hadd ikteb mhux applikabbli (N/A)

Hin Bidu	Hin Tmiem	Tul ta' ħin f'minuti	Attivita' (Waqt l-ikel, Waqt l-uzu tat-toilet, mistrieħ fis-sodda, mistrieħ fuq sufan ecc.)	Lokalita' (Liema kamra fid-dar)	Tipi ta' apparat uzat għall-uzu tal-Internet (pc, ipad, netpad, netbook, mobile, laptop ecc.)	Hemm persuni oħra prez enti ħdejk waqt il-ħin li qed tuza l-Internet? Jekk iva, f'dan il-ħin qiegħed tikkomunika magħhom ukoll? Wiegeb biss iva jew le jekk hemm persuni oħra. Jekk ma hemm ħadd ikteb mhux applikabbli (N/A)

Hin Bidu	Hin Tmiem	Tul ta' ħin f'minuti	Attivita' (Waqt l-ikel, Waqt l-uzu tat-toilet, mistrieh fis-sodda, misrieh fuq sufan ecc.)	Lokalita' (Liema kamra fid-dar)	Tipi ta' apparat uzat għall-uzu tal-Internet (pc, ipad, netpad, netbook, mobile, laptop ecc.)	Hemm persuni ohra presenti hdejk waqt il-hin li qed tuza l-Internet? Jekk iva, f'dan il-hin qieghed tikkomunika maghhom ukoll? Wiegeb biss iva jew le jekk hemm persuni ohra. Jekk ma hemm hadd ikteb mhux applikabbli (N/A)

APPENDIX IV

Sample Population Profiles

Sample Population Profiles Table

No	Pseudonym	Economic Activity	Age	Family Type
1	Paul Mamo	Pensioner	60	Traditional
2	John Mamo	Salesman	27	Traditional
3	Isabelle Mamo	Clerk	35	Traditional
4	Paula Mamo	Pensioner	60	Traditional
5	Mario Pavia	Student	23	Traditional
6	Giovanna Pavia	Public Service	55	Traditional
7	Gorg Pavia	Manager	55	Traditional
8	Lily Pavia	Student	23	Traditional
9	Josiemarie Cossai	Student	24	Traditional
10	Agnes Navarro	Teacher	40	Traditional
11	Jessica Navarro	Student	17	Traditional
12	Mario Navarro	Designer	38	Traditional
13	Andrew Pace	Pensioner	62	Traditional
14	Pace Sara Pace	Housewife	56	Traditional
15	Paul Pace SN	Executive	37	Traditional
16	Bertu Mallia	Priest	34	Traditional
17	Simona Mallia	Housewife	58	Traditional
18	Johnny Mallia	Pensioner	60	Traditional

19	Fiorella Mallia SN	Student	16	Traditional
20	Dione Quattromani	Businessman	48	Traditional
21	Helen Quattromani	Housewife	47	Traditional
22	Jessica Quattromani	Student	23	Traditional
23	Ray Abdilla	Operations Clerk	48	Reconstituted
24	Rita Abdilla	Clerk	46	Reconstituted
25	Marjo Abdilla	Student	16	Reconstituted
26	Charles Bonavia	Police Officer	40	Reconstituted
27	Mary Bonavia	Clerk	40	Reconstituted
28	Sandra Bonanno	Student	16	Reconstituted
29	Yolanda Bonanno	House wife / work		Reconstituted
30	Winston Bonanno	Businessman	60	Reconstituted
31	Xanthe Bonanno	Student	13	Reconstituted
32	Carla Agius	Housewife	48	Reconstituted
33	Dino Agius	Paramedic	48	Reconstituted
34	Dixie Camilleri	Marketing	59	Reconstituted
35	Alec Camilleri	Marketing	55	Reconstituted
36	Tanya Delia	Paramedic	39	Reconstituted
37	Mark Delia	Labourer	40	Reconstituted
38	Edward Tanti	Port Worker	48	Single Parent

39	Lucio Tanti	Student	19	Single Parent
40	Sasha Tanti	Student	16	Single Parent
41	Marika Vassallo	School Director	55	Single Parent
42	Fabian Vassallo	Teacher	28	Single Parent
43	Dunstan Zahra	Teacher	32	Single Parent
44	Marie-Stella Zahra	Pensioner	63	Single Parent
45	Michael Sapiano	Bank Manager	54	Single Parent
46	Mari Sapiano	Student	23	Single Parent
47	Connie Vella	Secretary	44	Single Parent
48	SammyVella	Student	11	Single Parent
49	Petra Tonna	Head Teacher	44	Single Parent
50	Elsa Tonna	Pensioner	64	Single Parent
51	Josephine Lauri	Teacher	51	Childless
52	Bernard Lauri	Operator	52	Childless
53	Frans Kinds	Pensioner	76	Childless
54	Agnes Kinds	Pensioner	76	Childless
55	Carmen Psaila	Therapist	60	Childless
56	Paul Psaila	Public Officer	60	Childless
57	Doris Law	Prof. Officer	44	Childless
58	Joseph Law	Legal Officer	44	Childress
59	Saviour Portelli	Public Officer	33	Childless
60	Antoinette Portelli	Teacher	33	Childless

