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To (B)oldly Go:
A study of older people's usage of ICT and its implications for thinking about (digital) identity

by

Melanie Jane Heeley

A Doctoral Dissertation, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy degree of Loughborough University

July 2013

Department of Information Science
Loughborough University

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Abstract

The demographic time bomb means that older people will become a major part of tomorrow's society. This has become an increasingly pressing issue for older people and government policy alike. ONS (2009) statistics suggest that past retirement age, the sense of quality of life (QoL) experienced by older people begins to decrease, with the fastest decline occurring after the age of 70. This research therefore began by investigating how ICT could be implicated in the social life of the older person and thus improve their QoL. Literature reviews of the field of older people's involvement with ICT indicated that there was very little research between the more general studies of ICT involvement (which include far more than the purely social aspects) and the very specific (which involve examining the social impact of just one piece of technology). This study therefore aimed to fill the gap between the two extremes. It also aimed to generate theory in an under-theorised area. The study began with a focus group and interviews asking questions around how people thought social life had changed with the advent of new technologies, how they experienced the technology, and how things could be improved in the future. The study was qualitative in nature and adopted a grounded theory approach in order to inductively generate theory. The study of the lived experience of ICT also contributed to a phenomenological approach. Comparative analysis of transcripts obtained in Phase One (Year One) enabled a set of Grounded Theory Categories to be created which accounted for what was happening in the data. A core category of identity was identified which influenced subsequent data collection in Phase Two (Year Two). Phase Two participants were then involved in more focused interviews around identity concepts. Further analysis in Year Two enabled a Schema of Subject Positions to be created concerning (digital) identities which accounted for all of the participants in the study and the ways in which they viewed and interacted with technology. The Categories were also subsumed within a Grounded Theory Model involving a tripartite identity schema aligned with Giddens' theory of the 'reflexive project of the self'. Findings suggest that participants are implicated in methods of identity involvement which can be playful or pragmatic; can be viewed in moral, immoral and amoral ways (leading to ideas of the authentic and the inauthentic); and can represent the individual or explore new identities. Identity construction can ultimately be implicated positively with the use of ICT, and may lead to a virtuous cycle of ICT usage which can improve quality of life by affirming better self-views or enabling the testing of new views of selfhood. Positive technology identities can be offered as identity role models for other older people to follow.

Keywords: Older people, later life, ICT, technology, digital identity, grounded theory, phenomenology, discourse analysis, moral, authentic, reflexivity.

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Quotations

1. Changes wrought in the human psyche by electronic communications are not necessarily new phenomena…

> But one morning he made him a slender wire,
> As an artist's vision took life and form,
> While he drew from heaven the strange, fierce fire
> That reddens the edge of the midnight storm;
> And he carried it over the Mountain's crest,
> And dropped it into the Ocean's breast;
> And Science proclaimed, from shore to shore,
> That Time and Space ruled man no more.
>
> From 'The Victory', a poem written in tribute to Samuel Morse, 1872
>
> **[From Standage (1998, p.23) - *The Victorian Internet*]**

2. The phenomenology of computer technology…life in a computerised world…

> For it was now like walking among the matrices of a giant computer, the zeroes and ones twinned above, hanging like balanced mobiles right and left, ahead, thick, maybe endless.
>
> **[From Pynchon (1996, p.125) - *The crying of Lot 49*]**

3. A philosopher's view on morality, the fiction of essences, and the performativity of existence…

> […] popular morality distinguishes strength from expressions of strength, as if behind the strong individual there was an indifferent substratum which was at *liberty* to express or not to express strength. But no such substratum exists; there is no 'being' behind doing, acting becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction imposed on the doing – the doing itself is everything.
>
> **[From Nietzsche (1996, p.29) - *On the genealogy of morals*]**

4. When does ageing begin…?

All children, except one, grow up. They soon know that they will grow up, and the way Wendy knew was this. One day when she was two years old she was playing in a garden, and she plucked another flower and ran with it to her mother. I suppose she must have looked rather delightful, for Mrs Darling put her hand to her heart and cried, 'Oh, why can't you remain like this for ever!' This was all that passed between them on the subject, but henceforth Wendy knew that she must grow up. You always know after you are two. Two is the beginning of the end.
[From Barrie (2004, p.5) - *Peter Pan*]

5. Reflexivity and Reflection…what's the difference?

The difference between reflexivity and reflection is that while the latter suggests looking in a mirror and seeing yourself, the former involves an action deployed on an object and that object reacting back, resulting in a changed situation.
[From Gay (2009, p.1) - *Reflexivity and development economics*]

6. The phenomenology of technology for older people…?

Space: The final frontier
These are the voyages of the Starship, Enterprise
Its five year mission
To explore strange new worlds
To seek out new life and new civilisations
To boldly go where no man has gone before
[From the opening lines to Star Trek][1]

[1] See for example: *The Phrase Finder,* 2010. <http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/385400.html>, [accessed 01.04.10].

To (B)oldly Go:
A study of older people's usage of ICT and its implications for thinking about (digital) identity

Chapter One: Introduction – Older people/ICT/ (digital) identity/the reflexive project of the self

1.1 Summary of the Thesis

The demographic time bomb means that older people will become a major part of tomorrow's society, complete with their own set of social issues and concerns. The 'new dynamics of ageing' is a phrase encompassing current research in the field of older people's issues which particularly aims to examine "the dynamic ways in which the meaning, understanding and experience of ageing are currently changing and becoming more diverse" (NDA 2011).

The present research has taken as its starting point the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) by older people in social contexts, and is carried out in conjunction with the Sus-IT project which aims to improve the quality of life for older people through the use of such new technologies. The Sus-IT project itself is part of the New Dynamics of Ageing Programme (NDA).

Through the use of a grounded theory methodology, which begins with a subject area and not necessarily a fixed set of aims and objectives, this research into the social aspects of ICT became increasingly focused around notions of (digital) identity as the study progressed. Thus the research operates at the intersection of three complex factors: the new dynamics of ageing, older people's usage of ICT, and related notions of socially performed identities which in turn have an impact on conceptions of digital identity.

The study was carried out through the use of a focus group, interviews, emailed questions and creative writing to examine the phenomenology or 'lived experience' of older people as they thought through the ways in which ICT was implicated with

their lives and personal narratives of the self. Important to the notion of selfhood with respect to the mediating influence of ICT became Gidden's (1991, p.5) idea of "the reflexive project of the self", which consists in "the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives" that take place "in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems". In today's world, information and communications technologies provide just these abstract systems for "the mediation of experience" (Giddens 1991, p.23); ICT allows the "intrusion of distant events into everyday consciousness" in a "collage"-like manner (Giddens 1991, pp.27 & 26). Alongside this, these technologies also allow people to re-assess, re-use, re-think such 'identity' materials and then perhaps to incorporate them into their own self projects through the use of tools like Word-processing, email and Facebook, to name just a few. This represents a highly iterative involvement of people and their identities with technology.

In the present study, the "reflexive projects" of older people are therefore explored through their relationship with, and lived experience of, information and communications technologies. The resultant complexity of the data, and the interpretation of the lived experience which stems from it, allows older people's experiences to be demonstrated in highly nuanced ways which move beyond the more stereotypical ageist and reductionist discussions occurring in previous studies of older people's relationship with ICT. The findings are summarised diagrammatically in the form of a System Map of identity processes relating to the usage of ICT by older people.

This chapter will continue by providing the rationale behind the study in terms of the necessity for research into the processes of 'ageing', it will further highlight the direction that the present study will follow, and then summarise both the work of Sus-IT and the New Dynamics of Ageing Programme (NDA) of which it forms part, in order to enable the contextualisation of the research which is presented in subsequent chapters.

1.2 The 'new dynamics of ageing'

The 'new dynamics of ageing', with its associated research field, responds to the implications generated by demographic predictions about the increase in the older sections of the population both in the UK and beyond. UK population figures obtained from the 2001 Census as given by the Office for National Statistics (ONS 2001), give the figure for people aged 50 plus as being approximately 19.5 million of which more than 9 million are over 65. The overall population figures for the UK are broken down by age in the table below (ONS 2001):

Table 1 Population figures for the UK from the 2001 Census (ONS 2001)

Age Range	Total	Males	Females
0 - 4	3486253	1785688	1700565
5 - 9	3738042	1914727	1823315
10 - 14	3880557	1987606	1892951
15 - 19	3663782	1870508	1793274
20 - 24	3545984	1765257	1780727
25 - 29	3867015	1895469	1971546
30 - 34	4493532	2199767	2293765
35 - 39	4625777	2277678	2348099
40 - 44	4151613	2056545	2095068
45 - 49	3735986	1851391	1884595
50 - 54	4040576	2003158	2037418
55 - 59	3339004	1651396	1687608
60 - 64	2880074	1409684	1470390
65 - 69	2596939	1241382	1355557
70 - 74	2339319	1059156	1280163
75 - 79	1967088	817738	1149350
80 - 84	1313592	482707	830885
85 - 89	752035	226520	525515
90 and over	372026	83492	288534
Totals	58789194	28579869	30209325

As a general percentage of the population, the figures relative to older people have been rising measurably and are set to rise further. In particular, the Office for National Statistics (ONS 2010) report that the "fastest population increase has been in the number of those aged 85 and over, the "oldest old"". Also, in the 25 year period 1984-2009 the percentage of the population aged 65 and over increased from 15% to 16% (ONS 2010). The ONS's (2010) graph, given to demonstrate the phenomenon of this 'longevity revolution', is shown below:

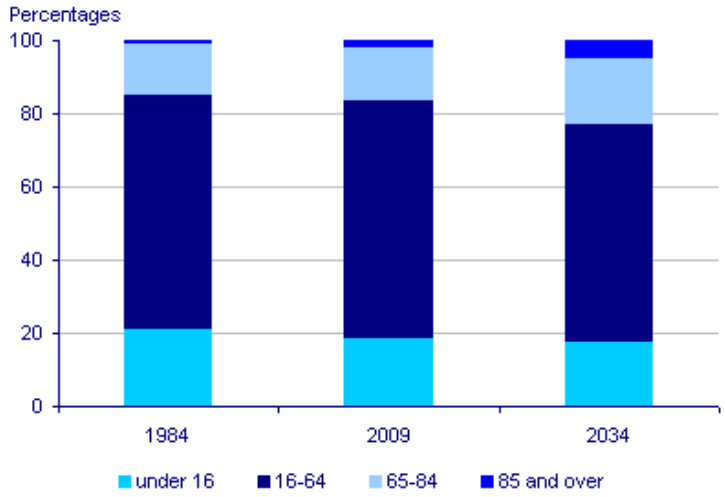


Figure 1 Age groups as a percentage of the population 1984, 2009, 2034 (ONS 2010)

The graph also demonstrates that in the same 25 year period (1984-2009), "the percentage of the population aged under 16 decreased from 21 per cent to 19 per cent" (ONS 2010). The ONS (2010) reports that as a result of these demographic tendencies, the median age for the UK population increased from 34 to 39 over the time period in question. The changing nature of the population make-up, which shows the increasing percentages of older age groups with time, highlights challenges to both the older people themselves and to policy makers alike. Social policy therefore needs to be able to respond to the needs of an ageing population.

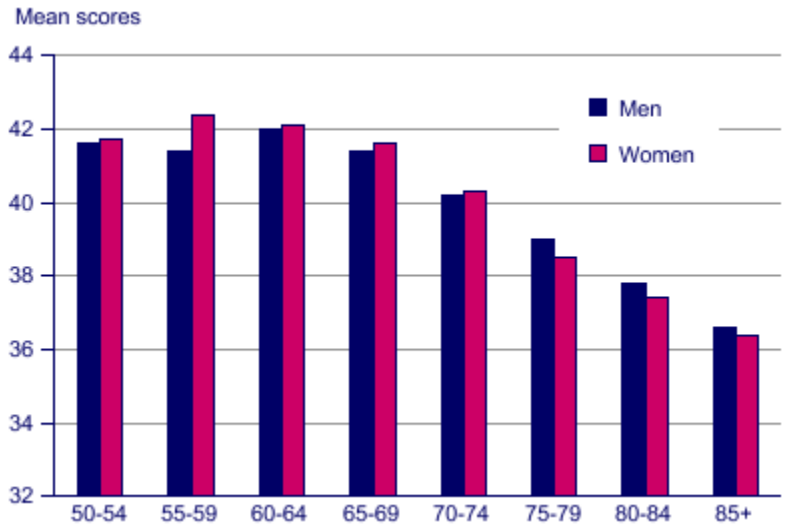
Quality of life (QoL) in older age has been of particular concern for social researchers for many years as is evidenced by the Growing Older Programme (GO 2004, p.2), the origins of which go back to 1995 "and the Whitehall EQUAL initiative that posed the question how can the quality of people's lives be extended?" The GO Programme's (2004, p.2) stated aim was therefore to "create a broad based multidisciplinary and co-ordinated programme of research on different aspects of quality of life in older age". From different aspects of the research it emerged that the central elements of quality in later life as emphasised by older people were (GO 2004, p.6):

> Social relationships, home and neighbourhood, psychological well-being and outlook, activities and hobbies (carried out alone), health and functional ability and social roles and activities.

In addition, financial circumstances and a feeling of independence and control did also emerge from the studies (GO 2004, p.18). However, the research recognises that the influencing variables on QoL are not just the individuals "own characteristics and circumstances", but that "there is also a dynamic interplay between people and their surrounding social structures in a changing society" (GO 2004, p.32). The self is enmeshed in this changing society, and is impacted by it accordingly.

The GO Programme's (2004, p.15) research into QoL was also intended to overturn positivist social research in Europe which operated from within a "perspective of functionalism" and which focused on "decline and disability", preferring instead the US approach which also investigates life satisfaction and more positive aspects of ageing. Such research is orientated towards "a more positive view of old age as a natural component of the lifespan" (GO 2004, p.15).

The GO Programme produced a set of measures of QoL known as the CASP 19 scale (GO 2004, p.4), which encapsulate notions of Control, Autonomy, Self-Realisation and Pleasure within one overall score. Based on this scale, the ONS (2009) have produced various measures of QoL for older people as indicated in the graph below. Their findings indicated that there is a tendency for the overall CASP-19 score to decrease with later life as in the graph below:



Quality of life of people aged 50 and over by age measured by CASP-19 scores, England, 2006

CASP
C-Control: the ability to intervene actively in one's own environment
• A-Autonomy: the right of an individual to be free from unwanted interference by others
• S-Self-realisation: the active processes of human fulfillment
• P-Pleasure: the sense of fun derived from the more active (doing) aspects of life

Figure 2 Quality of life of people aged 50 and over by age for 2006 (ONS 2009)

As ONS (2009) point out, their figures tend to show that "CASP-19 scores decrease from state pension age onwards with the fastest decline occurring after the age of 70". These statistics suggest that there is an increasing imperative here in an ageing population to improve people's feelings of autonomy and also societal involvement post retirement, and thus their feelings of self worth and efficacy, key factors in maintaining a positive sense of personal identity.

While personal change obviously occurs throughout the life course, retirement here is highlighted as one of the key changes associated with later life. Although the above statistics suggest that the post retirement period can lead, in the long term, to feelings of loss of social and personal purpose, there are also possible gains to be accrued in terms of a new found sense of freedom and the flexibility to pursue alternative challenges than the ones presented by a former work environment. Other personal changes can become more significant or likely in later life, again through either loss or gain. These changes include important factors such as:

- changing cognitive skills (decrease in the ability to learn quickly, poorer concentration and memory, onset of later life debilitating conditions such as dementia)
- changing physical skills (poorer eyesight, loss of fine motor control due to arthritis and so on)
- becoming a grandparent – increased sense of family community, or decrease in free time due to childcare responsibilities
- death of significant others – e.g. spouse, or children
- loss of home – through changed life or physical circumstances

All these factors can lead to older people experiencing potential discontinuities in their sense of self. These discontinuities may lead to a re-definition or alteration in the individual's perception of their personal 'identity'. Declining physical skills may present obstacles to the maintenance of a positive identity. However, an individual may also discover beneficial things about themselves, or find the time to pursue activities which had previously been neglected in a busy schedule; in this way, self-worth also has the potential to increase in later life.

There is a challenge in ageing research here to maintain its affirmative focus in spite of the 'positivist' negativity surrounding some of the transitions of later life. The impetus for new research needs to be based around the 'new dynamics of ageing' as

it is coming to be envisaged. This needs to recognise the following key factors (Walker & Maltby 1997, pp. 13-17):

> More and more people throughout the EU are leaving the labour force in different ways: early retirement, partial retirement, redundancy, unemployment, disability, and so on. At the same time, with increased longevity, older people are living longer and healthier old ages and, as a result, the threshold of frailty is being pushed back. These changes in age structure, health, and patterns of employment are transforming the nature of old age. They are, thereby, posing sharp questions about both the traditional, passive roles expected of older people and the extent to which policy makers and major economic and political institutions have adjusted to sociodemographic change.

Society's assumptions about the nature of older age need to be challenged in the light of the above statements, and social gerontology needs to react accordingly.

1.3 Older People and ICT

In the Foreword to the policy vision 'Getting on: a manifesto for older people in a networked nation", Martha Lane Fox (2011, p.1), the UK Digital Champion, argues that one way of improving the QoL of older people is to ensure that they are appropriately engaged with the digital world since they "have as much if not more to gain from access to the Internet" and other tools "as the rest of society". Technology can play a huge part in delivering both "care and services to older people in the UK" (Lane Fox 2011, p.1). Race Online 2012 (2011, p.3), in fact, considers older age to be "the best time of life" to be using the internet and other digital technologies in spite of the fact that "more than 5.7 million UK over-65-year-olds have never been online". Digital technologies, particularly the internet, have a huge role to play in ensure that older people are "empowered and connected as consumers, grandparents, parents and citizens" (Race Online 2012 2011, p.15).

Social gerontologists now deem "successful ageing" to be about more than "avoiding illness and retaining independence", in fact as Race Online 2012 (2011, p.17) state:

> A high quality older age means having a sense of purpose and full inclusion within the community. It means strong social contacts and networks, physical activity and mental stimulation.

Race Online 2012 (2011, p.17) now believe that the internet is the main key to "such levels of successful societal engagement", so in their opinion "being offline puts older people (in particular) at a major disadvantage, not only socially but also in terms of health" as the evidence suggests that "the risks from poor social integration are comparable to those of smoking, high blood pressure and obesity".[2]

Through their work, Race Online 2012 (2011, p.20) are keen to begin the process of laying ageing stereotypes to rest: digital technology is not "somehow beyond the grasp of older people" and "older people are no more likely than other demographic groups to say that the Internet is difficult to use".[3] Race Online 20102 (2011, p.20) give some key statistics concerning older people and technology usage that are beginning to reverse prevalent ideas:

- More than one million additional over 65 year olds regularly use the Internet in 2011, compared to 2009.
- 60% of over 65 year olds now use a mobile phone (up from 51% in 2007).
- The greatest increase in digital TV ownership between 2007 and 2009 was among over 65 year olds.

Whilst these figures may reflect a certain pragmatic usage of technology, particularly since many older people use the internet for health information, there are other figures to show that older people are adopting different approaches to technology usage, as Race Online 2012 (2011, p.20) point out:

- OfCom data from 2011 Q1 shows an increase of more than 420,000 over 65 year olds using Internet access for social networking over just 12 months, an average of more than 1000 new social networkers per day.[4]
- Figures from Facebook say that, as of July 2010, there were 678,500 over 65 year olds using the site in the UK, up from 407,500 in 2009 and just 83,000 in 2008. That's a total increase of 717% over this period.

Comparing older people to the general population using figures from Ofcom's Digital Participation Consortium Tech Tracker Q1 2011, Race Online 2012 (2011, p.20) suggest that older people's usage of online facilities is, in fact becoming "increasingly similar to that of other age groups", as can be seen from the table below:

[2] They take their evidence from: Social Relationships And Health. In S. Cohen, L. Underwood, & B. Gottlieb (Eds.), Measuring and intervening in social support (pp. 3–25). New York: Oxford University Press.
[3] They take their evidence from: The OfCom UK Adults Media Literacy Report (2010).
[4] They take their evidence from: Ofcom Tech Tracker, 2011 Q1 – http://www.ofcom.org.uk/static/marketdataresearch/statistics/subset.pdf

Table 2 Ofcom Digital Participation Consortium Tech Tracker (Race Online 2012 2011)

Activity	65+	All UK
Sending and Receiving Email	79%	88%
General Surfing/Browsing the Internet	78%	87%
Purchasing Goods/services/tickets	58%	71%
Finding/Downloading information for personal reasons	51%	58%
Using social networking sites	21%	59%
Playing Games online/Interactively	15%	38%
To find information on health related issues e.g., NHS Direct	27%	36%
Using Local council/Government websites	31%	39%

Source: Ofcom Digital Participation Consortium Tech Tracker Q1 2011. Question: Which, if any, of these do you or members of your household use the Internet for whilst at home? Base: Those with access to the Internet at home.

Older people are indeed beginning to use the same technologies as the rest of the population.

Other commentators are also increasingly recognising the need to over-turn accepted stereotypes of ageing, particularly as they pertain to technology usage. Traditionally, technology development for older people has focused on overcoming the disadvantages of ageing, but not necessarily in supporting positive views of longevity. This can have adverse effects on user attitudes towards technology. But as Roberts (2009, pp4-5) points out, in a report for the International Longevity Centre (ILC), contemporary gerontology now demands that we move beyond this negative position:

> The idea of the user has grown in popularity at a time when, in contemporary gerontology, there has been increasing recognition that we should understand ageing not just in terms of disability, dependency and disadvantage but also as a project of identity, experience and meaning.

Roberts (2009), notes how current ICT provision is viewed by older people. Firstly, he (Roberts 2009, p.9) points out that there are a range of assistive technologies focused around older people particularly, and including "telecare and telehealth devices", which are felt to be stigmatising and hence resisted. Secondly, there are more general consumer technologies available which have been "developed with a wide audience in mind but they often fail to excite or invite use by older people" because they are "not sufficiently sensitive to [their] needs, competences and perspectives" (Roberts 2009, p.9). And yet, Roberts (2009, p.7) also points to "evidence that social networking sites aimed specifically at older people are faring

less well – with some US sites shifting to a more age inclusive strategy, suggesting that sites or services devoted just to older people are not always attractive". Underlying this is the fact that assistive technologies focus on what an individual *cannot* do, whereas more general technologies are at least "designed to support 'experiences' and stress empowerment and enablement" (Roberts 2009, p.9).

The general confusion in this area highlights the need for research into providing a more positive technology experience for older people which does not emphasise the negative aspects of self. Providing more technologies which support the older person in their pursuit of identity, experience and meaning may therefore be the key to success in the area of ICT provision, rather than those which stress disability and disadvantage (Roberts 2009, p.4-5). So research into the area of older people's ICT experiences, and what they have to say about 'identity' related matters in the context of these experiences, is therefore timely and may help to cut through the confusion and enable provision of future technologies which are of more genuine appeal. One milestone along the way would be to segment the older population more finely, so that they are not seen as an homogeneous mass (Roberts 2009, p.10). This would assist in accumulating knowledge "about the variations in experience and attitudes over the late life course" (Roberts 2009, p.10).

Ultimately, therefore, there is a pressing "need to strive to make technology that connects people to their own aspirations, their own projects of self development, self esteem, experience and identity" (Roberts 2009, p.10).

1.4 The Present Study – Aims and Objectives

The ESRC studentship was awarded to investigate the "social aspects of and influences on ICT use by older people"[5], and was supervised from within the Sus-IT project. As the project itself was multi-disciplinary it was envisaged that the present research would draw its influences from work within both the Information Sciences and the Social Sciences. In line with this, the study adopted a sociological method - Grounded Theory - to investigate the research area stipulated by the ESRC studentship. In accordance with a Grounded Theory approach the study started with

[5] Studentship description.

a problem area, rather than specifically laid down project aims. These aims were then subsequently refined through successive iterations of data collection and analysis, to match the developing findings. The study thus began by investigating the social aspects of ICT usage by older people, but on-going analysis highlighted that much of the data could be deemed to accrete around the idea of (digital) identity. The research questions then began to focus in on this central category within the data. How this project refinement operated in practice is detailed within the 'research process' section (see Section 2.4) of this thesis. The data analysis itself was initially carried out using general coding, but following the isolation of the 'identity theme' it was continued by assessing the data to determine how each text segment could be said to illustrate a consideration of 'identity' as perceived and expressed by older people. This was carried out to create a map of the factors involved in the on-going process of identity formation by older people.

As befits a study of the social aspects of ICT usage, the project was initially concerned with information and communication technologies that could be said to be social in nature. However, with an increased focus on matters of identity the study opened out to discuss any technologies with which the study participant was familiar, whether they had used them or not. Opinion on them, however ill- or well- informed, was deemed to be just as relevant as their experience in the creation of meanings around the concept of (digital) identity.

This study, with its focus on identity and the self, thus came to incorporate research which contributed towards one of the NDA research questions as articulated within the Sus-IT Case for Support (2008, p.2), and which concerned itself with an understanding of "the potential contributions of technology for self-narrative and self-definition". However, the resulting picture became slightly more complicated than this, as use of information and communications technologies also contribute to a personal narrative in ways which are not necessarily self-directed. Hence the study contributes to an understanding of the interlinking of personal and digital identity, and also corresponding technological mechanisms for building, expressing, comparing, challenging and re-envisioning identities. The whole of this system is envisaged as occurring in a context of social systems, from the local to the global, each with their own mechanisms of stipulation and constraint, or freedom and expression, which 'grounds' the original investigation of the 'social' as initially

envisaged for the research. The resulting picture of the research – System Map – is summarised in the diagram below. Each of the sections of the diagram represents a category (in grounded theory terms), which in itself becomes a separate objective to be populated and clarified by the acquisition and analysis of data.

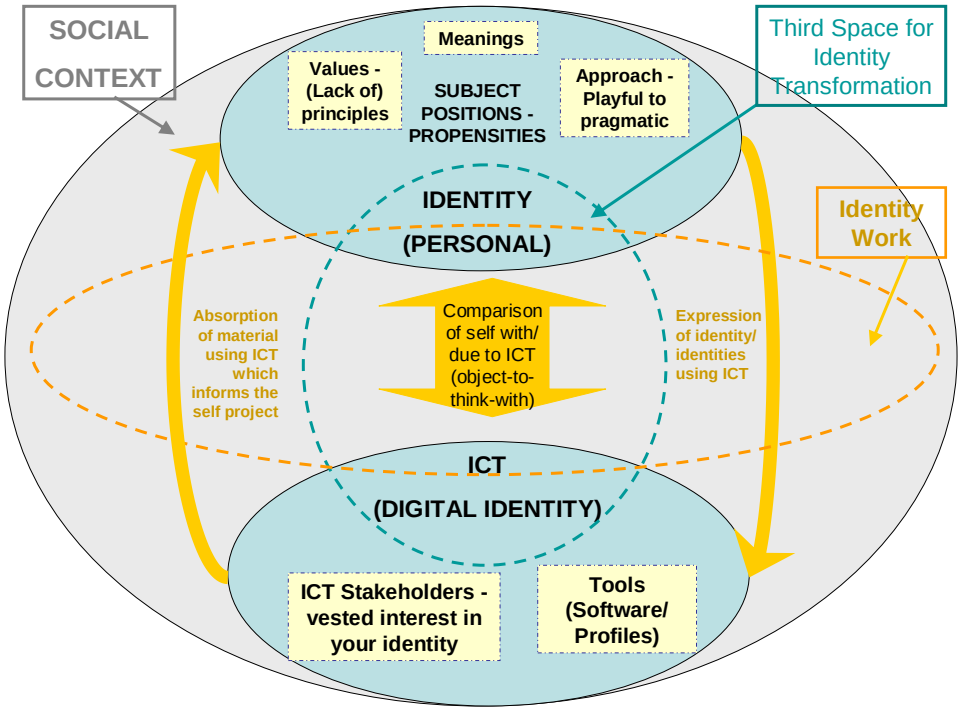


Figure 4 System Map for thinking about (digital) identity – induced from the present study

The iterative identity processes involved in the above System Map, the idea of ICT as a mediator in those processes, the social context of these processes and the ability of ICT to allow for on-going identity revision all reflect Gidden's (1991, p.14) vision of "Modernity's reflexivity", as he relates:

> everyone is in some sense aware of the reflexive constitution of modern social activity and the implications it has for her or his life. Self-identity for us forms a *trajectory* across the different institutional settings of modernity over the *duree* of what used to be called the 'life cycle' […] Each of us not only 'has', but *lives* a biography reflexively organised in terms of flows of social and psychological information about possible ways of life. Modernity is a post-traditional order, in which the question, 'How shall I live?' has to be answered in day-to-day questions about how to behave, what to wear and what to eat – and many other things – as well as interpreted within the temporal unfolding of self-identity.

The explanation of the System Map in the various data chapters of this thesis will help to contextualise Gidden's ideas on 'reflexivity' within the thoughts and lives of older people.

1.5 Research Context

1.5.1 The New Dynamics of Ageing Programme (NDA)

This research into older people's usage of ICT and its implications for identity was carried out within the New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) Programme, and more specifically the SUS-IT Project which is part of the NDA remit; it should therefore be understood within these dual contexts. The research itself was funded by a bursary from the ESRC.

Governments everywhere are beginning to recognise the associated implications of the ageing population, hence the reason behind the setting up of the NDA programme in the UK. The NDA Programme is a "multidisciplinary research initiative with the ultimate aim of improving quality of life of older people" (NDA 2010). It is an umbrella programme for several different projects looking at many different aspects of the ageing process.

The focus for research activities throughout the overall programme is seen to be quite clearly on "active ageing" and "ageing well across the lifecourse", demonstrating an emphasis on a positive framing of the factors influencing the ageing process (NDA 2011). The NDA (2010) programme title acknowledges that there are dynamic forces at work in the meaning and processes of ageing. These forces also intersect with the changing dynamics of technology and other factors.

The NDA programme encourages both "direct engagement with older people and user organisations" and "the development of innovative multidisciplinary research groups and methods" (NDA 2010).

1.5.2 The Sus-IT Project

The Sus-IT (2008) Project, which is just one of the NDA programme's total umbrella, was instigated to investigate ways of sustaining ICT usage by older people in order to promote quality of life through processes related to sustaining independence and autonomy throughout the later lifecourse. Its aims and objectives are also related to the dynamic processes of ageing. The stated aims of the project are given as follows (Sus-IT 2008, p.1):

- generate new knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of ageing in relation to the dynamics of ICT use and development.
- investigate the actual and potential barriers to sustained and effective use of ICTs by older people
- explore a range of potential social and technical solutions to these barriers

Although there are obviously challenges inherent in the ageing process such as the threat of decline in cognitive and motor functioning, and the resultant decline in autonomy and independence that these can bring in their wake, the NDA programme aims to mitigate these concerns through funding research into creative methods of technology usage that help maintain independent living (NDA 2011).

The project work was organised into a number of WorkPackages across various different universities and subject specialisms, as detailed in the Sus-IT (2008, pp.5-12) 'Case for Support' document, and given in the table below:

Table 3 Sus-IT WorkPackages (Sus-IT 2008)

WP1A	Facilitating the participation of older people within the project
WP1B	Supporting multidisciplinary research across various disciplines and universities
WP2	Psychological aspects of ageing and ICT use
WP3	Technology Sandpits for testing new technology concepts with older people
WP4	Semi automated technology adaptations addressing decline in skills
WP5	Learning and support needs of older people with respect to ICT
WP6	Project Management and Co-ordination (Steering Group)
WP 7	Dissemination and exploitation of research findings into policy and practice.

The complexity of the sociotechnical research questions involved in the project necessitated "expertise from a range of disciplines and perspectives" (Sus-IT 2008, p.2). Thus the research consortium was multidisciplinary in nature and comprised: (Sus-IT 2008, p.2):

> leading researchers and practitioners in the fields of participatory and user-centred design, psychology, gerontology, sociology, computer and information science, human computer interaction, and learning technologies.

It was anticipated that a wide-range of research methods would be used including "sociologically-informed methods and techniques for understanding older people's lives" which would incorporate, amongst others "ethnography, grounded theory and activity theory" (Sus-IT 2008, p.3).

1.6 Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis is organised as follows:

Chapter One – summarises the research project and the rationalisation behind it. It also introduces the contextualisation of the 'new dynamics of ageing', older people's usage of ICT, and the idea of Quality of Life (QoL) in later life. The chapter continues by providing the research context background of the NDA programme and the Sus-IT project. The chapter ends with a section detailing the organisation of the thesis.

Chapter Two – sets out the methodological background to the thesis, which is qualitative and inductive in nature, and operates at the intersection of Grounded Theory, Phenomenology and Discourse Analysis. The chapter also describes the practicalities of the research process in terms of how the Grounded Theory approach operated as a method of proceeding, and also in terms of other relevant factors pertaining to the actuality of fieldwork.

Chapter Three – is devoted to detailing the preliminary, or sensitising, literature review carried out in order to alert the researcher to the future possibilities of the data. In line with a Grounded Theory approach, not all the literature review undertaken for this study was carried out in advance of the study taking place.

Chapter Four – is thus devoted to the literature review which was carried out alongside the iterative data collection and analysis cycles that are appropriate to the Grounded Theory method.

Chapter Five – provides an overview of the Grounded Theory Categories obtained during the study in terms of a System Map (or Model) related to the factors which impact on (digital) identity, as gleaned from raising more minute data coding to higher, summarising levels. This System Map then provides the basis for the data chapters which follow. Each subsequent data chapter will proceed to flesh out an aspect of the System Map. Taken together these subsequent data chapters will provide the complete evidence base for the overall model.

Chapter Six – is the first of four data chapters and is devoted to an exposition of how an individual's selfhood in the offline world impacts, determines and assesses their own online identity, and in some cases that of others. The chapter is subdivided into two parts: a description of a Schema of Subject Positions available to older people created from an analysis of all the individual participants, and a section on Moral Panics which concerns the personal attitudes and judgements of older people concerning the (identity) implications of a digitally mediated environment and the possible effects on both the self and society.

Chapter Seven – concerns itself with a categorisation of the data in terms of the 'identity work' processes that are enabled by the use of technology, and how these occur in the lives of the participants involved in the study.

Chapter Eight – elaborates on the data provided by older people which relates to ICT identity stakeholders, i.e. those people, companies or organisations who are felt to have a vested interest in determining or impacting a person's digital identity for various forms of personal or organisational gain.

Chapter Nine – presents the phenomenological, or lived experience of technology, and its impact on the digital identity of older people. Here, the 'identity' of the actual technology, or at least the way it is perceived, is deemed to have certain impacts on the 'identity' of the user. This chapter is the last in the series of data chapters which explicates an element of the study's System Map.

Chapter Ten – is a series of 'Reflections' on the overall data set obtained from the study. It refers to literature review carried out after the full data analysis was completed. The literature review encompasses the field of ageing studies and its theoretical slants more generally, and it also refers to online reports in the field of later life and ICT usage. This approach to the available literature is consistent with the final stage of the Grounded Theory method. The limitations of the research and suggestions for future study are also incorporated here. The conclusions from the study about older people, ICT and identity are then presented in terms of the overall contribution to knowledge of the research.

Chapter Two: Methodologies and Methods

2.1 Introduction to the Present Study

Our position is not logical; it is phenomenological [Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.6]

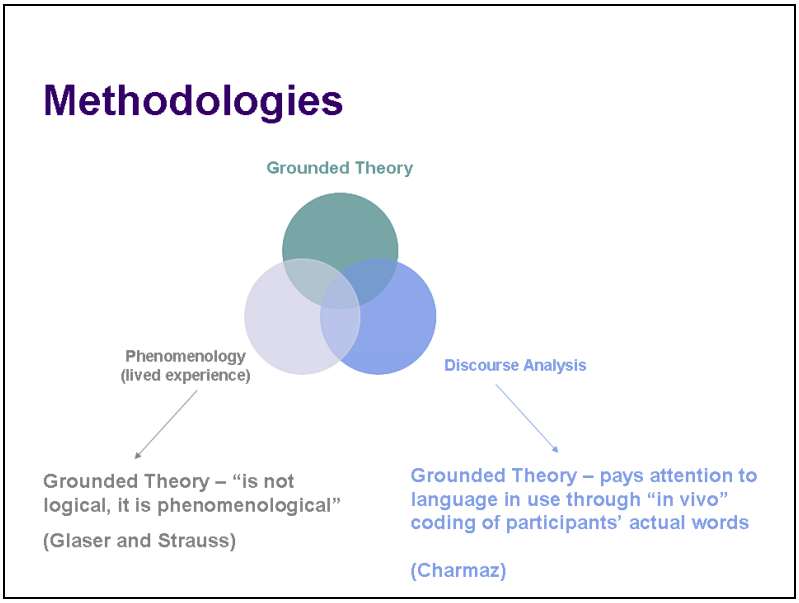


Figure 5 Methodologies used in the research

This chapter will discuss the methodologies to be followed in the present study, which are threefold (see the diagram above) and based on Grounded Theory which Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.6) posit as phenomenological (based on lived experience), and which Charmaz (2006, p55) acknowledges as paying attention to "language in use" through "in vivo" coding, leading to a discourse analysis type approach. The study is qualitative and inductive in nature, with a constructivist/ interpretivist epistemology.