61	Rose Pizzuto	Driver	50	Childless
62	Ernest Pizzuto	Accountant	50	Childless
63	Ivan Azzopardi	Labourer	35	Lesbigay
64	Gordon Rossi	Businessman	38	Lesbigay
65	Vince Tortell	LSA		Lesbigay
66	Norman Axiaq	Manager	27	Lesbigay
67	Anna Sammut	Social Worker	44	Lesbigay
68	Tereza Suda	Self Employed	38	Lesbigay
69	Paul Said	Freelancer	42	Lesbigay
70	Jeremy Cascun	Freelancer	44	Lesbigay
71	Amanda Spiteri	Social Worker	31	Lesbigay
72	Eileen Calafato	Social Worker	31	Lesbigay
73	Rosina Saliba	Cleaner	55	Lesbigay
74	Francesca Debono SN	Self-Employed	52	Lesbigay
75	Anthony Dimech	Businessman	34	Cohabiting
76	Berta Desira	Teacher	40	Cohabiting
77	Dezin Desira	Student	12	Cohabiting
78	Anthony Turner	Businessman	40	Cohabiting
79	Kim Cole	Housewife	38	Cohabiting
80	Ian Turner	Student	10	Cohabiting

81	Gemma Vidal	Housewife	35	Cohabiting
82	Thomas Vidal	Factory Worker	17	Cohabiting
83	Publius Gatt	Port Worker	35	Cohabiting
84	Kerry Vidal	Pensioner	70	Cohabiting
85	Joseph Galea	Self Employed	59	Cohabiting
86	Emily Xuereb	Factory Girl	50	Cohabiting
87	Mario Incorvaja	Self Employed	33	Cohabiting
88	Kassandra Incorvaja	Student	12	Cohabiting
89	Tamika Cutajar	Hairdresser	35	Cohabiting
90	Catherine Incorvaja	Cashier	37	Cohabiting
91	Trudy Pace-Tabone	Student	12	Cohabiting
92	Xandru Pace-Tabone	Plasterer	37	Cohabiting
93	Tessie Tabone	General Manager	41	Cohabiting
94	Gaetano Farrugia	Public Officer	40	Cohabiting
95	Peter Bongailas	Public Officer	52	Cohabiting
96	Mary Friggieri	Hairdresser	52	Cohabiting

APPENDIX V

Time Diaries Database

Time Diaries January (Feb) 2013
Family Kinds

	(Agnes)		(Frans)	
Tuesday 1	45 Minutes pm / Research /emails		45 Minutes am & 30 Minutes pm / Research / emails	
Wednesday 2	55 Minutes pm / Research / emails		150 Minutes pm / Research / emails	
Thursday 3	30 Minutes pm / Newspapers		180 Minutes pm / Research / emails	
Friday 4th			45 Minutes pm / Updating Software	
Saturday 5th	60 Minutes pm / Newspapers / emails		35 Minutes pm / Emails	
Sunday 6th			30 Minutes am / Emails	
Monday 7th	45 Minutes pm / Newspapers / emails		75 Minutes am / Research / emails 60 Minutes pm / Research / emails	

Time Diaries January (Feb) 2013
Family Azzopardi / Rossi

(Ivan Azzopardi)   (Gordon Rossi)

Tuesday 1			30 Minutes am / Toilet 1hour 15 Minutes am / Working from home 30 Minutes pm / Bedroom	Interaction
Wednesday 2	60 Minutes pm / Browsing 120 Minutes pm / Recipes		60 Minutes pm / Living Room / sofa	Interaction
Thursday 3				
Friday 4th	30 Minutes pm / Bathroom		30 Minutes pm / Bedroom	Interaction
Saturday 5th	60 Minutes pm / Bedroom	Interaction		
Sunday 6th			90 Minutes pm / Bedroom	Interaction
Monday 7th				

Time Diaries January (Feb) 2013

Family Quattromani

	Dione		Jessica	
Tuesday 1	23 Minutes am / Kitchen / Dining / having coffee / News	Interaction	18 Minutes am /Bedroom / Facebook 38 Minutes am / Resting on sofa Kitchen / Living Email /News /Facebook 103 Minutes pm / During dinner / Watching TV Kitchen /Dining Facebook / News	Interaction Interaction Interaction
Wednesday 2	12 Minutes pm / Kitchen / dining / Email / Browsing		35 Minutes am / Bedroom / Facebook 24 Minutes pm / Study room / Email /Facebook /News	
Thursday 3			40 Minutes am / Breakfast / Kitchen /Living Emails/ VLE /News /Facebook 61 Minutes pm / Resting on Sofa Kitchen / Dining Facebook 138 Minutes pm / Resting / after Dinner / Kitchen /Living / Facebook	Interaction Interaction Interaction
Friday 4th	40 Minutes pm / Kitchen /Dining / Browsing		18 Minutes am / Study / Kitchen Breakfast / Facebook emails 22 Minutes pm /Study room / Studying	

Saturday 5th	65 Minutes pm / Study Room / Browsing / Shopping 33 Minutes pm / Study Room / Browsing / Email		24 Minutes pm / Food preparation / Kitchen / Dining / Facebook /email 324 Minutes pm / Study room / Studying / Facebook / emails / YouTube	
Sunday 6th	17 Minutes am / Kitchen / Dining / News Weather		12 Minutes am / Kitchen / Living VLE / Emails 12 Minutes pm / Resting from studying / Kitchen / Living / emails	Interaction
Monday 7th	59 Minutes pm / Kitchen / Dining News / Browsing	Interaction	21 Minutes am / Lunch time / kitchen / Dining / Facebook / News / emails 18 Minutes pm / Resting on the sofa / Facebook / emails	Interaction Interaction

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Time Diaries January (Feb) 2013
Family Mallia