QUALITATIVE INDUCTIVE APPROACH - (GROUNDED THEORY WITH PHENOMENOLOGY AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS)

This study is to be qualitative in terms of its data collection and analysis procedures, to allow for research open-endedness and the investigation of attitudes, opinions and behaviours with respect to older people's usage of ICT. This type of qualitative

investigation, based on the analysis of transcripts of interviews and one focus group, was deemed necessary to enable concepts and theories to emerge from the data collected in conjunction with research participants, in an area of study which is currently under-theorised. This abstraction to theory from the evaluation of individual examples means that it is therefore also an inductive study, as opposed to a deductive one. Research based on deductive principles instead could be said to be speculative and a priori in nature (Johnson 2004, p.165). According to Johnson (2004, p.165) an inductive approach to research is justifiable on the grounds that:

> Explanations of social phenomena which are inductively grounded in systematic empirical research are more likely to fit the data because theory building and data collection are closely interlinked […] and are therefore more plausible and accessible.

The analysis of the data will therefore be carried out using the technique known as "grounded theory", which enables theories to emerge inductively from qualitative data through a process of data coding and categorisation (Charmaz 2006).

Consistent with a qualitative study of 'phenomena' (such as older people's usage of ICT) is the approach known as phenomenology, which is applicable when "the rich detail of the essence of people's experiences of a phenomenon is to be explored, described, communicated and possibly interpreted" (Grbich 2007, p.84). This approach is to be used to determine how people who have not grown up with technology experience the social aspects of it when what they are accustomed to is 'real' rather than 'virtual' communication. It is an attempt to chart 'virtuality' from the perspective of someone for whom it has once been strange, rather than someone who is born to it and experiences it as the norm.

Capturing "strangeness" is an accepted challenge for the researcher in social sciences when studying social worlds within one's own culture, since in the early days of research the majority of work was once carried out in foreign countries or on ethnic minorities where the response was one of immediately recognisable 'alien outsider' 'culture shock' (Atkinson et al. 2003, p.25). In a sense, the older person who is relatively new to ICT has gone through such a 'culture shock' in their own lifetime. Even those who have never used ICTs can still appreciate that social life has changed in some manner, which makes them too the 'alien outsider'. Therefore the

challenge is to make evident this 'strangeness' which is yet a part of the culture to which the researcher belongs. But, at the same time, this is not to dismiss those older people who have readily taken to the new media and absorbed it into their lives, since here the concept is one of "going native" and accepting the once 'alien' way of being (Atkinson et al. 2003, p.31). The title of this study, drawn as it is from the opening lines of Star Trek:

> Space: The final frontier
> These are the voyages of the Starship, Enterprise
> Its five year mission
> To explore strange new worlds
> To seek out new life and new civilisations
> To boldly go where no man has gone before

neatly encapsulates the idea of journeying into social strangeness. But it would seem, in this case, that it is not 'Space' but 'Cyberspace' that is the final frontier for older people.

CONSTRUCTIVISM/INTERPRETIVISM

Qualitative research methods, grounded theory and phenomenology are all consistent with the epistemological approach of constructivism/interpretivism, which is to be adopted in this study (Grbich 2007, pp.8-9). As Grbich (2007, p.8) explains, such positions assume that "there is no objective knowledge independent of thinking". The concept of reality adopted by contructivism/interpretivism is one which is:

> socially and societally embedded and existing within the mind. This reality is fluid and changing and knowledge is constructed jointly in interaction by the researcher and the researched through concensus. Knowledge is subjective, constructed and based on the shared signs and symbols which are recognised by members of a culture. Multiple realities are presumed, with different people experiencing these differently. (Grbich 2007, p.8)

Research carried out according to this epistemological background explores "the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences in the worlds in which they live" (Grbich 2007, p.8). The interpretation of the research by the researcher is deemed to be "limited by the frames derived from their own life experiences", and so the subjectivity of the researcher (their own views) and their intersubjectivity (reconstruction of other's views) are of particular relevance here (Grbich 2007, p.8).

One of the key theorists in the interpretive, constructivist field was Geertz, the highly influential anthropologist and proponent of "thick description". He espouses a concept of culture which is "essentially a semiotic one" whereby "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun" (Geertz 1973, p.5). For Geertz (1973, p.5) culture is taken to be those webs, and therefore the analysis of it is "not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning". Analysis in this context is then concerned with "sorting out the structures of signification", a process which is "like that of the literary critic", and then "determining their social ground and import" (Geertz 1973, p.9). The aim of the analyst becomes, according to Geertz (1973, p14), the "enlargement of the universe of human discourse", and so culture becomes a semiotic context in which "social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes" can be "intelligibly – that is, **thickly**[6] – described". Analysts are interpreters of "the flow of social discourse" (Geertz 1973, p.20), who "rescue the "said" of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in perusable terms". The art of this approach is to "frame an analysis of meaning", which Geertz (1973, p.313) defines as "the conceptual structures individuals use to construe experience", so that it "will be at once circumstantial enough to carry conviction and abstract enough to forward theory".

Since the constructivist/interpretivist approach is concerned with subjectivity, and personal interpretation (Grbich 2007, p.8 – as above), I will say something here of my personal background. My own particular subjectivity is derived from my position as a late 'baby boomer' who did not grow up with ICTs, but came to experience computing through a degree in Physics. My first collision with ICTs was through writing unsuccessful computer programmes on the mainframe, which left me with the profound feeling that they were a technological nightmare and that in future I would have nothing to do with them. Oddly, I then embarked on a fifteen year career as a computer analyst, and ICTs moved from 'impenetrable maze' to the status of intuitively understood tools. Latterly, and with initial trepidation, I have journeyed into the unknown, and strange realms of internet dating and Facebook, and these have shaped my own phenomenological awareness of the 'virtual' social world of ICTs. I have felt their subtle, social, behaviour-changing effect on my personality and attitudes. My awareness is one of being reluctant to allow the creators of Facebook to dictate to me how I should interact with other people. I

[6] Emphasis added.

asked myself how I might be changed irrevocably by the seemingly mere act of 'poking' someone or sending them a Facebook 'gift'. Were these really what I desired as adjuncts to my social personality? But these strange ways are now familiar paths, although I can still sense the phenomenological 'strangeness' from the corners of my memory of the months spent wandering in these initially alien territories. I have, in some sense, gone "native", but only to a certain degree, as the researcher's challenge is to retain the 'outsider' mentality, and so I must remember to occasionally re-embark on the intellectual process of "defamiliarization" with the subject matter at hand (Atkinson et al. 2003, pp.26-27).

My subjectivity as a researcher is also informed by my PhD in English literary criticism, with its emphasis on qualitative, interpretive analysis and the idea that everything is a fictively constructed 'text' to be interpreted and ultimately deconstructed. This background has caused me to be an adherent of the critical approach known as 'The Death of the Author' a concept developed by Roland Barthes (1977) in an essay of the same name. The aim of analysis, in this case, is not to determine what the author intended by their text, this is the 'intentional fallacy' (Barthes 1977). The author is merely scriptor, and it is language itself which speaks (Barthes 1977). The reader becomes the key to the meaning of the work and the meaning is new with each re-reading (Barthes 1977). If I were to apply this to my qualitative analysis of spoken (and written) data, my views of it would thus be privileged. Also, the speaker could not know what they intended by their utterance since the speaker 'was spoken' by language, and what they said is just a "tissue of signs" drawn from "many cultures" (Barthes 1977). In other words, my background leads me to recognise that the speaker is drawing, perhaps unknowingly, on a pre-existing repertoire of language 'sound-bites', or discourses. For me, the speaker is a "mediator" of their culture or in Barthes' words a type of "shaman" (Barthes 1977). In a sense, it could be said that a speaker is a 'stranger' to the background of their own utterances. It is possible that in my analysis of the data I too will be unwittingly drawing on this post-structural method of viewing the world of communication. I will also be 'estranged' from my own linguistic sources.

In light of the above, it is evident that a qualitative and interpretive approach is highly implicated with the subjectivity of the researcher, who acts as a 'shamanic' mediator in the analytic process. But this also means that the researcher acts as a

mediator of culture with regards to the participants in the study. The participants in the study will therefore, of necessity in an interactive study, pick up on the cues that I provide (whether knowingly or unknowingly) through my description of the research project and the phrasing of my instructions and questions, so that I become another of Gidden's (1991, p.5) "abstract systems" through which multiple choices about technology and its impact are filtered. I am thus implicated in the 'reflexive' processes I am attempting to study.

My own personal identity is also 'reflexively' implicated in these processes since I cannot help but undergo a change in my personal thinking as a result of my interaction with others and the iterative nature of the grounded theory methodology. In effect, I will not be left 'unchanged' (Gay 2009, p.1) as a result of carrying out the research. As Gay (2009, p.3) points out "reflexivity is often used to refer to any situation in which things affect themselves". So my prior lived experience of ICT will be altered by my interactions with the thoughts and lived experiences of other people. Also, according to Gay (2009, p.3), following an argument provided by Geertz, "methodology itself is reflexivity" since "it involves discussing what you are doing", so my discussion of it here is having a circular impact on the research and upon myself.

Ultimately, a reflexive position suggests that the researcher is "implicated in [their] own text because [they have] a (usually unspoken) social background that affects what [they say]." In this section, I have thus tried to tease out my background so that the reader will have a clearer picture of my prior, and not altogether escapable, influences and the impact this will have on the participants and the analysis.

2.2 Phenomenology

THE CONCEPT OF STRANGENESS

The concept of 'strangeness' has been a key concern of several phenomenologists. Atkinson et al. (2003, p.31) point to the work of Alfred Schutz and its provision of "a philosophical account of the intellectual consequences of strangeness and estrangement". They suggest that his essay on 'the stranger' "continued the work of

authors like Simmel, translated into social phenomenology" (Atkinson et al. 2003, p.31). Atkinson et al. (2003, pp.31-2) point out that in the work of Schutz:

> [t]he social position of the stranger or newcomer is treated as a vantage point for the investigation of mundane reality. The stranger who encounters a new social situation for the first time […] will discover that his or her taken-for-granted assumptions concerning everyday life do not work in the new circumstances. This refers not only to the most florid of social differences, but also operates at the most basic level of practical knowledge and action.

But though the stranger is the "everyday social actor in a strange situation", it is the phenomenologist who must perform the work of phenomenological analysis (Atkinson et al. 2003, p.32). For research purposes then, older people are thus the 'strangers' under consideration, and the researcher is the phenomenologist who must make sense of their social cyberspace excursions.

A DIGRESSION BASED ON THE CONCEPT OF STRANGENESS

But although older people are the 'strangers', in that they are journeyers in a foreign land, should they be 'strangers' to the researcher? The issue here is one of catergorising the relationship between participant and researcher, and the word participant is used in the context of the overall Sus-IT project aims. Research 'at home' has reversed the original formulation of the anthropological enterprise such that where difference was once celebrated we now contest the notion of the 'other' and its valorisation of difference (Atkinson et al. 2003, p.35). Difference implies 'distance' and 'strangeness', but recent thought challenges the dualisms between "observer and observed" and between "familiar and strange" (Atkinson et al. 2003, p.42). Should 'neutral' distance between researcher and researched be maintained or should there be a move to closer, more intimate relations (Atkinson et al. 2003, p.46)? Atkinson et al. (2003, p.47) suggest that there are no easy answers to this question but instead they reason that:

> "Othering" – in the sense of treating cultures and social groups as inherently exotic and alien – is no longer acceptable, intellectually and morally. On the other hand, we still need to recognize that the purpose of ethnographic field research is to make sense of social settings we are not familiar with, and to make strange social contexts that we assume we understand by virtue of our taken-for-granted cultural competence.

There are debates in here around the nature of the 'researched', and the aims of Sus-IT are consistent with a move away from the term 'researched' or 'subject' to

the idea of 'participant'. But if the 'researched' is a 'participant', then by logical extension the 'researcher' must also be a 'participant' since they are now both participating in the same enterprise. But this leads to a second debate centred on researcher 'contamination'. Atkinson et al. (2003, p.109) suggest that this is a "paralyzing and unhelpful way of characterizing the research process (and can actually render all research inadequate)".

Atkinson et al. (2003, p.109) refer to the work of Myerhoff as a way of conceptualising the situation differently:

> She used the idea of a "third voice" which she explained as "neither the voice of the informant nor the voice of the interviewer, but the voice of their collaboration."[7]

Kaminsky (1992, p.129) notes that Myerhoff's "third voice" is "intended to give full weight (and honor) to the voice of the informant which is then "elevated and transfigured by being conceptualized (presented) as the voice of the story teller". As a writing project (in this case the writing of a thesis based on collaboration), it "points to a development that is moving away from monologism, toward dialogism," celebrating the "collaborative relationship between interviewer and informant" in a way which legitimises the resulting "double-voiced" discourse (Kaminsky 1992, p.129). The data for the study are therefore generated "through a lived process of face-to-face dialogue" (Kaminsky 1992, p.131). Such a process of engaging with participants in talking about ICT is also therefore implicated in the lived experience of the actual technology itself; both interviewer and participant are engaged in an experience connected to technology that leaves them both 'reflexively' changed with respect to that technology. As Kaminsky (1992, p.132) quotes from Myerhoff, "complex changes occur between subject and object" such that "neither party remains the same". It also means that the 'text' emanating from that exchange is a fusion, irrevocably changing what two individuals would have experienced/produced separately; so in some sense what is produced as a result of this is a 'reflexive' text, or perhaps a joint "reflexive consciousness" (Kaminsky 1992, p.132), as interviewer and participant act as mediators of culture for each other.

[7] Atkinson et al. (2003, p.109) state that this comes from Kaminsky's editorial introduction to Myerhoff's posthumous papers. They give the citation as Kaminsky, M. 1992. Introduction to B. Myerhoff, *Remembered Lives: The Work of Ritual, Storytelling and Growing Older,* 1-97. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

In light of such considerations, Atkinson et al. (2003, p109) stress that it is an impossibility to deny our "being there" in the research process. The position of researcher becomes challenged on the grounds of "neutrality" in Atkinson et al.'s work (2003, p.81):

> the research process itself is ideologically implicated. Research methods cannot, it is argued, be neutral. There are no politically or interpretatively neutral standpoints from which the social world can be scrutinized and analyzed.

In a sense, the idea of phenomenological 'strangeness' has allowed a digression into a consideration of the roles of researcher and researched, and how they are both implicated in the overall research process. The problem of neutrality will be discussed further in the section on methods below, and the discussion of the phenomenological approach is now resumed.

WHAT IS PHENOMENOLOGY?

In his work on phenomenologically based research, *Researching lived experience,* van Manen (1990, pp.8-11) gives a few key definitions:

- "Phenomenology is the study of the lifeworld" – the world as we immediately experience it.
- "Phenomenological research is the explication of phenomena as they present themselves to consciousness" – consciousness is the only access human beings have to the world.
- "Phenomenological research is the study of essences" – that which makes a some-"thing" what it *is.*
- "Phenomenological research is the study of lived or existential meanings" – an attempt to explicate the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence, our lifeworld.

Grbich (2007, p.84) also provides a succinct definition:

> Phenomenology is an approach which attempts to understand the hidden meanings and the essence of an experience together with how participants make sense of these. Essences are objects that do not necessarily exist in time and space like facts do, but can be known through essential or imaginative intuition involving interaction between researcher and respondents or between researcher and texts.

Grbich (2007, p.84) notes that Edmund Husserl introduced the method of classical phenomenology in his book *Ideas 1* calling it "the science of the essence of consciousness". However, the word essence is a troubled one in the 'academy' at

large, due to its underlying association with the word 'essentialism'. Essentialist positions include:

- Plato's Forms - perfect and unknowable, eternal essences which pre-exist the imperfect, concrete reality of a thing, for example the idea of a table. Real tables are therefore "imperfect copies of perfect originals" (Harpur 2002, p.229)
- Jungian archetypes - unknowable, abstract entities which exist in the collective unconscious and form the recurring motifs of every mythology (Harpur 2002, p.40)

By contrast, social constructionism is an anti-essentialist position which denies that things can pre-exist in a mythological fashion which precedes individual human consciousness. Existentialism is another philosophy which adopts an anti-essentialist position in that it posits the idea that existence precedes essence (Grbich 2007, p.90). Grbich (2007, p.90) notes that the existentialist Sartre questioned Husserl's notion of essences; for him essences become part of human experience and do not pre-exist it. Thus there developed the approach known as existential phenomenology which diverges from Husserl's original classic formulation. Van Manen (1990, p.39) also seeks to demythologise the concept of 'essence' when he writes:

> But the word "essence" should not be mystified. By essence we do not mean some kind of mysterious entity or discovery, nor some ultimate core or residue of meaning. Rather, the term "essence" may be understood as a linguistic construction, a description of a phenomenon. A good description that constitutes the essence of something is construed so that the structure of a lived experience is revealed to us in such a fashion that we are now able to grasp the nature and significance of this experience in a hitherto unseen way.

The question then is how can one proceed with investigating the lived experience of older people as they journey into the alien territory of social cyberspace? What are the steps the phenomenological analyst must take?

OBTAINING EXPERIENTIAL DESCRIPTIONS

Van Manen (1990, p.62) writes that "[t]he point of phenomenological research is to "borrow" other people's experiences and their reflections on their experiences" to better understand an "aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole of human experience". One method of obtaining the necessary data is, according to van Manen (1990, p.63), the "conversational interview", and depending on the stage of the research this may:

> serve either to mainly *gather* lived-experience material (stories, anecdotes, recollections of experiences, etc.) or serve as an occasion to *reflect* with the partner (interviewee) of the conversational relation on the topic at hand. In the latter case the conversational interview turns increasingly into a hermeneutic interview as the researcher can go back again and again to the interviewee in order to dialogue with the interviewee about the ongoing record of the interview transcripts. The hermeneutic interview tends to turn the interviewees into participants or collaborators of the research project.