	Edward		Lucio		Sasha	
Tuesday 1	15 Minutes pm / Dinner	Interaction	30 Minutes pm / Late evening / bedroom	Presence no Interaction	60 Minutes am / Late morning / resting / sofa/ kitchen	
Wednesday 2	9 Minutes pm / Dinner	Interaction	60 Minutes pm / Early evening / bedroom 165 Minutes pm / Late evening / bed		40 Minutes pm / Before lunch 3 hours 30 / Late evening / sofa / kitchen 40 Minutes pm / Sofa / kitchen	Presence no Interaction
Thursday 3	60 Minutes pm / Late afternoon / resting / sofa		120 Minutes pm / Early afternoon / bedroom 90 Minutes pm / Early evening bedroom		30 Minutes pm / Early afternoon / resting/ kitchen 18 Minutes pm / Early afternoon / bedroom 15 Minutes pm / Early evening / Kitchen	Interaction
Friday 4th	60 Minutes am / Late morning / kitchen	Interaction	129 Minutes pm / Early afternoon / bedroom		45 Minutes am / bedroom	

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Saturday 5th	90 Minutes pm / Early afternoon / sofa / resting / Watch TV / on Laptop	Interaction	180 Minutes pm / Early afternoon / resting / bed 3 hours Minutes pm / Resting / Bed		120 Minutes am / Sofa / Kitchen 30 Minutes pm / Lunch time	Interaction
Sunday 6th	45 Minutes pm / Before going to sleep / late evening		120 Minutes am / Resting / sofa 2 hours / Early afternoon / bed		180 Minutes pm / Late afternoon / evening / bed	
Monday 7th	60 Minutes pm / Late afternoon / resting /sofa		60 Minutes pm / Early afternoon / bed 60 Minutes pm / Late afternoon / bed 4 hours / bed		2 Minutes pm / Before lunch / bedroom	

Time Diaries January (Feb) 2013
Family Abdilla

	Rita		Ray		Marjo	
Tuesday 1	10 Minutes am / In Bed / Browsing 20 Minutes am / In bed / browsing 25 Minutes pm / In bed Browsing		10 Minutes am / Afternoon /toilet / Browsing		10 Minutes am / Early hours / Bed/ Browsing 30 Minutes am / After 08.30 in Bed 15 Minutes pm / Lunch Time	Interaction
Wednesday 2	30 Minutes pm After 17.00 / sofa / Browsing 70 Minutes pm After 20.00 / sofa / browsing	Interaction	15 Minutes am / Sofa / morning / Browsing	Interaction	15 Minutes pm / Dinner	Interaction

Thursday 3	20 Minutes pm / In bed before going to sleep / Browsing		15 Minutes am / Breakfast / Facebook / browsing	Interaction	30 Minutes pm / Toilet	
			10 Minutes pm / Afternoon / Resting / Facebook / browsing	Interaction	20 Minutes pm / After 21.00 /Sofa	
			6 Minutes pm / Toilet			
			17 Minutes pm / Sofa / Facebook / Browsing	Interaction		
			14 Minutes pm After 23.00 in bed before going to sleep			
Friday 4th	15 Minutes pm / Coffee break / kitchen / Browsing		15 Minutes am / Breakfast Facebook	Interaction		
	60 Minutes pm Before going to sleep / browsing		5 Minutes am / Garage / Facebook			
			15 Minutes pm / Lunch time / Facebook	Interaction		
			10 Minutes pm / After 19.00 / Sofa			

Saturday 5th	45 Minutes pm Coffee Time / kitchen / Browsing		7 Minutes am / Breakfast / Facebook	Interaction	15 Minutes am / Early morning / Bed	
			10 Minutes pm / Lunch time / Facebook	Interaction	30 Minutes am / Study room	
			30 Minutes pm / In bed		15 Minutes pm / After 19.00 / Living room	Presence no Interaction
Sunday 6th	20 Minutes pm / Afternoon / Bed / browsing		5 Minutes am / Breakfast / Facebook	Interaction	30 Minutes pm / After 20.00 / During a Party / living room	Interaction
				Interaction		
	45 Minutes pm / before going to bed / Browsing		35 Minutes pm / After 19.00 / Living room / Facebook			
			15 Minutes pm / After 20.00 / Facebook	Interaction		
Monday 7th	35 Minutes pm / Before going to sleep in bed		10 Minutes pm / Lunch Time / Facebook		10 Minutes am / After 07.00 / Breakfast	Presence no Interaction
					20 Minutes pm / Lunch time	
					30 Minutes pm / Dinner	Interaction

Time Diaries January (Feb) 2013

Family Dimech / Desira

	Berta		Anthony		Denzin	
Friday 1	15 Minutes am / On awakening / 06.00-06.15 Minutes am / Bedroom 17.30-19.30 / Resting / 2 hours living /sofa	Interaction Interaction	1 hour at 6 Minutes / Breakfast 90 Minutes / Dinner time/ 18.30 u 20.00	Interaction	15 Minutes am / 19.30 - .19.45 Kitchen / Resting 4 hours from 21.00-01.00 / Bedroom	
Saturday 2	15 Minutes am / On awakening 06.00-06.15 / Bedroom	Interaction	1 hour am / At 06.00 – 07.00 / Breakfast time 60 Minutes / Dinner time / 19.00 – 20.00	Interaction	3 hours am / 09.00-12.00 / Resting at grandma's house 4 hours 30 Minutes pm / 12.30 and 17.00 / Resting at grandma's house. 3 hours 20.30 – 23.30 / In his bedroom	Presence no Interaction Presence no Interaction