In seeking to make some element of the research project participatory, in accordance with Sus-IT, the hermeneutic conversational interview appears to be an ideal tool. It is envisaged that people will be engaged in the project in this way at some point during the interview when they seem interested in carrying out the necessary hermeneutic reflection. That van Manen introduces the idea of the 'conversational' interview is germane to the preferred approach of this study. For some of the interviews, and also for some part of the other interviews, the pre-developed questions will be used, to give a semblance of interviewer 'neutrality' and 'non-contamination'. However, this style of interviewing is queried on the basis that it is not normal discourse and the whole practice feels somewhat 'fake'. Conversation is the everyday norm and everyday lived experience is what is sought in this project, therefore it seems appropriate to test out what a conversational interview means on a practical level. In conducting one preliminary interview, the session was allowed to diverge from the straightforward question and answer method used previously into a more conversational style. As part of this style of interviewing, my opinion was given when asked, as indeed it was, and would be in the course of normal conversation.

My sense of this as a personal lived experience was that it initially felt 'wrong' according to all pre-defined notions of 'neutral' interviewing, but that this was a feeling which passed due to the more interesting data which was produced as a result. Did my opinion 'contaminate' the data? Well, in some cases it produced no response whatsoever because the participant did not know what I meant. In other cases, the participant developed the idea or rejected it. If the participant had just repeated my formulation, then maybe this could be classed as 'contamination' but this would be easily spotted by any responsible and alert analyst on perusing the transcript of the interview. Or maybe instead, it could be classed as a development of Myerhoff's "third voice" phenomenon (noted above), produced as a hermeneutic concensus between researcher and participant and not as contamination at all.

In line with this approach, more intense data will therefore be collected from the appropriate interviewees, which may only be a small number. This is consistent with Starks and Brown Trinidad's (2007, p.1375) opinion of the necessary sample size for a phenomenological study:

> Although diverse samples might provide a broader range from which to distill the essence of the phenomenon, data from only a few individuals who have experienced the phenomenon – and who can provide a detailed account of their experience – might suffice to uncover its core elements. Typical sample sizes for phenomenological studies range from 1-10 persons.

Some people will also be asked to undertake "Protocol Writing", or lived experience descriptions, which also enable a phenomenological analysis to be undertaken by the researcher (van Manen 1990, p.63). Van Manen (1990, pp.64-65) gives some suggestions for the production of a lived-experience description:

- Describe the experience as you lived through it (avoiding causal explanations, generalisations, abstract interpretations)
- Describe the experience from the inside (feelings, mood, emotions)
- Focus on a particular example of the experience
- Focus on what made the experience so vivid
- Attend to how the body feels, how things smell, how they sound
- It is not about factual accuracy but about the plausibility of the account as a lived experience.

The creative writing element of this study denotes a turn in the social sciences towards what Chamberlayne et al. (2000, p.1) term 'biographical methods' of research, which are useful especially where concerns with "reflexivity, individualism and identity" are of key interest in the research itself. Social science had also been accused of "becoming detached from lived realities" (Chamberlayne et al. 2000, p.1); the 'biographical' approach helps to overcome the problem identified here through its ability to "take better account of the interweaving of human and socio-political development" thereby linking "macro and micro levels of analysis" (Chamberlayne et al. 2000, p.1). Since creative writing is deemed to be an enabler of research on both the reflexive project of the self and on personal lived realities in a social world, it

becomes a useful tool for the present study. Giddens' emphasis on reflexivity has in itself shaped biographical work, turning it into an important "diagnostic feature" of the modern world (Chamberlayne et al. 2000, p.6). Chamberlayne et al. (2000, p.9) also crucially note that narratologists who work in gerontology argue that such methods can "play an important role in personal adjustment in later life" and also contribute to "the maintenance of identity" of older people.

Observation is also an appropriate phenomenological method, especially if, as van Manen (1990, p.69) writes:

> The human science researcher tries to enter the lifeworld of the persons whose experiences are relevant study material for his or her research project. The best way to enter a person's lifeworld is to participate in it.

Hence, excursions to Age Concern at both Derby and Leicester have been undertaken, for the purpose of giving 'computer taster sessions' to older people, or assisting them to fill out the Sus-IT Project's Digital Engagement Questionnaire. In this way the researcher became embroiled in the world of older people's experiences of technology.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL THEMATIC ANALYSIS

As van Manen (1990, p.78) writes, "the notion of theme is used in various disciplines in the humanities". Indeed, in the section below on 'Grounded Theory' a form of highlighting and of isolating themes known as 'coding' constitutes part of the method of procedure. According to van Manen (1990, p.79), phenomenological themes may be understood as the "structures of experience". Three approaches to uncovering thematic aspects of a phenomenon are provided by van Manen (1990, pp.92-93):

- The wholistic [sic] or sententious approach – attends to the text as a whole and formulates a phrase that captures the significance of it.
- The selective or highlighting approach – the text is read several times to determine what phrase(s) in the text seem(s) particularly revealing about the phenomenon being described.
- The detailed or line-by-line approach – every sentence is examined to see what it reveals about the phenomenon being described.

As mentioned in the section above, analysis can also be done in a collaborative way, forming part of an iterative process of drawing out themes from textual material and discussing them with individual or groups to see if they resonate with the experience of other people.

Van Manen (1990, p.101) points to four fundamental lifeworld 'themes', termed "existentials", which may be of assistance for reflection and analysis:

- *lived space* (spatiality)
- *lived body* (corporeality)
- *lived time* (temporality)
- *lived human relation* (relationality or communality)

The '*lived human relation*' existential is of particular concern for the present study, and the experience of it by older people as mediated by information and communication technologies. However, their experience of cyberspace as a type of '*lived space'* is also highly germane to the analysis.

HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL WRITING

Writing is an ongoing necessity in phenomenological analysis, as also in the case of Grounded Theory where 'notes' are written throughout each stage as a form of analytical reflection (see below). But the aim of phenomenological research is also to create a phenomenological text (van Manen 1990, p.111). Van Manen (1990, p.131) explains the iterative process which leads to the finished work:

> To be able to do justice to the fullness and ambiguity of the experience of the lifeworld, writing may turn into a complex process of rewriting (re-thinking, re-flecting, re-cognizing). Sartre describes how writing and rewriting aims at creating depth: constructing successive or multiple layers of meaning, thus laying bare certain truths while retaining an essential sense of ambiguity. This depthful writing cannot be accomplished in one straightforward session.

The researcher wrote out their own experiences of the texts and transcripts under consideration, and then returned to these notes again for the purpose of re-writing them for the final thesis.

2.3 Grounded Theory

2.3.1 Introduction

'Grounded Theory' was formulated by Glaser and Strauss as an acceptable response to mid-century positivist research paradigms which stressed "objectivity, generality, replication of research, and falsification of competing hypotheses and theories (Charmaz 2006, p.4). In this paradigm only quantitative ways of knowing held validity, and research involving interpretation and meaning was deemed to be unscientific (Charmaz 2006, p.4). Research up to this point was deductive and tested logical hypotheses which resulted from existing theory (Charmaz 2006, p.4). However, this created a theory impasse, in that some existing theories were refined but it was difficult to develop new ones (Charmaz 2006, p.4). Glaser and Strauss sought a way out of this situation, by developing a form of qualitative analysis which was just as systematic as quantitative analysis but which had the power to generate new theory (Charmaz 2006, p.4). Their work in this regard led to what we now know as 'Grounded Theory' and their opening attempt to state their position is given in their work *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Their title refers to theory which lies waiting to be 'discovered' from the sociological data which is collected for research purposes; the theory is therefore grounded in a systematic study of data and not derived totally hypothetically. In the Preface to their work, Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.viii) note the following:

> What is required, we believe, is a different perspective on the canons derived from vigorous quantitative verification on such issues as sampling, coding, reliability, validity, indicators, frequency distributions, conceptual formulation, construction of hypotheses, and presentation of evidence. We need to develop canons more suited to the discovery of theory.

Thus whilst they see Grounded Theory as a rigorous approach it is not of the same paradigm as studies which require verification of results using statistical, i.e. random and unbiased data samples. It is a method which concerns discerning an 'effect' and not the actual magnitude of that effect within a population. Sampling is therefore theoretical and not random, that is, it is carried out deliberately to further the theory under construction. These issues will be discussed further in the section below on sampling. The emphasis on theoretical sampling does not mean that the study is any the less rigorous than quantitative analysis, it just operates in a different paradigm

with different rules. As Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.6) state, "our position is not logical; it is phenomenological".

Charmaz (2006, p22) also points out that a grounded theory study gives priority to the study of a "phenomenon", which is a word that co-incides with a phenomenological approach. Starks and Brown Trinidad (2007, pp.1376-7) suggest that whereas phenomenology produces "rich thematic descriptions that provide insight into the meaning of the lived experience", a grounded theory approach should provide a theory around "a core category that explains the central phenomenon present in the data". Thus the present study seeks to provide both a description of older people's lived experience of social interaction and/or identity related matters in the context of ICTs, and to theorise the actual processes involved.

The methods used to collect the necessary data set from participants involved a preliminary focus group with fixed questions, interviews using both fixed questions and open-ended, conversational techniques, some responses to e-mailed questions, and some examples of participant writing. Some participants provided data in more than one way. The point was to ensure that the overall data set was rich enough to analyse using both the phenomenological and grounded theory approaches.

Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.8) offer their *Discovery of Grounded Theory* as a starting point "to stimulate other theorists to codify and publish their own methods for generating theory". They wish "to stimulate rather than freeze thinking about the topic" and so they intersperse "suggestions" with "frank polemic" (Glaser & Strauss, p.9). This is important to bear in mind as they evidently expected their work to be developed further once it was put into practice by other researchers. Interestingly, Glaser and Strauss then subsequently developed the theory separately and along different lines. Unfortunately, Glaser (1992, p.2) thought that Strauss had diverged so far from the original tenets that he was prompted to write that "You wrote a whole different method, so why call it "grounded theory?"" Glaser (1992, p.3) did not attempt to write a full critique of Strauss's work deeming this to be "too cumbersome because due to the underlying logic of the misconceptions in Basics of Qualitative Research there would be corrections on every page". Glaser (1992, p.3) also thought that a "simple critique would be too destructive and non-productive to Strauss and researchers alike". Such a major critique of the differences between Glaser and

Strauss's original work and Strauss's independent re-formulation will likewise not be attempted here, and will merely serve to distract attention from the method that will actually be followed. The method to be employed will, as suggested, take Glaser and Strauss as its initial starting point, but then use the formalisation of it as generated by Charmaz (2006). As previously mentioned, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.8), it is not inconsistent with their approach to use a subsequent researcher's formalisation.

Charmaz's work[8] has been chosen for her clear and executable guidelines combined with her emphasis on two key (and related) concerns:

- her 'phenomenological' approach to grounded theory - which fosters "seeing images through participants' eyes, finding hidden poetry in their voices, and sensing the texture of their lives" in order to enhance presentation of their stories. The phenomenological nature of the grounded theory method is mentioned briefly in Glaser and Strauss (1967) but not followed up as an explicitly codified approach nor implicitly in their writing style. Having said this, it should be borne in mind that this study will use van Manen's formalisation of the phenomenological method as this has more explicit procedures for carrying out the research whereas Charmaz's phenomenology focuses on the way the research is presented stylistically after analysis.
- her interest in developing the idea of the 'third voice'.

An extended quote from Charmaz (2002, pp.320-321) will demonstrate the combination of these two approaches in her work which means:

> adapting traditional ways of analyzing qualitative data and adopting new modes of writing about it. With them, we can aid storytellers to break the silences that surround their situations while we present patterns of thought, feeling, and action that had previously remained implicit. My perspective resonates with Meyerhoff, Metzger, Ruby, and Tufte's (1992) notion of a "third voice", one that condenses verbatim texts, invisibly embeds empirical knowledge in participants' tales, demonstrates their dialogic and cultural contexts, and provides a seamless bond between experience and ethnographic analysis.[9]

[8] Her book and various published papers.
[9] This is not to imply that the present study has an ethnographic slant though.

2.3.1.1 Glaser and Strauss – The Discovery of Grounded Theory

What constitutes theory?

It is important to note at the outset that grounded theory is not a sociological method which generates verified 'results' by statistical means; it is a method which generates theory to be statistically verified or contradicted by other researchers in future studies (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.48). It therefore has no truth claims; but what it does claim to do is accurately reflect at a higher degree of abstraction what was found in the qualitative data under study (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.23). Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.31) suggest that grounded theory can be presented preferably as a "running theoretical discussion, using conceptual categories and their properties". Their procedural method of "comparative analysis" puts a high emphasis on "theory as process" meaning that theory is "an ever-developing entity" and not a "perfected product" (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.32). This would mean that further work could modify it, but that the presented form is the one that stands at that moment in time (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.32). Grounded theory is also a method which leads to a theory about social processes; in this way it maps process not stasis (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p.114).

The two different types of theory highlighted by Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.32), that can be developed using their methods, are "substantive and formal". By substantive theory they mean "that developed for a substantive, or empirical, area of sociological inquiry" (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.32). By formal theory they mean "that developed for a formal or conceptual, area of sociological inquiry. These are middle-range theories in that they "fall between the "minor working hypotheses" of everyday life and the "all-inclusive" grand theories" (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.33). The present study is concerned with generating a substantive theory concerning older people and the social aspects of information and communication technologies. It would not be possible to generate a "formal theory" from this study as that would entail incorporating comparative analysis "among different kinds of substantive cases which fall within the formal area" (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.33) and this would go beyond the scope of the project. However, it may be possible to speculate on the type of 'formal theory' which could be generated from a larger study of which the present substantive study could form just one part. For example, the present study involves looking at one particular age group, whereas future studies could combine

ICT users up to the age of 50. Conjecture as to the shape of an overall theory about the use of ICT for social purposes could be achieved by looking at other research output in the same field but for younger people. Thus the theory generated by the present study could be compared with other academic study results even if it cannot be compared experimentally at this stage.

The key elements of theory produced by grounded theory methods comprise "first, conceptual categories and their conceptual properties; and second, hypotheses or generalized relations among the categories and their properties" (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.35). Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.36) continue to elaborate on the elements of theory in the following way:

> Making a distinction between category and property indicates a systematic relationship between these two elements of theory. A category stands by itself as a conceptual element of the theory. A property, in turn, is a conceptual aspect or element of a category.

As the researcher works with different groups of participants constant comparisons will be made between them and this "not only generates categories, but also rather speedily generates generalized relations among them" (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.39). These generalized relations are what Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.39) refer to as hypotheses. To illustrate how these elements work in both substantive and formal theory, Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.42) have produced the following table based on their research in hospitals:

Table 4 Substantive versus formal theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967)

Elements of Theory	**Type of Theory**	
	Substantive	**Formal**
Category	Social loss of dying patients	Social value of people
Properties of Category	*Calculating* social loss on basis of *learned* and *apparent* characteristics of patient	Calculating social value of person on basis of *learned* and *apparent* characteristics
Hypotheses	The higher the social loss of a dying patient, (1) The better his care, (2) The more nurses develop loss rationales to explain away his death	The higher the social value of a person the less delay he experiences in receiving services from experts

Glaser and Strauss (1967, pp.79-99) devote a whole chapter to discussing the generation of formal theory. This will not be discussed here as formal theory involving all age groups, not just older people, is beyond the scope of the project.

Theoretical Sensitivity

There is a debate in grounded theory about how much an analyst should know about the area before the start of the project. This has coalesced into various statements about whether to do a literature review before the data collection and analysis phases of the research commence, as would be normal in most projects. The key point though that should form the basis for thinking about this debate is that the theory generated should be "emergent" from the experimental data because "theoretical sensitivity is lost when the sociologist commits himself exclusively to one specific preconceived theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.46). However, Glaser and Strauss's (1967, p.253) position actually seems to be more subtle than the debate surrounding it would seem to suggest, as they write:

> no sociologist can possibly erase from his mind all the theory he knows before he begins his research. Indeed the trick is to line up what one takes as theoretically possible or probable with what one is finding in the field. Such existing sources of insights are to be cultivated, though not at the expense of insights generated by the qualitative research, which are still closer to the data. A combination of both is definitely desirable.

What is required is to approach the data with as open a mind as possible, in spite of what one previously knows. To be totally "doctrinaire" (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p.46) about what one expects to find, or to "carefully cover "all" the literature before commencing research, increases the probability of brutally destroying one's potentialities as a theorist" (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.253). It therefore does not appear to be a hard and fast rule about doing a literature review, or at least some appropriately sensitising background research; what is of importance is the motive for carrying it out and the ends to which it is put. In the case of the present study a preliminary, sensitising, literature review was carried out for the purpose of increasing alertness to the types of question that had been used in interviews and focus groups during previous research in order to obtain data about the social aspects of ICT use by older people. Interestingly, few theories had been advanced in the field to prejudice the analysis. This paucity of existing theory also confirmed the view that a grounded theory approach to the research was appropriate in order to generate new theory about the area in question.

Sampling

In the grounded theory paradigm, data is collected according to the following principles, which Glaser and Strauss (1967, p45) define as follows:

> Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges. This process of data collection is *controlled* by the emerging theory, whether substantive or formal. The initial decisions for theoretical collection of data are based only on a general sociological perspective and on a general subject or problem area. […] The initial decisions are not based on a preconceived theoretical framework.

As a grounded theory study requires the analyst to be alert to theory as it emerges from data, the initial starting point is not to be clearly defined; it is enough to start with a very general subject area and a fairly loose, open-ended aim (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.45). The analysis of data occurs on a rolling basis as it is collected, and the developing theory points the way forward as to which groups should be sampled next (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.47). Of primary concern when selecting participants for studies is therefore their "theoretical relevance" (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.49). They are to be selected on the basis of their ability to help generate "as many properties of the categories as possible" (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.49). Theoretical sampling continues until "theoretical saturation" is reached, i.e. further data collection does not yield new data about the categories under construction (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.61). As a result of following these research methods, it cannot be stated at the outset of the research how many groups will be sampled or what these groups will ultimately be (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.61).

Glaser and Strauss (1967, pp.62-64) take pains to discuss the differences between theoretical sampling and statistical sampling as they are aware that positivists will criticise the method on the basis that theoretical sampling would introduce bias.[10] However, their position is that concepts of bias are not germane to the method of grounded theory. The following table is a summary of the discussion provided in support of their position (Glaser & Strauss 1967, pp.62-64):

[10] However, Glaser and Strauss (1967, pp.185-220) do devote a whole chapter to the 'Theoretical Elaboration of Quantitative Data'. They do not dismiss quantitative data, but accept that it can have a useful place in the creation of theory. This chapter will not be discussed as quantitative data is not going to be used in the present study.