Sunday 3	15 Minutes am / On awakening 06.15 Bedroom /	Interaction	1 hour am / at 06.00-07.00 / Breakfast		3 hours am / 09.00-12.00 / Resting at grandma's house	Presence no Interaction
	2 hours / 16.00 – 18.00 / Resting / sofa	Interaction	120 Minutes /Dinner time 20.00 – 22.00	Interaction	3 hours pm / 13.00–16.00 / Resting at grandma's house	Presence no Interaction
					I hour pm / 20.00–21.00 / Kitchen / Resting	Presence no Interaction
Monday 4	10 Minutes am / On awakening 06.00-06.10	Interaction	30 Minutes am 06.00 / Breakfast		3 hours pm / 15.00 – 18.00 / Resting at grandma's house	Presence no Interaction
			3hrs 30 Minutes / Sofa 18.30 – 21.00	Interaction	3 hours 30 Minutes pm / 19.30–22.30 / Resting / Kitchen	Presence no Interaction
Tuesday 5	30 Minutes am / 07.30-08.00 / Kitchen / before going to work	Interaction	30 Minutes / at 06.00 / Breakfast / 3 hours / sofa / 18.00 - 21.00		2 hours pm / 15.30 – 17.30 / Resting at grandma's house	Presence no Interaction
	60 Minutes pm / 19.30 – 20.30 / Resting on sofa				3 hours pm / 19.00-22.00 / Kitchen / Resting at grandma's house	Presence no Interaction
Wednesday 6	30 Minutes am / Before work 06.00-6.30 / in bed	Interaction	1 hour am / At 06.30 - 07.30 / Breakfast		3 hours pm / 15.00-18.00 / Resting at grandma's house	Presence no Interaction
	1 hour 30 Minutes pm / 19.30–21.00 / resting on sofa	Interaction	2 hours pm / Sofa / 18.00–20.00		1 hours pm / 21.00-22.0 / Resting in the Kitchen	Presence no Interaction

| Thursday 7 | 15 Minutes am / On awakening / bedroom 06.00-06.15 | Interaction | 30 Minutes am / 07.30 / Breakfast I hour pm /20.00 – 21.00 /living kitchen | | 3 hours pm / 15.00 – 18.00 / Resting at grandma's house | Presence no Interaction |
| | 60 Minutes am / Before going to work / Kitchen 07.00 -08.00 / kitchen 15 Minutes pm / 19.45- 20.00 / resting / sofa | Presence no Interaction | 90 Minutes pm / During dinner / 18.30 u 20.00 | Interaction | 2hours pm / 19.30 – 21.30 / Kitchen / resting | Presence no Interaction |

Time Diaries January 2014

Kinds Family

(Agnes)   (Frans)

	(Agnes)		(Frans)	
Wednesday 1	10 Minutes am /Research	Interaction	90 pm /Emails (Nephew)	Interaction
Thursday 2			45 am / Research	Presence no Interaction
Friday 3	30 Minutes pm / Newspaper	Interaction		
Saturday 4	30 pm / Newspaper		105 am / Newspapers	Presence no Interaction
Sunday 5	30 pm / Newspaper		65 am / Sending Birthdays	Presence no Interaction
Monday 6			90 pm / Research /emails	Presence no Interaction
Tuesday 7	30 pm / Newspaper		90 am / Downloading Music	Presence no Interaction

Time Diaries January 2014

Family Azzopardi / Rossi

(Ivan Azzopardi)   (Gordon Rossi)

Wednesday 1				
Thursday 2				
Friday 3				
Saturday 4				
Sunday 5	120 pm / Bed	Interaction		
Monday 6	30 am / Bed	Interaction		
Tuesday 7	60 am / Sofa			

Time Diaries January 2014

Family Quattromani

(Dione)   (Jessica)

	(Dione)		(Jessica)	
Wednesday 1	25 Minutes am / Kitchen /Living / News / emails	Interaction	15 Minutes am / Kitchen Dining /Facebook and Browsing	Interaction
			57 Minutes pm / Kitchen Dining Facebook and Browsing	Interaction
Thursday 2	15 Minutes am / Kitchen / Living / News		583 Minutes / pm / Study /Bedroom / Living Room Facebook, Studying Browsing / News	Interaction
Friday 3	20 Minutes pm / Kitchen / Living Browsing	Interaction	312 Minutes / am/ pm / Study room / Studying / Facebook/ News	
			77 Minutes pm / Study room Studying /Facebook / News /YouTube	
Saturday 4th			167 Minutes am/ pm / Study room / studying /Facebook	
			13 Minutes pm / Tea Time / Kitchen / Dining / Facebook	Interaction

Day	Activity		Activity	
Sunday 5th	50 Minutes am /Bedroom / Browsing /Shopping	Interaction	24 Minutes am / Resting / bed / Facebook / News	
	25 Minutes am	Interaction	11 Minutes am / Resting / Kitchen Dining /Facebook	
	55 Minutes pm / Kitchen /Living / Browsing / Shopping	Interaction	7 Minutes pm / Before Lunch / Facebook	
	20 Minutes pm / Games / Kitchen / Living		14 Minutes pm / Before Studying / Kitchen / Dining / Facebook	
			24 Minutes pm / After dinner Kitchen / Dining Watching TV and Facebook	Interaction
			28 Minutes pm / Kitchen / Living Watching TV and Facebook	Interaction
Monday 6th	20 Minutes pm / Kitchen /Living Banking /News/ Browsing		30 Minutes am / Resting / bed / Facebook / YouTube	
			16 Minutes pm / Before Lunch / Kitchen / Dining / Facebook	
Tuesday 7th			26 Minutes am / Resting / bed /Facebook / Gmail	
			110 Minutes pm / After Dinner / Kitchen / Living Facebook / YouTube / News	Interaction