Table 5 Theoretical sampling versus random sampling (Glaser & Strauss 1967)

	Theoretical Sampling	**Random Sampling**
Purpose?	To create theory which consists of categories, properties and interrelationships (p.62)	To obtain accurate evidence on distributions of people among categories (p.62)
What is an adequate sample?	Judged on how well the categories are saturated (p.63)	Judged on techniques of random and stratified sampling used in relation to the social structure of the group(s) sampled (p.63)
Relationships amongst categories?	Hypotheses are generated which are pertinent to the direction of the relationship. It is not about testing the magnitude of the relationships found (p.63)	Relationships are tested for direction and magnitude (p.63)
Bias?	Once discovered the relationship is assumed to persist in direction no matter how biased the previous sample of data was, or the next sample is. The theory is only subject to being disproven (in subsequent research) not proven by the researcher (p.63)	A statistical method for eliminating bias in results which are concerned with demonstrating the magnitude of relationships in a population (p.63) It is not necessary to use random sampling for theoretical sampling purposes (p.64)
When to stop?	Theoretical sampling can be stopped when the categories of the theory are saturated (p.64)	Must be continued no matter how much saturation is perceived, due to the rules of accurate evidence and completing the original research design (p.65)

In light of the above, selecting one particular age group for which to study the social uses of ICT could potentially have odd implications for a grounded theory approach. The choice of age group was not one made by the researcher, but enforced by the demands of the Sus-IT project with which the research is linked. Although grounded theory development is not dependent on unbiased samples, the present study has nonetheless removed from view a portion of the overall population which could use ICT for social purposes. This begs the question of how and when could bias come into operation as a factor? The question is best answered by saying that the theory under generation is a substantive theory about older people and ICT and that younger people would be classified as a different substantive study. Taken together these could then be raised to an overall formal theory of ICT used for social purposes.

The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis

The actual method for generating grounded theory – the constant comparative method - as proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967, pp.101-115) merits very few pages in the overall work and consists of the following four stages:

- comparing incidents applicable to each category
- integrating categories and their properties
- delimiting the theory
- writing the theory

1. Comparing incidents applicable to each category

Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.105) propose that the researcher codes the incidents found in the data into categories.[11] They suggest that this can be done in the margins of the research, or by more elaborate methods as necessary (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p106). Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.106) suggest using cards for the latter, but there are now also software packages available for this purpose such as Atlas TI.[12] Their basic defining rule for the constant comparative method is given as:

> *while coding an incident for a category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category* (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.106)

Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.106) suggest that this comparison can be done from memory. The result of many comparisons amongst incidents is that theoretical properties of categories soon begin to emerge (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.106). Such properties can be thought about in the following manner:

> the full range of types or continua of the category, its dimensions, the conditions under which it is pronounced or minimized, its major consequences, its relation to other categories, and its other properties (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.106)

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.107) categories and their properties can be of two different types: those constructed by the researcher "and those that have been abstracted from the language of the research situation" (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.107).[13] For the purposes of this study, the latter pays attention to language in use.

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[11] It is virtually impossible to code into categories on the first pass through the data. especially if the theory is to be truly emergent rather than pre-conceived (how can the researcher code into categories on the first pass if they don't know what those categories are going to be). Hence this is why Charmaz (2006) has formalised procedures which start at a more fundamental level of coding than coding into categories – as discussed later. This is also one of the reasons why a practitioner's use of grounded theory is preferred over the original, but the authors have intended for this to happen as mentioned previously. I have chosen Charmaz even though I recognise that Glaser and Strauss have both written works to operationalise the method subsequent to the original publication.

[12] Atlas TI will be referred to again in the section on Methods.

[13] The latter have come to be known as In vivo codes.

Coding and comparison with other data will continually lead the researcher to develop questions and insights (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p.107). At these points Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.107) rule that the researcher should stop coding and record a memo of the developing ideas. The individual memos generated from many sessions of these recorded thoughts will later be re-arranged for writing up the final theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p.108).

2. Integrating categories and their properties

As analysis proceeds, the emphasis shifts from comparing incident with incident to comparing incidents with the properties of the categories that have been generated (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p.108). More analysis leads to comparing categories with categories which then forces the researcher "to make some related theoretical sense of each comparison", hence integrating the categories into an encompassing theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p.109). Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.109) summarise the integration process in the following way:

> If the data are collected by theoretical sampling at the same time that they are analyzed (as we suggest should be done), then integration of the theory is more likely to emerge by itself. By joint collection and analysis, the sociologist is tapping to the fullest extent the in vivo patterns of integration in the data itself; questions guide the collection of data to fill in gaps and to extend the theory – and this also is an integrative strategy.

3. Delimiting the theory

Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.110) state that delimiting occurs at the level of theory and also at the level of categories. Theory begins to solidify as "major modifications become fewer and fewer" throughout the analysis process (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p.110). Some categories can also be removed as they are subsumed within higher levels of analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p.111). Delimiting is also achieved by "theoretical saturation" since new incidents which only lend bulk to the existing theory but not fresh insights need not be coded and included as evidence.

4. Writing the theory

When the analyst possesses "coded data, a series of memos, and a theory" these can then be used to create the final product for presentation (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p.113).

Writing the Theory

In the above section, 'Writing the theory' is alluded to as part of the grounded theory process, here it is to be mentioned as a practice. What Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.228) try to address here is the problem of:

> how to describe the data of the social world studied so vividly that the reader, like the researchers, can almost literally see and hear its people – but always in relation to the theory.

The impression given here is that of the beginnings of a phenomenological approach to what is basically an experience that was "lived" (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.67). It is couched in the type of language that pays attention to how the phenomenon in question was perceived in a sensory way by the research participant. In a footnote, Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 229) suggest that:

> The researcher's task of conveying credibility is actually much like that of the realistic novelist, though the latter's analytic framework – his interpretation – is generally much more implicit. Often the novelist's tactics for getting the reader to imagine social reality are more subtle, both because he may be a more skilled writer and because he may feel that he can use more license in his presentation.

There is thus deemed to be a writerly approach to portraying 'lived experience' which can make a very great difference to the quality and feel of the presentation of the data. Charmaz's approach to portraying the 'lived experiences' of her own participants shows this phenomenological, almost novelist-like, stylistic method to an extremely high degree. Due to the researcher's background in studying literature this 'literary' approach obviously has particular appeal; this literary approach to analysis has also been referred to by Geertz (see above).

Sources for Qualitative Data

Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.163) suggest that the "voices"[14] to be heard in the library, that are contained within various documents, are equivalent to "the anthropologist's informant or the sociologist's interviewee", and can thus be used as sources for analytic use. Glaser and Strauss's formulation of 'voices' here resonates with Myerhoff's idea of the 'third voice' (see above) which produces a 'reflexive' analytic text as the researcher engages with further materials related to the subject

[14] In a footnote, Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.183) suggest that government archives and company files can also be useful for generating social theory. Perhaps, internet sources can also be added to this list by extrapolation.

matter at hand. The researcher is inevitably changed by further reading in such materials which impacts on their subjectivity as well as their analytic approach. This, in turn, can affect the 'voices' in the library as their theories become refined by the impact of subsequent 'voices' in a dialogically impactful manner.

2.3.1.2 Charmaz's Codification of Grounded Theory

Introduction

As has been noted above, it is virtually impossible to code into categories on the first pass through the data especially if the theory is to be truly emergent rather than pre-conceived. How can the researcher code into categories on the first pass if they do not know what those categories are going to be? Categories and the ensuing theory should be the outcome rather than the starting point of a grounded theory analysis. Hence this is why Charmaz (2006) has formalised procedures which start at a more fundamental level of coding than coding into categories (discussed later) though this does not nullify the rest of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) analytical approach. This clarification of starting point for the analysis of data is also one of the reasons why a practitioner's use of grounded theory is preferred over the original in this research, but the authors have intended for this to happen as mentioned previously. Charmaz has been chosen even though it is recognised that Glaser and Strauss have both written works to operationalise the method subsequent to the original publication. One of the main reasons for this is that the original formulations are now quite old in research terms, and stem from the desire to give qualitative data analysis a positivist position from which to commence. The back cover of Charmaz's (2006) re-operationalising of Grounded Theory notes that:

> Grounded Theory must move on from its positivist origins and incorporate many of the methods and questions posed by constructivists over the past twenty years to become a more nuanced and reflexive practice.

Charmaz brings Glaser and Strauss up to date for more contemporary concerns, and presents something that can be more easily put into practice, without completely breaking with the original formulation.

Charmaz (2006, p.9) views Grounded Theory as "a set of principles and practices, not as prescriptions or packages". They are guidelines intended to be used flexibly

rather than rules and requirements (Charmaz 2006, p.9). This is taken to mean that the various elements can be used malleably to facilitate the analysis in a way which suits the individual researcher on their journey to produce a theoretical formulation of the situation under investigation. Charmaz (2006, p.9) also points out that the methods can "complement other approaches to qualitative data analysis, rather than stand in opposition to them". In this way, there is scope to develop the analysis along discursive and phenomenological pathways simultaneously.

Charmaz (2006, p.10) makes the further point that Grounded Theory is a process and all processes "contain surprises because the present arises from the past but is never quite the same". In practice this means that Grounded Theory as a process contains "some degree of indeterminacy" (Charmaz 2006, p.10), not least because it is a process of open-ended research which is not necessarily expected to start with fixed aims.

One way in which Charmaz (2006, p.10) diverges openly from Glaser and Strauss's original proposition stems from their starting assumptions about "discovering theory as emerging from data separate from the scientific observer". Glaser and Strauss's position thus assumes that there is an *objective* truth just waiting out there to be uncovered scientifically by observation. Charmaz (2006, p.10) however, states that:

> Unlike their position, I assume that neither data nor theories are discovered. Rather we are part of the world we study and the data we collect. We *construct* [sic] our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives and research practices.

Charmaz's (2006, p.10) approach to Grounded Theory therefore operates under the assumption that "any theoretical rendering offers an *interpretive* [sic] portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it". For Charmaz (2006, p.10) this approach is therefore *subjective* and means that:

> Research participants' implicit meanings, experiential views – and researchers' finished grounded theories – are constructions of reality.

Charmaz is therefore operating in a constructionist/interpretivist paradigm, rather than the positivist paradigm of Glaser and Strauss. The researcher is an implicit part of the process and their background affects the interpretation of the qualitative data. The present study operates in the same constructivist paradigm as that of Charmaz

(2006), hence a further reason for being sensitised to the research data by her re-vamping of the earlier Grounded Theory work.

Gathering Rich Data

Charmaz (2006, p13) openly acknowledges that no researcher is a completely blank slate, and that they therefore inevitably start their research with some tools and a few provisional concepts gleaned from their individual disciplinary perspectives. Hence, for Charmaz (2006, p.16) it is not out of the question to start the research process with what is known as "sensitizing concepts" which "sensitize you to ask particular kinds of questions about your topic" and alert you to "certain possibilities and processes in [the] data". These sensitising concepts, however, should be seen as "points of departure for developing, rather than limiting, our ideas". They should not stifle the data collection and analysis, but instead enable it (Charmaz 2006, p.17). In this way, space is left for unanticipated themes to develop during the analysis of the data (Charmaz 2006, p.17).

Charmaz (2006, p29) recommends creating an initial set of open ended questions, however, she acknowledges that as a result of what occurs in the interview setting it is unlikely that all questions will be asked as the tangents suggested by the participant may need to be explored in more depth. In Charmaz's (2006, p.29) opinion, the actual list of questions should not be taken into the interview and the interview itself should remain informal and conversational. For the comfort of the participant, the interview should not become an interrogation (Charmaz 2006, p.30). In this way, rapport can be established and maintained with the study participant to elicit the rich data required for the study, and to allow for further interviews to take place in order to clarify data subsequently (Charmaz 2006, p.19).

Charmaz (2006, p.28) explains that Grounded Theory interviewing methods "are open-ended yet directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet unrestricted". Hence they have a considerable flexibility and allow "researchers more analytic control of their material" (Charmaz, p.28). Subsequent interviews in the field can proceed with a narrower range of topics in order to gather "specific data for developing our theoretical frameworks" (Charmaz, p.29). These ongoing interviews are shaped according to the needs of the developing theory, and are used to fill in the gaps and

resolve the ambiguities. They are therefore more targeted than the early interviews, where a theoretical direction has yet to emerge.

Charmaz (2006, p.28) states that whilst many studies proceed on the basis of interviews alone, this can be complemented by other data collection methods such as observations or written accounts. In the case of the present study, a focus group was undertaken to gain an initially very broad feel for what was happening in the field, and then some pieces of creative writing were elicited from various participants on much more specific themes. In line with Charmaz (2006) it was felt that these methods would provide different opportunities for self-expression thereby enhancing the data set gained from the interviews.

Charmaz's (2006) Approach to Coding in Grounded Theory Practice

Coding in qualitative data analysis is how "concrete statements" gained in the field are progressively moved towards more abstract interpretations, so that an analytic account can be made of them (Charmaz 2006, p.43). In the analytic phase of a grounded theory approach, the data is studied closely, assessing the importance of "words, lines, segments and incidents" (Charmaz 2006, p.42), and it is then coded, which means précising "segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data" (Charmaz 2006, p.43). Charmaz (2006, p.45) explains that codes "stick closely to the data" and "show actions", usually in the form of phrases containing gerunds (the verb form ending in 'ing') as in Charmaz's code "expecting to manage pain". It should be noted that "the logic of Grounded Theory coding differs from quantitative logic that applies *preconceived* [sic] categories or codes to the data" (Charmaz 2006, p.46). This is consistent with an inductive rather than deductive type of study. It should be remembered here that we are using language to describe language. Hence as Charmaz (2006, p.46) points out "language plays a crucial role in how and what we code". As researchers we can "only know the empirical world through language" (Charmaz 2006, p.46) and the language we use "reflects views and values" (Charmaz 2006, p.47). This means that even our codes are "constructed" entities, and in spite of best attempts to provide a "perfect fit" it is still a researcher's view (Charmaz, 2006, p.47).

Charmaz (2006) breaks down the types of coding carried out in a Grounded Theory study into initial coding, focused coding, axial coding and theoretical coding. These are described in the paragraphs which follow.

Initial Coding

Charmaz's (2006, p.49) summarised instructions for carrying out 'initial coding' can be given as follows:

- Remain open
- Stay close to the data
- Keep your codes simple and precise
- Construct short codes
- Preserve actions
- Compare data with data
- Move quickly through the data

Charmaz (2006, p.50) recommends that the initial coding is carried out on a line-by-line basis.[15] As this is a study of language in use, note should also be made of some of the specific terms used by the participants, known usually as "in vivo codes" (Charmaz 2006, p55). As Charmaz (2006, p.55) highlights, such terms often act to "condense meanings" that participants assume everyone shares. These terms generally need unpacking rather than reproducing (Charmaz 2006, p.55).

Focused Coding

Focused coding means determining which "initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize your data incisively and completely" (Charmaz 2006, p.57). Such codes are enlisted to "sift through large amounts of data" once some "strong analytic directions have been determined" (Charmaz 2006, p.57).[16]

Axial Coding

The data fractured by the previous codings must then be reassembled to relate categories to subcategories and to specify the dimensions of a category; a process known as axial coding (Charmaz 2006, p.60). As Charmaz (2006, p.60) relates, axial coding "follows the development of a major category". It allows the data to be linked

[15] For the purposes of this study the initial coding was carried out on a sentence by sentence basis. This approximates the line-by-line approach.

[16] In practice this meant that certain themes were noted in the data which related to notions of ethics/value, types of ICT usage – pragmatic to playful, and relations of online to offline self. The transcripts of all participants were then analysed again on that basis to produce an identity schema.

back together (Charmaz 2006, p.61). Charmaz (2006, p.61) suggests that the following organising schema from Strauss and Corbin may be beneficial to the thought process involved in axial coding:

- Conditions – the circumstances or situations that form the structure of the studied phenomena
- Actions/Interactions – participants's routine responses to issues, events or problems
- Consequences – outcomes of actions/interactions

This is a very structured format and Charmaz (2006, p.61) suggests that those researchers who prefer flexibility need not perform axial coding in this manner. However, developing subcategories of categories and demonstrating the links are valuable exercises in making sense of the data (Charmaz 2006, p.61)

Theoretical Coding

Theoretical coding is the final step to producing a theory from data, and involves adding precision to the coding to raise the analytic codes to theoretical status (Charmaz 2006, p.63).

Memo Writing

An important part of the process of analysing the codes is memo-writing (Charmaz 2006, p.72), which entails continual writing about the codes in an informal and analytic manner. Memos should be personal and non-academic to allow the free-flow of ideas, and hence they need only be "partial, preliminary, and provisional" (Charmaz 2006, p.85). Memos are an important aid in the process of moving from having many codes to fewer more focused categories, and finally to the construction of the theory which encompasses the key processes in the whole of the data (Charmaz, 2006, p72).

Theoretical Sampling, Saturation and Sorting

The questions about, and the data gaps that arise in, the categories created through the processes of data coding and analysis are resolved by going back into the field and collecting the data necessary to reach theoretical 'saturation' of the categories that have emerged (Charmaz 2006, p.96). This is known as theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006, p.96) and is hence not a statistically random approach to obtaining a population with which to work (Charmaz 2006, p.101). Memos are written about the subsequent data gleaned from theoretical sampling and these are sorted and

integrated into the developing categories (Charmaz 2006, p.96). Saturation of the categories is reached when no new fresh insights about them emerge from the data collected in the field (Charmaz 2006, p.96).

Theory Generation

The overall aim in the present study will be to produce what Charmaz (2006, p.130) terms a 'constructivist theory', which "places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants". As Charmaz (2006, p.130) clarifies, a constructivist grounded theory "lies squarely in the interpretive tradition". Theory in this sense can only be an "interpretation" and is thus dependent on the researcher's view (Charmaz 2006, p.130). The researcher therefore needs to operate in a reflexive way about their own interpretations (Charmaz 2006, p.131). This can also apply to creating a phenomenological text where the process of reflexivity is known technically as "bracketing" (Grbich 2007, p.86).[17] The theory to be arrived at is difficult to pre-describe, however frequently it will attain a generic status, extending beyond the individual study to become portable across other fields (Charmaz 2006, p.146).