Time Diaries January 2014

Family Mallia

	Edward		**Lucio**		**Sasha**	
Wednesday 1	30 Minutes am / after 9.00 am /resting /sofa	Presence no Interaction	120 Minutes am / before lunch / Bed	Interaction	90 Minutes pm / after lunch / Bedroom	Interaction
Thursday 2	60 Minutes am / 09.00 - 10.00 / bed / sofa / resting		30 Minutes pm / After 17.00 / sofa 30 Minutes pm / Lunch time / kitchen	Presence no Interaction Interaction	60 Minutes am / sofa / resting 0900 - 10.00 90 Minutes / Early afternoon / kitchen / sofa	
Friday 3	15 Minutes am / after 9.00 am /resting /sofa 60 Minutes pm / 16.00 – 17.00 / resting / sofa	Presence no interaction	3 Hours pm / 16.00-19.00 / Resting / bed	Presence no Interaction	120 Minutes am / Before lunch / bed	Presence no Interaction

Saturday 4	30 Minutes am / kitchen / on awakening		30 Minutes pm / Lunch time 20 Minutes pm / Tea time at 18.00 / sitting room 30 Minutes pm / Before going to bed	Interaction Presence no Interaction	60 Minutes am / On awakening / bed 30 Minutes am / Late in the morning / kitchen / sofa 60 Minutes pm / Before going to sleep / bed	Presence no Interaction Presence no Interaction Presence no Interaction
Sunday 5	120 Minutes am / bed /between 10.00 – 12.00	Presence no Interaction	2 hours pm / After 20.00 pm / Resting / sitting room		120 Minutes am / before lunch / kitchen 105 Minutes pm / resting / kitchen 150 Minutes pm / 18.00 - 20.30 / kitchen / before dinner 30 Minutes pm / 21.30-22.00 / Before going to sleep / sofa	Interaction Interaction Interaction Interaction

Monday 6	60 Minutes pm / 16.00 -17.00 / tea time / Kitchen	Interaction	30 Minutes pm / Lunch time 60 Minutes pm / 22.00 u 23.00 / bed	Interaction Presence no Interaction	15 Minutes pm / dinner /kitchen 30 Minutes pm / before going to sleep	Interaction Presence no Interaction
Tuesday 7	15 Minutes am / on awakening / bed 30 Minutes pm / 15.00 / sofa	Presence no Interaction	90 Minutes am / Before lunch / kitchen	Interaction	45 Minutes am / On awakening / bed 120 Minutes am / Before lunch / sofa 120 Minutes pm / Before going to sleep	Interaction Interaction

Time Diaries January 2014

Family Abdilla

	Rita		Ray		Marjo	
Wednesday 1	30 Minutes pm / Afternoon /sofa	Interaction	10 Minutes am / Breakfast 21 Minutes pm / Afternoon 10 Minutes pm/ After 1900 / sofa	Interaction Interaction Interaction	15 Minutes am / Bed after 8.00 am 15 Minutes am / Sofa 10 Minutes pm / Dinner 15 Minutes pm / Afternoon / 15 Minutes pm / Late after 20.00 / sofa 17 Minutes pm / Bed / before going to sleep	Presence no Interaction Interaction Interaction Interaction Interaction
Thursday 2	15 Minutes pm / Afternoon / sofa		5 Minutes am / During breakfast 10 Minutes pm / Afternoon / sofa 15 Minutes pm / Dinner time	 Interaction	10 Minutes am / Bed after 8.00 am 30 Minutes pm / Afternoon during /-homework / study room 15 Minutes pm / After lunch 15 Minutes pm / After 18.00 / sofa 15 Minutes pm / After 20.00 / sofa 15 pm / After 22.00 / bed/ before going to sleep	Interaction Interaction Interaction

Friday 3	15 Minutes am / On awakening / sofa		20 Minutes am / Breakfast 5 Minutes am / Just after midnight before going to sleep	Interaction	30 Minutes am / After 09.00 / bed	
					15 Minutes am / After 11.00 am / during break from studies	Interaction
					30 Minutes pm / Early afternoon / Living room / sofa	
					2 hours pm / Play station / living room / after 18.30	Interaction
					15 Minutes pm / After 20.00 / sofa	Interaction
					15 Minutes pm / After 22.00 pm / in bed / before going to sleep	
Saturday 4	40 Minutes pm / After 23.00		10 Minutes pm / Afternoon / sofa 20 Minutes pm / Late afternoon / kitchen / sofa	Interaction	15 Minutes am / After 09.00 / bed 10 Minutes am / After 11.00 / sofa	Interaction Interaction
					30 Minutes pm / During lunch	Interaction
					15 Minutes pm / Early afternoon / sofa	Interaction
					20 Minutes pm / After 19.00 during dinner	Interaction

					2 hours 30 Minutes pm / After 20.00 / computer game / living room 15 Minutes pm / After 22.00 / bed before going to sleep	
Sunday 5	25 Minutes pm / Afternoon / sofa / living room 45 Minutes pm / After 23.00 / bed		5 Minutes am / Late morning after training / garage 5 Minutes pm / Lunch time 5 Minutes pm / Later afternoon/ sofa	Interaction	10 Minutes am / After 20.00 / bed 5 Minutes am / After 22.00 / sofa 15 Minutes pm / During lunch time 5 Minutes / pm early afternoon / sofa 10 Minutes pm / Late afternoon / sofa 5 Minutes pm /After 18.00 / sofa 30 Minutes pm / After 19.00 / sofa 15 Minutes pm / After 22.00 / in bed before going to sleep	Interaction Interaction Interaction

Monday 6	45 Minutes pm / 20.00– 21.00 / sofa / living room	Interaction	5 Minutes am / Breakfast time	Interaction	5 Minutes am / After 09.00 / bed	Interaction
					15 Minutes am / After 11.00 / break from studying	
			5 Minutes pm / Late afternoon / tea time		20 Minutes pm / During lunch	Interaction
					10 Minutes pm / Early afternoon / sofa	
			25 Minutes pm /After 20.00 / Sitting room	Interaction		
					1 hr.30 Minutes pm / Late afternoon / games / living room	Interaction
					30 Minutes pm / After 18.00 / Sofa	Interaction
					30 Minutes pm / After 22.00 / Sofa	Interaction
					15 Minutes pm / After 21.00 / Before going to bed	
Tuesday 7			5 Minutes am / Breakfast	Interaction	5 Minutes am / During breakfast	Interaction
			20 Minutes pm / After 10.00 / sitting room	Interaction	15 Minutes pm / Late afternoon / during lunch	Interaction
					15 Minutes pm / After 18.00 / after finishing homework	
					15 Minutes pm / After 21.30 / bed	

Time Diaries January 2014

Family Dimech / Desira

	Berta		Anthony		Denzin	
Wednesday 1	10 Minutes am / 06.00-07.00 am / Before / Breakfast / Bedroom	Presence No Interaction	30 Minutes am / 06.00-06.30 am / Breakfast	Presence no Interaction	10 hours pm/am / 15.00- 01.00 am / Free time	Presence no Interaction
	60 Minutes pm / 16.00-18.00 pm / After work / Living room	Presence No Interaction	60 Minutes pm / During dinner / living room	Interaction		
	90 Minutes pm / 19.00-21.00 pm / Leisure / Internet /TV Living room	Interaction				
Thursday 2	90 Minutes pm / 19.00-21.00 / Leisure / Internet TV / Living room	Interaction	120 Minutes pm / 18.00-20.00 / Kitchen /living / during dinner	Interaction	3 hours pm / 15.00-18.00 pm / Bedroom	Presence no Interaction
					5 hours pm / 20.00 - 01.00 am / Bedroom	
Friday 3	10 Minutes am / 06.00–07.00 / Before work / Bedroom	Presence no Interaction	30 Minutes am / 06.00-06.30 am / breakfast / living room	Presence no Interaction	4.30 hours pm / 17.00–19.30 Free time bedroom	Presence no Interaction
					3hours pm/am / 23.00-02.00 free time	

Saturday 4	30 Minutes am / 08.00-09.00 am / Before work / Living room 90 Minutes pm / 16.00-1800pm / Working / Living room	Presence no Interaction Presence no Interaction	60 Minutes pm / 17.00–18.00 /Living room / sofa	Interaction	7 hours pm / 14.00–18.00 pm Free-time / Bedroom 6 hours pm/am / 20.00–02.00 / Bedroom	Presence no Interaction
Sunday 5	45 Minutes am / Between / All around the house 120 Minutes pm / 18.00-21.00 pm / Leisure / Living room /TV /Internet	Presence no Interaction Interaction	30 Minutes pm 16.00-16.30 / Living room / sofa 60 Minutes pm / 20.00-21.00 pm / Living room / sofa	Interaction Interaction	2 hours pm / 13.00–17.00 pm / Free time / bedroom 5 hours pm/am / 20.00-01.00 / Bedroom / free time	Presence no Interaction
Monday 6	10 Minutes am / 06.00 am / Before work / in the Bedroom 30 Minutes pm 16.00 / After work / Living room 2 hours pm / 18.00-22.00 /Leisure / Internet TV / Living room	Presence no Interaction Presence no Interaction Interaction	240 Minutes pm / 18.00-22.00 pm / Living room / dinner	Interaction	3 hours pm / 15.00–18.00 / Free-time / Bedroom 5 hours pm/am / 20.00–01.00 / Free time / Bedroom	Presence no Interaction
Tuesday 7	10 Minutes am / Before work / 06.00 / am / Bedroom 60 Minutes pm / After work / in living room 45 Minutes pm / 20.00-21.00 / Leisure / Bedroom	Presence no Interaction Presence no Interaction Interaction	120 Minutes pm / 19.00-21.00 pm / Living room /dinner	Interaction	3 hours pm / 17.00-18.00 / Free time / Bedroom 5 hours pm/am / 20.00-01.00 / Free time / Bedroom	Presence no Interaction

Time Diaries July 2013

Kinds Family

	(Agnes)		(Frans)	
Monday 1			75 Minutes am / Research / Emails 150 Minutes pm / Research / Emails	Interaction Presence no Interaction
Tuesday 2	30 Minutes pm / Research / emails 60 Minutes pm / Research / email	Interaction Presence no Interaction	75 Minutes am / Research /Emails / Newspapers 75 Minutes pm / Research /Emails / Newspapers	Presence No Interaction Presence No Interaction
Wednesday 3	60 Minutes pm / Newspapers	Presence no Interaction	150 Minutes am / Research 60 Minutes pm / Research / Newspapers	Interaction Presence no Interaction
Thursday 4	Not Home		Not Home	
Friday 5	Not Home		Not Home	
Saturday 6	60 Minutes pm / Emails	Presence no Interaction	75 Minutes pm / Research / Emails	Presence no Interaction
Sunday 7	60 Minutes am / Research	Presence no Interaction	30 Minutes pm / Emails / Internet Banking	Presence no Interaction

Time Diaries July 2013

Family Azzopardi / Rossi

(Ivan Azzopardi)   Gordon Rossi)

	(Ivan Azzopardi)		Gordon Rossi)
Monday 1	30 Minutes am / Bed / Facebook 45 Minutes pm / Sofa / Facebook	Interaction	-
Tuesday 2			-
Wednesday 3	30 Minutes am / Toilet / Facebook		-
Thursday 4	60 Minutes pm / Bed / Facebook	Interaction	-
Friday 5	30 Minutes pm / Sofa / Facebook 60 Minutes pm / Sofa / Emails	Presence no Interaction	-
Saturday 6			-
Sunday 7			-