2.4 Research Process

Grounded Theory can provide the method for proceeding with the research process as well as the underlying methodology. Idrees, Vasconcelos and Cox (2011) have operationalised Grounded Theory so that it can be used as a model for PhD research design within the field of Information Studies. Their paper acknowledges the challenges of pursuing Grounded Theory in a "typically time-limited PhD research project", and as a result aims to demonstrate an application of it "without the need to change any of its key features or principles (Idrees, Vasconcelos and Cox 2011, p.188). They propose a four stage research model which contains the following key steps and their associated outcomes (Idrees, Vasconcelos and Cox 2011, p.188):

[17] 'Bracketing' as an actual technical exercise has not been carried out in this study. However, the subjectivity and reflexivity of the researcher, and associated implications, are discussed in Section 2.1 of the present chapter.

1. **uncertainty stage** – where the primary focus is formed
2. **emergence stage** – where the core categories which are the foundations of the theory emerge
3. **ambiguity resolution stage** – where the grey areas in the emerging theory are clarified
4. **maturity stage** – when relationships between categories are defined and the theory is refined and contextualised by reference to existing literature

Idrees, Vasconcelos and Cox (2011, p.192) represent their four stage process diagrammatically in the following way:

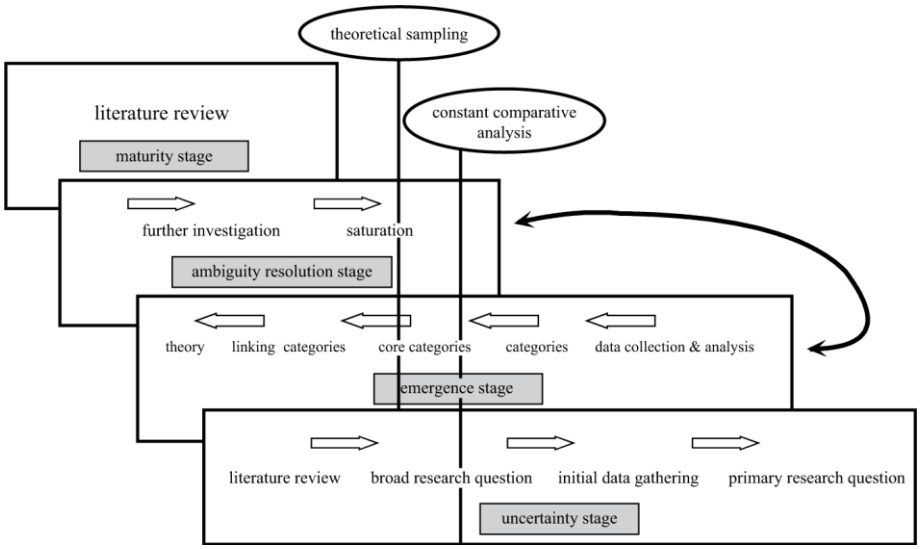

Figure 6 Four Stage Grounded Theory Process (Idrees, Vasconcelos and Cox 2011)

This diagram reflects the various activities involved at each stage of the model and their associated outcomes. The diagram also highlights the Grounded Theory method of constant comparative analysis, which must take place throughout the various data analysis phases. Data collection after the initial phase proceeds according to theoretical sampling in order to explore the gaps encountered from an analysis of the data. The following sections explain Idrees, Vasconcelos and Cox (2011) four stage research model in more depth, and also demonstrate the flow of the present study by reference to this model.

2.4.1 One : 'The Uncertainty Stage' – Emergence of the Primary Focus

2.4.1.1 The Model

The aim of the first stage of the research process is to develop a "primary research question through a systematic process of empirical inquiry" (Idrees, Vasconcelos and Cox 2011, p.192). The name of the stage highlights the idea that in Grounded Theory "the research does not need to have an initial tight focus" (Idrees, Vasconcelos and Cox 2011, p.193). The inductive nature of the approach therefore means that no a priori assumptions guide the research process, so it starts with uncertainty as to what the focus will eventually become (Idrees, Vasconcelos and Cox 2011, p.193). The research therefore starts with "a very open and broad research question", which in Idrees, Vasconcelos and Cox's (2011, p.188) paper is formulated in the following way:

> "What are the barriers to knowledge sharing in hotels in the religious tourism and hospitality industry in Saudi Arabia?"

The model as followed here advocates the use of a preliminary literature review as "a vehicle for sensitization" which is an "entirely different approach from using it as a means to define an *a priori* coding system or root categories" (Idrees, Vasconcelos and Cox 2011, p.193). The initial literature review serves to "provide a context and an overall picture of the research problem" (Idrees, Vasconcelos and Cox 2011, p.193).

Idrees, Vasconcelos and Cox's (2011, p.194) model advocates carrying out a pilot study to assist in formulating the focus for ongoing research. Their approach to sampling at this stage is defined as "purposeful" in that they targeted "the sample which is expected to provide relevant information on the issues under investigation" (Idrees, Vasconcelos and Cox 2011, p.194). In their example they therefore approached "10 middle managers working in differently rated hotels in the religious tourism destination" (Idrees, Vasconcelos and Cox 2011, p.194). In depth interviews were conducted and the subsequent data analysis which was undertaken led to a reformulation of the research question so that it became rephrased as follows (Idrees, Vasconcelos and Cox 2011, p.194):

"In what ways do competing hotels in the religious tourism destination in Saudi Arabia cooperate through sharing their knowledge?"

Re-formulated in this manner it was an attempt to explore the emerging paradox of competing hotels "sharing their knowledge within competitive relations" (Idrees, Vasconcelos and Cox 2011, p.194).

2.4.1.2 The Model in Practice

The 'Uncertainty Stage' of the research process for this study was carried out in the first year of a full time PhD research project.

BROAD RESEARCH QUESTION

The study began as an investigation into the social aspects of ICT usage by older people. This conformed to the requirements for the PhD as submitted to the ESRC to obtain funding for the project. The initial broad research question developed by the researcher can be stated as follows:

What are older people's perceptions of how social life has changed (generally and personally) with the advent of ICT, how are they experiencing this phenomenon within their own social lives, and how can ICT be used on a social level to help older people (themselves and others) in the future?

SENSITISING LITERATURE REVIEWS

Some literature reviews were carried out in stage one of the research model for sensitisation purposes rather than hypothesis generation. These initial literature reviews were carried out to alert the researcher to Grounded Theory methods, and also to the research background of older people, ICT, and the concept of the social, as can be seen below:

Phase 1 Literature Reviews

- Grounded Theory – sensitisation to the processes involved in carrying out Grounded Theory analyses.
- broad reading in the field of older people – encompassing various research and project outputs, demographic schema, websites for older people
- broad reading in the field of ICT and the social – various publications

- broad reading in the field of older people and ICT usage – various publications and a PhD thesis.
- more focused reading in the field of older people and the social aspects of ICT usage

These preliminary literature reviews (incorporating journal articles, other publications, and related websites) were never intended to be exhaustive due to the emergent nature of Grounded Theory. It was therefore acknowledged that further reading would need to take place as the research progressed in order to understand more clearly the background to the research focus as it emerged throughout the four stages of the research model. These subsequent literature reviews took place in an iterative manner, which was both forward-looking and backward-looking at the same time, so that they became both sensitising to, and clarifying of, what was happening in the data as it was collected and analysed.

The sensitising literature review, which encompassed looking at journal articles of pre-existing research, enabled the production of the focus group questions and the initial set of interview questions. These questions were used for data gathering purposes in the 'Uncertainty Stage'.

All the literature consulted has been written up in the relevant sections of this thesis.

DATA GATHERING - FOCUS GROUP (PILOT STUDY)

Group methods can be used for 'exploration and description' of ideas, for the 'generation of ideas', and for 'intervention' in the experienced social reality (Steyaert & Bouwen 2004, p.141). One focus group was held in Year One as a prototype to fulfil the first and second of these purposes.[18] It was envisaged as a session to determine what data would be generated from an initial engagement with the themes of the study.

Stewart et al. (2007, p.91) draw attention to the following concerns when designing and implementing a focus group session:

[18] The focus group participants for this were obtained from the Nottingham Café Scientifique.

> A certain amount of direction and structure is useful for moving the discussion along, controlling dominant group members, and for drawing out reticent respondents.

For the purposes of this study the focus group had the specific format known as 'the hadron collider'.[19] This technique gives both a novel "direction and structure" (Stewart et al. 2007, p.91) to the focus group proceedings. The method entails sitting the participants in a circle and sending round two questions at once – one of which goes clockwise and the other anti-clockwise. The questions are also sent round with 'props' e.g. a hat and a scarf, so that when you get the hat you talk about one question, when you get the scarf you talk about the other question, and if you get both at once you talk about both questions. Participants are usually limited to two minutes each. The method is called the 'hadron collider' because the ideas which are generated in the clockwise direction are supposed to collide with and fertilise the ideas that are generated in the anti-clockwise direction. The method means that the participant knows when it is their turn to speak, and hence it is not a dialogue or a conversation, though in practice people do tend to comment or ask questions out of turn.

The advantage of the 'hadron collider' is that everyone gets their allocated turn to speak, so that no-one is left out or overshadowed by more talkative participants. This enables the more "dominant group members" (Stewart et al. 2007, p.91) to be controlled implicitly and without their knowledge by the structure of the session.

When the prop reaches the next person they are not obliged to speak, hence there is no pressure on the more "reticent respondents" (Stewart et al. 2007, p.91). But having said this, the advantage of the "hadron collider" approach is that it is fun for the participants, and barriers can be broken down by the comedy of trying to remember which question belonged to which 'prop'. The participant can thus start their flow of words quite comically by the delaying technique of wondering which question they were intended to answer.

[19] This format was designed by Robin Johnson in the context of the Nottingham Café Scientifique. The researcher was a co-organiser of the Nottingham Café Scientifique. This puts on a programme of academic talks throughout term time in a Café bar in Nottingham.

In practice, the participants for the first focus group already knew each other and were used to this format for discussion, which is another reason why the "hadron collider" was chosen for this meeting.

The questions used for the focus group are given below:

Questions for the first half

1. How do you think social life has changed in general over the last 15 to 20 years or so with the advent of information and communication technologies?

2. Can you give us a personal anecdote about how your social life has changed with the advent of information and communication technologies?

Questions for the second half

1. So you have got to project yourself into your future and make predictions as to how ICTs might develop to benefit the social life of older people. That's the general question. How can we benefit the life of older people in a social way?

2. Personal question is – are there any ICT based avenues for social networking YOU would like to pursue personally, that you haven't already?

These questions are formulated to encapsulate the idea of change, both with hindsight and foresight, and on a personal and general social level. Formulated in this way, they are also designed to explore as well as generate ideas.

The trial focus group was based on an opportunity sample, in that the participants are drawn from the Nottingham Café Scientifique, a society co-organised by the researcher. The focus group was scheduled as part of the ordinary meetings held by the society, and so a random group of people arrived to take part, rather than the names of the participants being known at the start and organised in advance. The Café Scientifique was chosen for the population for this pilot study for the ease with which the group could be assembled and for the articulate nature of the audience concerned. The people who attend the Café Scientifique are either opinionated or well-educated, and it was therefore thought that a lively and well-informed pilot focus group would ensue, providing a wealth of interesting data on the topic of the social aspects of ICT usage. It was thought that the data set generated by this population would be rich enough to facilitate the process of pin-pointing the primary research focus. The attendees were hence a purposive sample as well as being a

convenience sample. The nine attendees of the focus group (seven male and two female) are given below in order of their year of birth:[20]

- Tom 1928
- Howard 1945
- Douglas 1946
- Gavin 1948
- Jonathan 1950
- Michael 1951
- Iris 1952
- Sanjay 1953
- Vanessa 1957

DATA GATHERING - INTERVIEWS

Pilot Interviews

Three initial structured interviews were carried out to test a fairly comprehensive set of questions generated from a review of the literature, from the focus group results, and from personal interest and experience of the Internet and other technologies as social phenomena. These questions can be found in Appendix 1. The participants for these interviews were again obtained using a combination of convenience and purposive sampling as above. They had all taken part in the focus group and so were already primed about the research topic concerned (Howard, Jonathan and Vanessa)[21]. Each of these initial pilot interviews lasted two hours. This length of time seemed fine for participants who were known to the researcher. However, it could be far too intense for participants not known to the researcher. Also some of the questions did not necessarily generate rich data or interesting avenues to be followed up.

Subsequent Interviews

Following on from the pilot, further interviews in the 'Uncertainty Stage' were conducted using a modified subset of the questions depending on the participant. These subsequent interviews were semi-structured since the structured interview

[20] Pseudonyms are used here and throughout this thesis. Pseudonyms are used to maintain a personal feel but provide confidentiality.
[21] Pseudonyms.

approach can sometimes be too rigid for research purposes and will not elicit the rich data that is required for the study. Opportunity needed to remain for pursuing interesting side-lines that occurred during the process of the interview. Also, some questions would inevitably draw out clichéd, broad-brush responses and the aim was to move beyond these initial responses to something more detailed and exploratory. Room therefore needed to be left to ask questions that facilitated this which could not be known in advance of the interview taking place. The sample population was again based on convenience and purposive sampling. People were selected from the group of family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances known to the researcher. They were selected on the basis of having a story to tell about their (non-) relationship to ICT. Some of these people were therefore purposively selected for their high interest in technology on various levels, or for their known usage of various individual social networking software programs, or for a registered opinion concerning the use of technology for some purpose, or even if they had very little interest at all but could articulate the position well. These potential stories had been picked up throughout the course of the researcher's previous acquaintanceship with the people concerned. They were selected to give a spread of opinion from disinterest in using technology, through to low interest and on to high interest.

DATA ANALYSIS

Initial data was then subjected to preliminary analysis. In order to do this, individual transcripts were produced and coded and these were subsequently subjected to comparative analysis. Some of the broad themes occurring within the data were ascertained in the form of memos. Of interest became Marie's concern with personal profiles in various applications, Eddie's discussion of the ability of technology to depersonalise the individual, Robert's fear of people masquerading as something they are not for various nefarious purposes, and Penny's querying of whether the minutiae of daily life appearing in Facebook statuses constitutes who we really are. In their individual ways, each of these people was debating an 'identity' related issue that had occurred in the course of their interactions with, and thinking about, aspects of technology.

During this data collection/analysis process a conference on Digital Identity held by KT Equal was attended. KT Equal (2010) is a "consortium of UK researchers dedicated to extending quality life for older and disabled people". However, it was

not the content of the conference which produced an interest in matters of '(Digital) Identity', but the title itself, in conjunction with an explanation of the use of the internet by one of the participants (who was the correct age for the present study). This conference participant had developed pseudonyms on various online fora to express different 'stereotypical' political views on various subject matters. Sometimes these pseudonyms would argue with each other publicly without anyone knowing that these were the same person. This reported means of digital self-expression by an 'older person' dovetailed with the data analysis already carried out for the study and threw matters of 'identity' – both personal and digital - into sharp relief in the rest of the data. 'Identity' started to become an increasingly useful 'sensitising concept'.

As a result of this, the researcher read Turkle's (1995) work[22], *Life on the screen: identity in the age of the internet.* The following quotation from this work is relevant to the ongoing rationale of the present study (Turkle 1995, p.10):

> In the story of constructing identity in the culture of simulation, experiences on the Internet figure prominently, but these experiences can only be understood as part of a larger cultural context. That context is the story of the eroding boundaries between the real and the virtual, the animate and the inanimate, the unitary and the multiple self, which is occurring both in advanced scientific fields of research and in the patterns of everyday life. From scientists trying to create artificial life to children "morphing" through a series of virtual personae, we shall see evidence of fundamental shifts in the way we create and experience human identity. But it is on the Internet that our confrontations with technology as it collides with our sense of human identity are fresh, even raw. In the real-time communities of cyberspace, we are dwellers on the threshold between the real and the virtual, unsure of our footing, inventing ourselves as we go along.

Turkle's (1995) influence on the present study is somewhat pervasive and so quite difficult to pin down. People have relationships through computers but also with computers (Turkle 1995). They compare themselves with computers but also they can compare the new selves that computers enable (Turkle 1995). Turkle's (1995, p.15) influences derive from Paris intellectual culture which included "Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari"; these are "theorists of

[22] Phase 2 of Literature Review.

poststructuralism and what would come to be called postmodernism". Initially Turkle (1995, p.15) was unable to connect with their ideas concerning the decentred self:

> for many people it is hard to accept any challenge to the idea of an autonomous ego. While in recent years, many psychologists, social theorists, psychoanalysts, and philosophers have argued that the self should be thought of as essentially decentered, the normal requirements of everyday life exert strong pressure on people to take responsibility for their actions and to see themselves as intentional and unitary actors. This disjuncture between theory (the unitary self is an illusion) and lived experience (the unitary self is the most basic reality) is one of the main reasons why multiple and decentered theories have been slow to catch on.

However, ICT can be seen as an enabler of thought processes concerning multiple and decentred selves; as Turkle (1995, p.17) explains, computer-mediated experiences are bringing such philosophies down to earth by providing an arena for producing these multiple selves both through language and image. The self is becoming a fluid concept (Turkle 1995, p.17) which contrasts heavily with a previous era where "stability was socially valued and culturally reinforced" (Turkle 1995, p.254). Culturally, we have arrived at a new era where "stable social worlds have broken down" and rigid roles can no longer be maintained (Turkle 1995, p.255). As Turkle (1995, p.255) suggests, these paradigms provide metaphors for thinking about well-being, and health is now concerned with "fluidity rather than stability". Health is maintained through the "culture of flexibility" and the ability of the self to adapt (Turkle 1995, p.255). This is of particular interest when thinking about the experience of older people who have lived through the era of supposed stability, and who are now also experiencing their own life transitions.

The conjunction of ongoing data analysis, the 'Digital Identity' conference, and Turkle's (1995) research on 'technology as an object to think with' about many different aspects of human identity acted to sensitise the researcher further to what might be happening in the data thus far collected. It was noted, for example, that some of the data could be explained by reference to the relation between the online and offline self. The 'primary research question' then became amended to:

How does the 'intervention of technology' become an 'object' for older people to think with about matters of personal, human, and social identity related phenomena, and how do they actually experience this in practice?

The production of the primary research question marks the requisite output of the 'Uncertainty Stage' of the four part model.

2.4.2 Two : 'The Emergence Stage' – Emergence of the Core Categories

2.4.2.1 The Model

According to Idrees, Vasconcelos, and Cox (2011, p.194), the 'Emergence Stage' "seeks to answer the primary research question resulting from the previous stage through systematic data collection and analysis". The phase then proceeds by focusing on and refining the "emerging categories" that have been identified from "the initial data gathering".