Time Diaries July 2013

Family Quattromani

(Dione)   (Jessica)

	(Dione)		(Jessica)	
Monday 1	21 Minutes pm / Study room / Browsing		20 Minutes am / Before Lunch / Kitchen / Living Facebook /Gmail / Webmail 33 Minutes pm / Before Dinner / Kitchen / Living Facebook	Interaction
Tuesday 2	60 Minutes pm / Before dinner / Kitchen / Living Browsing	Interaction	19 Minutes pm / Resting /sofa / Kitchen / Living Facebook 111 Minutes pm / Resting / sofa / Kitchen / Living Facebook / gmail / YouTube	Interaction
Wednesday 3	83 Minutes pm / Before Dinner / Kitchen /Living /Browsing	Interaction	74 Minutes am / Kitchen / Living / Resting / helping mum Facebook/ esims./ gmail	Interaction
			114 Minutes am / Before lunch Kitchen / Living Facebook /esims	Interaction
			99 Minutes pm / Before dinner / Kitchen / Living Facebook / esims / Gmail	Interaction
			128 Minutes pm / After dinner / Kitchen / living / Facebook / gmail	Interaction

Thursday 4			176 Minutes am / Before and after lunch / Kitchen / Living Facebook / Esims / gmail	Interaction
Friday 5	22 Minutes pm / Study room / Browsing		15 Minutes pm / Bedroom resting / Facebook / Esims / gmail / news	
Saturday 6	29 Minutes am / Kitchen / Living /Browsing / YouTube 68 Minutes am / Study room / Banking /email / News / Browsing	Interaction	301 Minutes am / Before and after lunch / kitchen / Living Facebook / news / gmail / esims / webmail	Interaction
Sunday 7	51 Minutes pm / Bedroom / Browsing / News/ YouTube			

Time Diaries July 2013

Family Mallia

	Edward		Lucio		Sasha	
Monday 1	15 Minutes pm / After lunch / Facebook / browsing	Interaction	30 Minutes pm / Early afternoon / Sofa / Facebook / email 60 Minutes pm / Before dinner / Sitting room / Facebook / email 2 hours pm / Before midnight / in bed / Facebook / email	Interaction	1.15 Minutes am / Before lunch in the bedroom Chatting / listening to music 45 Minutes pm / After lunch Bedroom / Chatting / 2 hours pm / after dinner / chatting / listening to music bedroom	
Tuesday 2	1 hour pm / Between 16:00 – 17:00 Sitting room / Facebook / chatting		3 hours pm / Late afternoon in bed		2 hours am / Before lunch / kitchen Facebook / chatting / listening to music 90 Minutes pm / Before dinner Facebook / chatting / listening to music / bedroom 30 Minutes pm / late evening before going to sleep / Facebook	Interaction

Wednesday 3	10 Minutes pm / after 17.00 in the bathroom on the toilet bowl. Browsing		2.30 Minutes pm / Early afternoon / Sofa 2 hours pm / After 20.00 /after dinner in bed			
Thursday 4	2 hours pm / Late evening before sleeping Sofa / Football on-line	Interaction	2 hours pm / In the afternoon in bed / Facebook / emails / chatting 1 hour / late evening / Browsing 15 Minutes pm / In the bathroom on the toilet bowl / Downloading	Interaction	-	
Friday 5	15 Minutes am / Before starting cooking for lunch Listening to music / Kitchen 1 hour pm / After lunch on the sofa / Facebook u emails		2 hours pm / Late afternoon / In bed			

Saturday 6	10 Minutes pm / After lunch Browsing videos Kitchen / dining	Interaction	4 hours pm / Afternoon / Sitting room / resting One hour pm / Before midnight / in bed		-	
Sunday 7	30 Minutes pm / afternoon Sofa / Facebook / emails / chatting 1 hour pm / Early evening / sofa / Facebook / browsing videos	Interaction	I hour am / sofa 09.00 - 10.00		40 Minutes am / Before lunch / Facebook / listening to music / Bedroom 60 Minutes pm / Late afternoon / Kitchen / Facebook 5 Minutes pm / Before dinner / Facebook 30 Minutes pm / After dinner on sofa / Resting / Browsing / Instagram	Interaction Interaction

Time Diaries July 2013

Family Abdilla

	Rita			Ray		Marjo	
Monday 1	45 Minutes pm / Facebook Resting in bed	Presence no Interaction	10 Minutes am / In bed / Facebook / watching sport news 5 Minutes pm / During Lunch / Facebook / Sport	Interaction Interaction	15 Minutes am / In bed Facebook / browsing 15 Minutes pm / In the bathroom on toilet bowl / Facebook / browsing 60 Minutes pm / Late night in bed watching video	Presence no Interaction Presence no Interaction
Tuesday 2	40 Minutes am / Before Work / office / email / Facebook 30 Minutes pm / Bathroom / toilet bowl / Facebook 20 Minutes pm / Bed Facebook / emails	Presence no Interaction Presence no Interaction	5 Minutes pm / Before sleeping in bed / Facebook / sports / browsing		10 Minutes am / Sofa / living room / browsing 10 Minutes pm Sofa / living room Browsing 15 Minutes pm / Lunch / Facebook 60 Minutes pm / Evening living room / chatting	Interaction Interaction Interaction

Wednesday 3	30 Minutes pm / Bed / Browsing		5 Minutes am / during breakfast balcony / Browsing / Sport		7 Minutes am / Bed / Browsing	
					15 Minutes pm / Lunch / Facebook / browsing	Interaction
					30 Minutes pm / Sofa / living room / browsing	
Thursday 4	20 Minutes pm / Bed / Browsing		5 Minutes pm / On the toilet bowl / Facebook / Browsing	Interaction	15 Minutes am / Resting in the living room / Facebook / browsing/	Interaction
			4 Minutes / In bed just before going to sleep		10 Minutes pm / Lunch / browsing	Interaction
					30 Minutes pm / Resting afternoon / Facebook / browsing	
					20 Minutes pm / Sofa / browsing	Interaction
					15 Minutes pm / In bed before sleeping / Facebook	Interaction

Friday 5	30 Minutes pm / Bed / Browsing / Facebook	Presence no Interaction	10 Minutes am / Breakfast / In the balcony /Facebook / browsing / 15 Minutes pm / Lunch / balcony / Browsing 8 Minutes pm / During TV watching / browsing / Facebook	Interaction	10 Minutes am / In bed early morning – wake up / Facebook / browsing 15 Minutes pm / Lunch / Facebook / browsing 30 Minutes pm / Afternoon / sofa / Facebook / browsing 15 Minutes pm / Evening / living room / Facebook / browsing	Interaction Interaction Interaction
Saturday 6	45 Minutes am / Sofa Living room / Browsing / emails	Interaction	8 Minutes pm / Balcony / browsing / Facebook	Interaction	15 Minutes am / Early morning in bed / Facebook / browsing 15 Minutes am / Morning / sofa Facebook / browsing 60 Minutes pm / During lunch time / On line games /u browsing 30 Minutes pm / After 18.00 / sofa / browsing 60 Minutes pm / Sofa / after 20.30 on line games / Facebook	Interaction Interaction Interaction

| Sunday 7 | 30 Minutes am / Sofa / living room Browsing / emails | Presence no Interaction | 13 Minutes pm / Tea time afternoon in balcony / Facebook / Browsing

10 Minutes pm / Before leaving for work / Balcony / Facebook / browsing | Interaction | 15 Minutes am / Morning Sofa / browsing

5 Minutes pm / Lunch / Facebook

10 Minutes pm / After 16.00 / living room / Facebook / browsing

1.30 Minutes pm / After 18.00 / living room
Facebook /Browsing and video watching

30 Minutes pm / Before sleeping in bed Facebook / browsing | Interaction

Interaction

Interaction |

Time Diaries July 2013

Family Dimech / Desira

	Berta		Anthony		Denzin	
Monday 1	20 Minutes am / 06.00 / Before work / living / room / bedroom Emails / Facebook 60 Minutes pm / Between 17.00–18.00 / After work / Living room Emails 120 Minutes pm / resting 19.00–22.00 / Living room / Watching TV / Films features	Interaction Interaction	3 hours pm / 19.00-10.00 / Various rooms / browsing	Interaction	6 hours pm / 10.30 – 17.30 / Bedroom / Playing watching videos You tube 7.30 hours pm/am / 19.30 – 02.00 am / Playing in the Bedroom / Watching / Videos / YouTube	

Tuesday 2	20 Minutes am / prior work in Kitchen / Emails / Facebook	Interaction	3 hours pm / Reading emails / living room / sofa	Interaction	5.30 hours am/pm / 11.00 - 18.30 / Playing / bedroom / Watching Video / YouTube	
	120 Minutes pm / 19.00 – 22.00 resting in living room / Features / News Reading	Interaction			7 hours pm / am / 19.30 - 01.30 am / Playing / Bedroom / Watching Video / YouTube	
Wednesday 3	240 Minutes pm / Living room between 18.00 – 24.00 resting Watching TV / browsing / films / Facebook	Interaction	4 hours pm / 19.00 - 23.00 / Sofa / living room / Browsing / reading	Interaction	13 hours pm/am / 10.30 – 02.00 am / Playing in Bedroom / Watching / Video / YouTube	

| Thursday 4 | 20 Minutes am / Before work at 06.00 / Bedroom / living room / Emails / Facebook

120 Minutes pm / between 18.00 – 21.00 Resting / living / bedroom / watch TV / features / face books / reading | Interaction

Interaction | 4 hours pm / 18.00–10.00 / Living room / sofa / Browsing | Interaction | 6 hours am/pm / 10.30-5.30 / playing watching / YouTube

7.30 hours pm/am / 19.30–02.00 am / Playing bedroom / Watching / video | |
| Friday 5 | 30 Minutes am / At 06.00 / prior work bedroom / living room / emails / Facebook

240 Minutes am / Between 07.00 – 12.00 resting / Living Room / watch TV / Features / Chatting / reading | Interaction

Interaction | 240 Minutes pm / 19.00–23.00 / Living room / dinner / Chatting / emails | Interaction | 6 hours pm / 10.30–17.30 / Playing / bedroom /Watching / video YouTube

7.30 hours pm/am / 19.30–2.00 am Playing / Bedroom / Watching video / YouTube | |

Saturday 6	120 Minutes pm / 17.00-19.00 / Resting / Living room / Reading	Interaction	240 Minutes pm / 15.00–19.00 / Living room / sofa / Internet /Browsing	Interaction	6 hours pm / 11.30–17.30 Playing / Bedroom / Watching / Videos / YouTube / 6 hours pm/am / 20.00-02.00 am / Playing / Bedroom Watching Video / YouTube	
Sunday 7	60 Minutes pm / Between 16.00–17.00 Resting TV / Watching features / Reading		2 hours pm / 16.00–18.00 / Sofa / living room / Browsing	Interaction	6 hours pm/am / 20.00 -02.00 / Playing / Bedroom / Watching Videos / YouTube	