THEORETICAL SAMPLING

In accordance with Grounded Theory principles, all remaining data collection needs to proceed according to theoretical sampling (Idrees, Vasconcelos, and Cox 2011, p.195). As Idrees, Vasconcelos, and Cox (2011, p.195) explain "the emerging categories from the previous stage lead to decisions on what and where to sample next". In the case of their study, Idrees, Vasconcelos, and Cox (2011, p.195) selected hotels with several layers of management, and chose to focus on managers rather than other stakeholders, since deciding whether to co-operate or compete with other hotels was "usually related to different management options". The data from the first interviews suggested that hotels within the same rating tend to form an informal club so the decision was taken to focus on the same market – the five star hotel (Idrees, Vasconcelos, and Cox 2011, p.195). Concurrent data collection and analysis combine to drive the process forward in an iterative manner (Idrees, Vasconcelos, and Cox 2011, p.195).

CONSTRUCTING CATEGORIES

As more data is collected and analysed using "the constant comparative method" the emergent categories are populated with theoretical properties (Idrees, Vasconcelos, and Cox 2011, p.196). The categories are then linked together "in order to form an explanatory framework" for the phenomenon under investigation (Idrees,

Vasconcelos, and Cox 2011, p.197). This process leads to the establishment of a core theme which is "the basic foundation of the theory" (Idrees, Vasconcelos, and Cox 2011, p.197). The core theme of the work of Idrees, Vasconcelos, and Cox (2011, p.197) can be stated as follows:

Knowledge sharing takes place among competing hotels through social networks that assume the nature of a club geared towards protecting the elite status of these hotels.

2.4.2.2 The Model in Practice

EMERGENCE OF CATEGORIES

Data from the initial data gathering phase suggested that the concept of (digital) identity could be used to explain some of the key findings in the data. As the data was analysed further, categories which impacted on the framing of (digital) identity began to emerge. A diagram of the key categories was commenced as a mindmap in Powerpoint and then refined with further constant comparative analysis. This category diagram was created towards the end of the first year of the full-time PhD, when all the data from the first phase of data collection had been analysed.

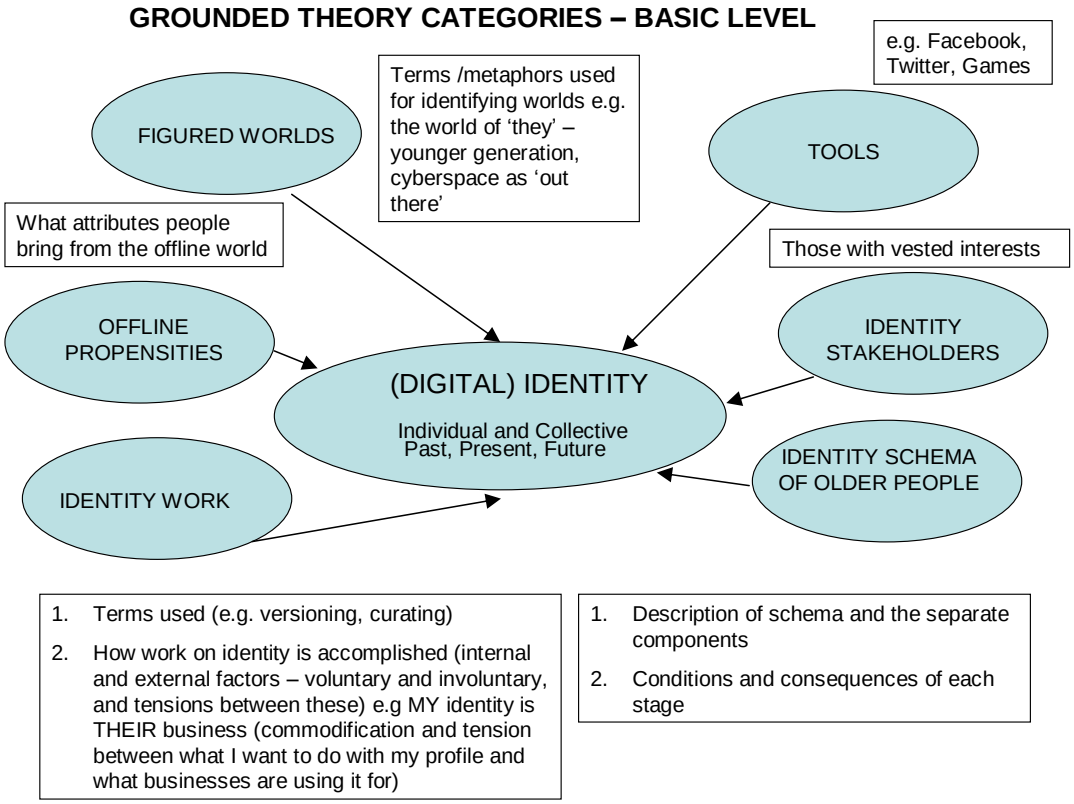

Figure 7 Initial Grounded Theory categories obtained from the study

THEORETICAL SAMPLING

It was acknowledged that as part of the second phase of data collection a model needed to be in place to guide future sampling in order to further populate the emergent categories centred on the core category of (digital) identity. There were three theoretical matters arising which impacted on the second phase of data collection:

- **Social tools only?** - data collection to date had focused on those applications which could be classed as 'social' or communicative in nature in accordance with the initial PhD stipulation. This was deemed to be an issue ongoing as it began to be queried by the researcher whether it was necessary for the tool to be 'social' in order to be implicated in 'identity work' (one of the categories in the emergent category diagram). Some participants in the first round of data collected had nonetheless talked about *all* the tools they used as a matter of course, and it was decided to allow for this in future interviews.

- **Tools for playing with identity?** - The other issue arising from the initial data gathering phase was that none of the original participants had used what could be considered as identity related tools specifically, such as online gaming (where avatars are used) or Second Life. This needed to be remedied in the second phase of data collection so that 'identity work' could be compared between people who used more practical tools such as email and those who wanted to play with various means of creating new identities.
- **Time and complexity?** – The amount of time spent using ICT, in conjunction with the complexity of the tools used, were assessed to be two important factors which were implicated in the production of (digital) identity.

These theoretical considerations were contributory factors in producing a schema for subsequent data collection. Also, as the theme of (digital) identity was not a major part of the initial question set an alternative set of questions also needed to be developed to enable chosen participants to elaborate on the topic (see Appendix 2). All the above factors affected the selection of participants and the course of subsequent interviews in Year Two of the PhD. Additionally, further literature reviews had been undertaken to aid with sensitising concepts throughout the process of data collection and analysis, for example:

- A search of the type of findings of Grounded Theory work which related to the concept of identity in general, and not just ICT related as in the case of Turkle.
- A search of identity related concepts generally, e.g. the work of Goffman.

In the first half of year two, data collection, as a result, proceeded using a model for participant selection (below) and an alternative set of questions.

The following diagram helps to illustrate the model of Digital Identity Curation/Creation that was generated for the purposes of Year 2 of the study – this model is a form of hypothetical population mapping. The challenge was to find participants who occur at different points along the 'spectrum', ranging from not wanting to have an online identity, to those people heavily involved in internet methods of self-exploration. The first year, which was based on convenience sampling, yielded many people who used new technologies for very practical purposes, but not many who were interested in the playful identity-performance

aspects of technology. It seemed that older people who have an interest in Second Life or online gaming are much less common, and so not easily found through convenience sampling (i.e. they did not occur frequently in the groups of people who are known to the researcher). This means that three methods of advertising had to be implemented to find appropriate participants as below:

- The PhD Student Discussion Den on Loughborough University's Learn Server - The research project was advertised with the following title: 'Research Participants Required – ICT Users Aged 50+' and the information about the study was given in an Attachment (see Appendix 3).

- The 'For Sale or Wanted' section of the Loughborough University website - The text of the message was in line with the above advertisement.

- Age UK - Facebook Page -
  The following was posted as a Status on Age UK's Facebook Page:

  > "I am a researcher at Loughborough University working on a project called Sus-IT which aims to help older people get the best out of new technologies. I am interested in talking to people who use the internet regularly and who pay attention to how they appear online. Of special interest are people who use pseudonyms or have avatars. I am based in the Midlands. The research would involve an interview of up to one hour. If you are interested in taking part please email my Facebook account. More information about the project can be found here. http://sus-it.lboro.ac.uk/index.html"

This generated one participant who decided to correspond by email rather than being interviewed. This participant passed the information on to two other people who also took part by email. An example of a completed email questionnaire is given in the Appendices.

Apart from the Facebook advertisement, which yielded email responses, the other two postings led to a few participants who agreed to interviews as part of the data collection carried out in the first half of the second year. Some of the respondents did not have the attributes asked for in the advertising prescription, but wanted to take part anyway. A couple of people were found through advertising means who had used online gaming with avatars. All the people who responded to the adverts

were interviewed for reasons of ethics, whether they had the requisite attributes mentioned in the advertisements or not. All participants nonetheless yielded useful data for the project as they helped to populate further the properties of the categories as laid out in the category diagram.

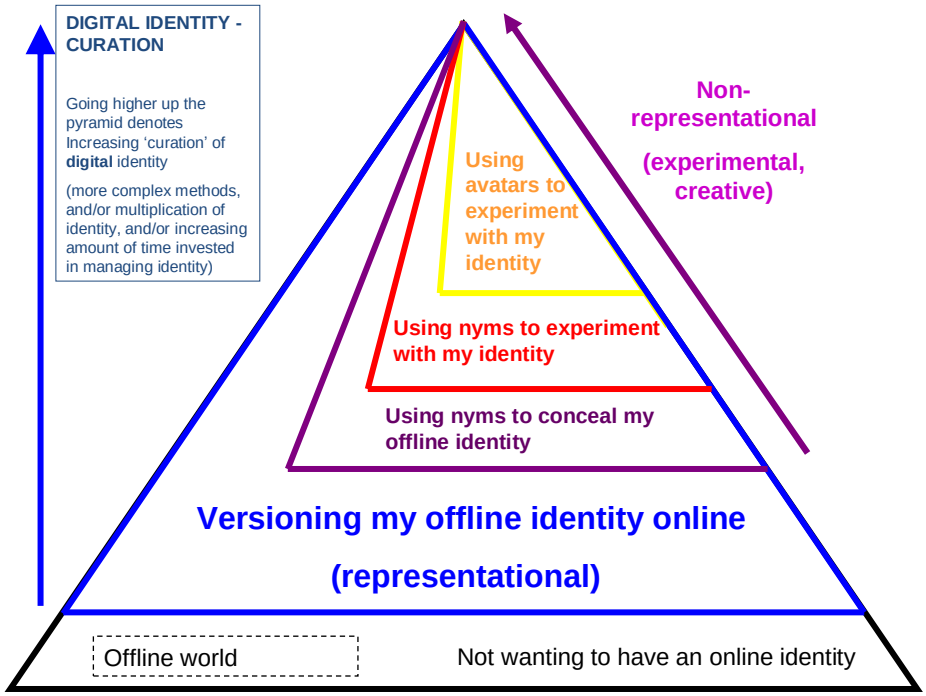

Figure 8 Initial model of digital identity curation/creation used for the study

The model takes its visual cue from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, although more specifically Kendrick's revised version of Maslow's hierarchy [23]. However, the similarities end at this point, since the pyramid here represents the idea of a population indulging in the increasing curation/creation of Digital Identity (which is deemed to be progressively less likely, as the decreasing area of the triangle towards the top represents). This diagram is not intended to imply any form of aspiration for older people; getting to the top of the pyramid is not deemed a desired endpoint. It is a diagram which maps, albeit hypothetically, the possible population to be sampled.

[23] Maslow: *Information design at Penn*. <http://datadesign.wordpress.com/2011/01/14/maslows-pyramid/>, [14.01.11], [accessed 09.02.11].
Kendrick: *Maslow's pyramid gets a much needed renovation.* <http://esciencenews.com/articles/2010/08/19/maslows.pyramid.gets.a.much.needed.renovation>, [19.08.10], [accessed 09.02.10].

Progression up the pyramid would therefore represent increases in two factors:

- **TIME/EFFORT** - increases in the time and effort spent on online tasks which manage the online identity of the participant. This can be in the form of curating identity where the effort is spent in versioning the offline self in various online programs (e.g. a business self in LinkedIn, a social self in Facebook, a political self on Twitter), or in the form of creating identity where the effort is spent in experimenting with a new online self (e.g. in programs such as World of Warcraft or Second Life).
- **COMPLEXITY** – increases in the number and complexity of methods used to curate/create the online self by any one individual. Those who are curating the self can have an increasing multiplicity of methods for versioning themselves (e.g. maintaining separate profiles/presence on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter). Those who are creating the self can use increasingly complex methods of creating the self ranging from text based approaches, through use of nyms, to the creation of avatars. Many of these can necessitate huge learning curves, increasing the time spent on them, or the associated tasks are lengthy and require huge commitment on behalf of the individual to undertake them such as group quests in World of Warcraft.

In the visual model generated for the purposes of collecting data it is not necessary to pass through the stages in sequence to reach higher points in the curation/curation of digital identity. For example, avatar creation is not a pre-requisite in the process of creating a more fully realised online self. Correspondingly, the online self need not be a fabrication based on avatars and nyms to be complex or time consuming. Also in one online tool the online self may be a version of the offline self, but in another it may be a fabrication so that more than one approach in the curation/creation of identity may be adopted.

CONSTANT COMPARATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The entire data set from Years 1 and 2 was merged and subjected to comparative analysis to further populate the categories that had emerged from the initial data gathering. The participant set to date was then also analysed in a spreadsheet to determine the 'subject positions' adopted by the participants and as ascribed by the researcher. This type of analysis was carried out as a result of reading a Grounded

Theory based thesis (Buckley 1998) on the sporting identity of schoolchildren; the final theory in this particular thesis was based around a hierarchy of identities that emerged during the analysis and how these identities related to others in the hierarchy.

As a result of the participant analysis a theoretical identity schema emerged (discussed in the results section below) which was based on three factors:

- the similarities or differences between offline and online selves.
- the moral stance (if any) taken concerning the comparison that has been made between these two selves.
- the nature of their technology usage – from pragmatic to playful.

OUTPUT OF EMERGENCE STAGE - THEORY

It can be seen from Buckley's (1998) thesis that an identity schema can be seen as the final theoretical output of a Grounded Theory study, although in the present study it is to be seen as one component of the theory under construction. What links the participants in Buckley's (1998) thesis are the relationships found between the various identity positions as assessed by the researcher. In the present study, notions of (lack of) values and (lack of) principle were seen to be invested in the processes of identity maintenance and creation. This (lack of) value process is the linking theme in the identity schema generated at the end of the 'Emergence Stage' of the research process model being followed here.

Following the identification of the schema of subject positions accreted around notions of (lack of) principles, further literature reviews were carried out on identity schema and ethics as pertains to the field of ICT. Literature reviews were also carried out concerning moral panics. In addition, further reading was carried out in the field of sociological views of identity in general, in keeping with the original social slant of the PhD.

2.4.3 Three: 'The Ambiguity Resolution Stage' – clarifying grey areas in the emergent theory for theoretical saturation

2.4.3.1 The Model

The ambiguity resolution stage of the process model envisioned by Idrees, Vasconcelos, and Cox (2011, p.197) is designed to achieve theoretical saturation of

the emerged theory, by clarifying all the remaining grey areas. This may require further investigation in the field to address the issues and gaps highlighted by the iterative data collection and analysis processes. In Idrees, Vasconcelos, and Cox's study (2011, p.197) the gaps highlighted referred to the differing communication practices of the managers concerned, dependent on the background from which they came (finance management, HR management etc). Further interviews needed to focus on such identified ambiguities, so that all the categories and their relationships could be finally established.

2.4.3.2 The Model in Practice

In Phase 3 of the process model, more of the data was written up which fuelled the thinking around the category diagram. The preceding literature reviews were also written up. As a result of these two processes, it was decided to refresh the category diagram with the thinking which had emerged as a result of these two processes, as the category diagram no longer expressed the processual nature of what was deemed to be happening in the data. The category diagram was therefore re-expressed as a 'System Map' for thinking about (digital) identity:

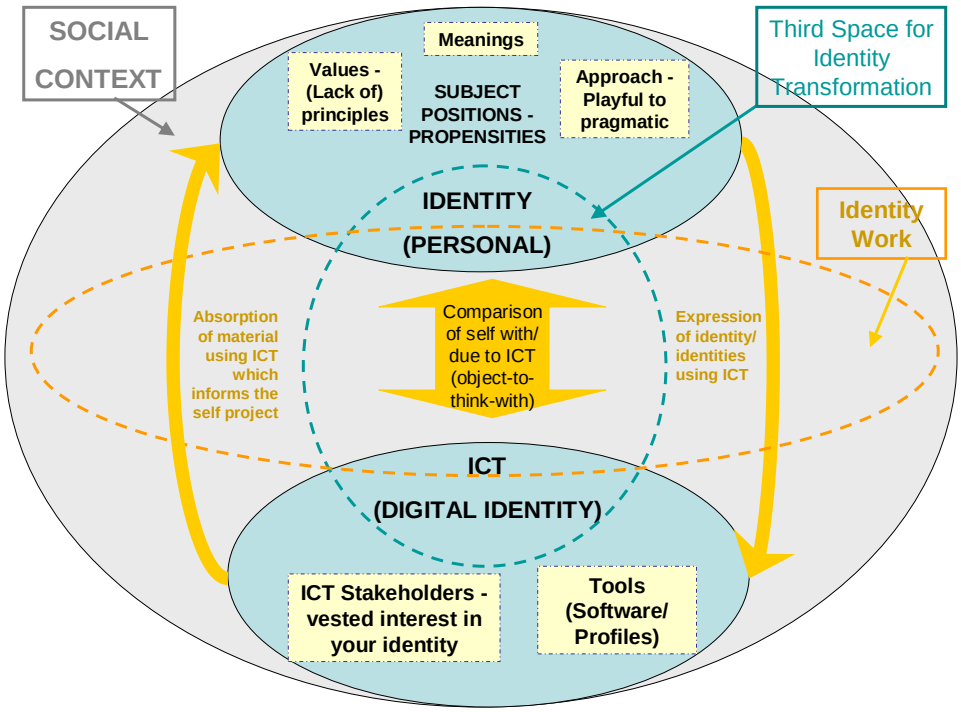

Figure 9 System Map for thinking about (digital) identity – from the present study

This map was deemed necessary to provide a clearer framework in which to discuss the data, as it contained some of the linking relationships missing from the original category diagram. At the same time, the concept of Digital Identity was removed from the centre of the diagram and assigned a role in the 'tripartite identity processes' which will be discussed later. Also, a topic that seemed major at the time – figured worlds – was subsumed within the idea of 'meanings' in the part of the diagram representing personal (offline) identity.

2.4.4 Four: 'The Maturity Stage' – discussion of findings against the literature

2.4.4.1. The Model

In 'the maturity stage' of the Grounded Theory research model, the emerged theory in its saturated form is outlined complete with all its categories and linking relationships. In this stage the existing literature in the field is used, and has two very different purposes: firstly "to help in clarifying the relationships between categories" and secondly "to discuss the findings and place them in the context of previous work as well as the broader field of knowledge to which they contribute" (Idrees, Vasconcelos, and Cox 2011, p.198). As Idrees, Vasconcelos, and Cox (2011, p.198) point out, this is the key stage for a more complete literature review:

> As with most inductive approaches, extensive exploration of the literature is made at this stage, whereas with hypothetical deductive approaches, this is the main focus at the beginning of the research. Furthermore, the findings can be used to discuss the literature and illustrate areas of divergence between the findings and previous studies.

2.4.4.2. The Model in Practice

'THE VOICES IN THE LIBRARY'

In practice, the System Map is presented at the beginning of the data sections with an accompanying overview, and then the individual sections (chapters) of the thesis which follow represent the discussion of the various categories. These subsequent chapters thus provide the evidence base for the System Map. The chapters

themselves were written with reference to the corresponding literature as the contexts arose. The literature referred to in these chapters acted to clarify the relationships within and between the grounded theory categories.

Of particular relevance to the 'thinking through' of the System Map as a whole, was Lawler's (2008) overview of current sociological perspectives, which had a pervasive influence on thinking, in much the same way as Turkle's work. The aspects of Lawler's work which dovetailed with the analysis of the data as the study proceeded are given in the next section.

The last chapter of this thesis – which provides a series of reflections - then discusses the mature data/theory as a whole, within the context of existing theories on ageing, to determine how the present study added fuel to the debate surrounding the field more generally. This final section required further literature review not previously carried out during the study.

SOME SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES FROM THE WORK OF LAWLER (2008)

Lawler (2008, p.1) draws attention in her work to matters which concern "how we might consider identities as being socially produced". This approach to the consideration of identity Lawler (2008, p.1) argues:

> enables the development of an expanded and fundamentally social and collective approach to identity, in contrast to the individualist and psychologistic perspectives that have tended to dominate discussions of this issue.

The following sections, as argued by Lawler (2008) in her work, examine some of the current social perspectives on the theme of identity and the subject, which expand on the ways identity has come to be analysed in later modernity.

IS THERE A UNIQUE KERNEL OF IDENTITY?

Lawler (2008, p.5) suggests that the Western world has developed the commonsense notion that there is a "true" or "deep" self, or in other words a "unique kernel of identity" such that people think to themselves "I am who I am". However, Lawler (2008, p.6) notes, following Elias, that to think in this way is not an

"inevitable feature of the human condition", but is instead part of the "civilising process" in the West:

> This process – from about the time of the Renaissance – involved increasing emphases on notions of self control. Manners must be observed; people ought not to act on sensory or other bodily impulses. In important senses, for Elias, manners make the person; that is Western persons *became* self-controlled beings as a result of the injunctions to self-control. This notion of the need to manage 'internal' states has led to the perception of 'true identity' being contained 'inside', while the social world is firmly 'outside'.

Contrarily, Lawler (2008, p.5) argues that one is not a "bounded, self-contained individual", "standing outside 'society'". In other words, identities are not "formed in opposition to the social world", but are instead "formed *by* the social world" (Lawler 2008, p.7). They are formed through a "complex interdependency" between many human beings (Lawler 2008, p.8). According to Lawler, (2008, p.8) this interdependent network produces "identity talk" which is about the "'ought' rather than 'is' of identities", so that identities can be seen or felt "to go wrong". In this way, identities are thus implicated in ideas concerning the "maintenance of the moral order" and a "concern with authenticity" (Lawler 2008, p.8).

TELLING THE SELF – IDENTITY NARRATION

Lawler (2008, p.11) argues that one of the methods through which identities are created is the process of story-telling or narrative. Identities can be seen as "creatively produced through various raw materials available – notably, memories, understandings, experiences and interpretations" (Lawler 2008, p.11). Identity "cobbled" together in this way becomes a "bricolage" (Lawler 2008, p.34). According to Lawler (2008, p.19) narratives are inevitably "enmeshed in – and produced within – webs of social relations". This is partly because everyone's stories "incorporate the life stories of others", and partly because the social world is in itself storied such that there is already a pre-existing "repertoire of available social, public and cultural narratives" (Lawler 2008, p.20). Lawler (2008, p.24) suggests that ethical behaviour arises from a process of empathy, i.e. the ability to "imagine ourselves in others' stories" and to act accordingly. As a result of these considerations, Lawler (2008, p.29) concludes that a "breach of sociality" can take place if people adopt what is seen to be a "fraudulent identity", such that their stories are either found to be untrue, appear inauthentic, or do not mesh appropriately with societal expectations.

GOVERNING THE SELF AND NORMALISATION

Lawler (2008, p.55) explains that the ways in which we become ourselves are implicated in a schema of power that works against usual commonsense notions of a "top down", "prohibitive, denying force". Instead the idea of self has become "a project to be worked on" according to ideas of what is deemed to be healthy or normal; as such it is a process of "normalization" which encourages the self to act on the self (Lawler 2008, pp.54-55). Lawler (2008, p.62) explains that Foucault uses the term "subjectivation (*assujetissement*)" in order to explain the relation that the self has with itself. According to this view, through subjectivation, a person is "tied to his own identity by a conscience" (Lawler 2008, p.62). They become a subject by being "*subject-ed*" to:

> the rules and norms engendered by a set of knowledges about these identities. They take up subject-positions – specific ways of being – available within discourse, understanding themselves according to a set of criteria provided by experts whose authority derives from rationality and 'reason' (Lawler 2008, p.62)

Such normalising "knowledges" are discourses generated within the fields of "medicine, psychology, psychiatry, pedagogy, and so on" (Lawler 2008, pp.63-64). In turn the "knowledges" lead to identities which are legitimised by legislation, such that there are "right and wrong ones", and when self governance fails, the legislation can ultimately be invoked to restore order through punishment (Lawler 2008, p.74). Identity in this sense "is too solid a concept for the rather 'emptied out' character of personhood used by Foucault" and instead we need to think in terms of being attached to various "subject positions" that are available to a person in discourse (Lawler 2008, p.76).[24]

MASQUERADING AS OURSELVES

Lawler's (2008, p.101) perusal of the key themes in sociological perspectives on identity highlights a Western preoccupation between "semblance and substance", that is between "*doing* an identity (performing)" and "*being* an (authentic) identity". However, latest theoretical stances indicate that this is actually a false dichotomy and that there is a sense in which identity can be seen as a masquerade of the self,

[24] This notion of 'Subject Positions' occurs later in the thesis. The assessment of older people's usage of ICT in connection with notions of identity is given as a Schema of Subject Positions – ways of being in which they can be implicated through a study of the discourses they use.

or in other words, the self only exists in the actual masquerade (Lawler 2008, p.103). It is a type of "self-impersonation", which can be understood as a process in which:

> we assume characteristics we claim as our own. Through this process, we become (social) persons through performing ourselves. From this perspective, asking who is behind the mask, or investigating the gap between semblance and substance, is not the issue. Rather, what we need to consider is what underwrites a contemporary concern with 'authenticity' in the first place (Lawler 2008, p.104)

Similarly, Lawler (2008, p.106) notes that in the work of Goffman, which concerns the dramaturgy of identity, performances do not mask the "true person" but instead "*make us persons*". There is a sense, however, in which the performances available to use are limited by social expectation (Lawler 2008, p.110). But it is in improvising these performances that Lawler (2008, p.110) suggests "we exercise moral choice, and this choice is important in the creation and maintenance of an ethical subjectivity".

INTERPELLATION AND SUBJECTIVITY

One aspect of recognising one's subjectivity comes into play in the act of "interpellation", a phenomenon developed by Althusser and adapted by Butler (Lawler 2008, p.115). The example given is that of a policeman 'hailing' someone in the street, who turns round in recognition of the fact that they have been hailed and thus recognises themselves as a subject; metaphorically speaking they have recognised themselves as 'subject' to "the social rules that govern any social formation" (Lawler 2008, p.115). Lawler (2008, p.116) suggests that politicians make attempts at interpellation when they make statements such as "as every decent person believes"; in this way "lines are drawn between 'us' and 'them' such that 'they' occupy an untenable position".

THE 'NATURAL' : IDENTITY AND HEREDITY

Also of relevance for this study is the idea that identity is linked to notions of kinship and inheritance (Lawler 2008, p31), and this can be seen clearly in the growing trend for tracing family trees, the latter having been greatly facilitated in recent years by various genealogical applications on the web. In light of Lawler's pronouncements on the idea of identity being something that is constructed socially, this alternative focus on something which seems natural highlights a contradiction between nature and culture concerning how identity is currently understood in the West (Lawler 2008,

p.32). As Lawler (2008, p.47) argues, the idea of 'nature' is usually invoked to imply an unchangeable given, or indeed something which 'ought' not to be changed. This resort to the idea of nature can be turned into an "immensely powerful legitimating mechanism" (Lawler 2008, p.48). Ultimately, Lawler's (2008, p.53) position on the matter is, however, more complicated than this:

> kinship appears to tie us firmly in to the biological and the natural, but at the same time, it defies those categories. For one thing, it always takes work, both the work of recognizing kin and the work of producing identities based on those kin. For another, nature is itself being reconfigured in understandings of kinship, so that what gets to count as 'natural' ties are culturally imagined.

The biologically natural is, paradoxically, still a work of culture.

2.5 Practicalities related to the research methods

2.5.1 Data Recording and Transcription

The data for the focus group and all of the interviews were collected using a voice recorder. Transcripts were produced for each of these sessions. In the main, these textual records were produced by playing the voice file back on a computer a portion at a time and then typing out what was said. This was an extremely time consuming process and as a result two other methods were also trialled, but not eventually adopted:

- **Dragon Voice Recognition Software** - One transcript was attempted using Dragon Voice Recognition Software. Having trained the software for the researcher's voice the voice file was fed directly into it (i.e. no playback of the file required), but this only yielded garbage as the software had not been trained for the participant's voice as well. A second attempt was made with the same voice file, which required playing back the initial recording into an ear-piece and then speaking the entire tape again into a microphone so that the whole thing came out in the researcher's voice. However, the text file generated still needed editing as Dragon is very difficult to train. Voice recognition software did not therefore lend any significant time advantage to the process. In addition it was also impractical as the clarity and loudness of voice required affected the throat.

- **Paid Help** - One transcript was also generated by a paid helper. One of the chief disadvantages of this was the cost even though it was a fraction of the going rate.

2.5.2 Phenomenological Methods - Creative Writing

This is a more specific, creative, hermeneutic and writerly approach in accordance with the phenomenological requirements of the study. Selected people were asked to record in writing their 'lived experience' of certain phenomena e.g. Skype. These people were selected on the basis of their interest in creative writing as gleaned from interview questions. However, one person contributed pieces of creative writing because they felt they lacked the confidence to be interviewed; they felt they would be more fluid in writing than in conversation. The creative writing component of the study was undertaken throughout the first three stages of the research process. The materials given to assist participants to produce their writing are given in Appendix 4.

2.5.3 Coding

The coding in 'the uncertainty stage' was done by hand on the transcripts of the focus group and the interviews. Coding was carried out according to Charmaz's (2006, p.46) prescription for 'initial coding', which is to try and discern "actions in each segment of data rather than applying preexisting categories to the data". Such coding should use words which "reflect action" and contain gerunds, or in other words verb forms that end with 'ing' (Charmaz 2006, pp.47-48). The coding was carried out on a line-by-line basis, all the time remaining open to the possibilities suggested by the data.

The early coding was deemed to be a trial of the method to see what it generated, prior to any possible shift to coding using commercially available software packages. Atlas TI was evaluated as a possible package to be used in this study. After coding a few transcripts manually, it was found that the amount of codes developed was overwhelming, and it was felt to be of no merit to use a software package to handle what would eventually be hundreds of redundant initial codes. Use of computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) was therefore rejected for this

study, and manual methods in conjunction with Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Powerpoint) tools have instead been used throughout.

One of the reasons for the rejection of CAQDAS resided in the proliferation of redundant code names created by using the 'initial coding' method specified by Charmaz (2006). It was deemed impossible to code by categories - as in the Glaser and Strauss (1967) original version - until you had used a more line by line approach of noting everything happening the data to see what categories might emerge. As it was not known at the beginning how the analysis would proceed the codes were not created with an end-point in mind. They were therefore open to re-interpretation in the light of subsequent data. The early codes changed when the categories were decided upon, and then changed again when the contents of the categories were refined in the writing up of the data. Categories operate at a higher level of abstraction than codes and are therefore fewer in number, but to remain truly open to the data no categories had been pre-determined for the study. This method of proceeding has more in common with Glaser's ideas on 'emergence' rather than Strauss and Corbin's proceduralisation of Grounded Theory, which in Glaser's opinion 'forces' data analysis. As Vasconcelos (2007, p.127) notes concerning Corbin and Strauss's method, "their approach placed greater emphasis on the codification of data", which meant that Glaser considered that:

> the new version was too prescriptive and emphasized too much the role of coding whereas the original essence and intention of Grounded Theory was to focus on theory development

The approach in this study is Glaserian and therefore it does not place a high emphasis on rigid coding or coding schema. Coding is here seen as a means by which to facilitate an end (the production of theory) and not the end in itself. The codes were not to become a rigidifying strait-jacket, but instead a valuable method of assistance in the constant comparative analysis process. It was hence not felt that CAQDAS software would enable patterns to be seen any more easily in the proliferation of data than using the manual method with Office as a set of mind-mapping tools, and may actually have obscured the patterns rather than highlighting them.

After the initial coding of transcripts and some memos were produced, patterns were seen in the data which lead to more focused categorisation of the data. The main categories will be given in the results below.

2.5.4 Use of Word, Powerpoint, Excel

MEMOS IN WORD

Memos were written in a Word document as thoughts about each transcript came to mind. The following is an example of a memo set developed with reference to the transcript of Eddie; it is given here to demonstrate the process of analysing data and moving from individual codes to a more focused reading of the data. Eddie can be seen to be entering into the debate about whether ICT is having positive or negative social effects, and how these effects ultimately impact on an individual's personal identity.

MEMOS WRITTEN IN RESPONSE TO THE TRANSCRIPT OF EDDIE

1. Critiquing Societal Change - Caused by using technology

Negative Social Effects
Society having an identity? Which is changing. Bottom up or top down – both! Society consists of parts which must be cohesive for it to be a society? Part of the positive versus negative debate. This is on the negative side! But also other debates here ? Processes occurring – depersonalising, becoming a non-person, violation of societal values:

- **'sign of depersonalisation' –** for Eddie there is a loss of interpersonal relationships through technology. These are affecting offline identity at the personal and general level. There is a lessening of interpersonal interaction – seen here as vital for healthy personhood. Society as a whole is therefore **atomising** – losing a basic cohesion.
- **Not being part of the 'circulo de los amigos' –** lacking an identity because you are not part of the circle, not included = non-identity. Digital exclusion. Has it so far pervaded our thought processes about self and society that one cannot be a member of society without being online?
- **Versioning Reality - Is the cyber real?** Is virtual reality real reality? A new social sphere? Is it just as valid?
- **Shame –** changing the way we socialise our children – exhibiting them. Letting the self be seen. Losing a part of ourselves in the exhibiting process and a part of our children if we exhibit them. Shame = a violation of cultural or social values. Shame = from the root to cover. If we uncover too much are we violating the values which we previously held as a society

Positive social effects
- **Bridging the generation gap (being a grandparent – the 'grandparent' identity) -** There is something here about increasing intimacy – the positive social consequences come from enhancing the relationships you already have particularly with grandchildren. (Goffman and ritual interaction?)
- **Maintaining links with dispersed family members**

2. Differing realities for different people
Identity dependent on allegiance groups. You define yourself by the group you belong to – the 'circulo de los amigos'.

3. Penetrating the identity of others
How can we do this if the cues are missing – how to build trust in an online world.

MIND MAPPING IN POWERPOINT

Diagrams were also created in Powerpoint as a mind-mapping tool to help build upon the memos and raise individual codes up to more general categories. Powerpoint was then used to express these categories diagrammatically for future reference. It was also used to create The System Map for the study.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS IN EXCEL

A spreadsheet of participants was created and thoughts about these were written according to various headings, the latter coming from a consideration of the memos written about the various transcripts. The spreadsheet was thus enlisted as either a type of memoing practice or a comparative practice which aided data analysis. From the spreadsheet analysis an Identity Schema of 'Subject Positions' was created, which will be discussed in Chapter Six of the results section.

2.5.5 Ethical Considerations

This study involved human participants. The study therefore needed a preliminary ethics questionnaire explaining the study and how the participants would be involved. In addition, as some of the participants were inevitably going to be aged over 65 due to the nature of the study, a full ethics proposal needed to be submitted to the Ethics Committee as this age group is deemed to be 'vulnerable' according to the ethics stipulations (Appendix 6). In practice, none of the study participants could be deemed vulnerable in other ways (e.g. they did not suffer from poor physical health or have mental health issues).

The participants in the study were given a Participant Information Sheet and asked to sign a Consent Form (see Appendix 7 and 8)

2.6 Study Participants

The overall population of study participants are represented in brief in the table below, complete with their age and cohort 'identities'. These age and cohort identities are an amalgamation of the classification schemas which will be discussed in Chapter Three: Preliminary (Sensitising) Literature Review section (section 3.3.2 below). Their manner of participating is also indicated by the following letters: I = Interview, F = Focus Group, W = Writing, and Q = Questions via email. The participants are indicated by pseudonyms to maintain their anonymity, but still give a feeling of individuality, which labelling them as Participant A, B, etc., would deny.

Two cohorts of Pre boomers (the 'Old old') and two cohorts of Baby Boomers (the 'New old') are in evidence here. These are 'assigned categories' of 'identities' about which certain 'identity' conclusions have been drawn by various commentators (referring again back to the preliminary literature review mentioned above). However, in presenting the table of participants in this manner, this study does not assume that the individual participants will conform to previous identity conclusions about these cohorts. The table does however, allow for comparisons to be made between the data provided by individuals in this study and previous findings about the cohorts in question. Questions should always be asked as to whether 'age' and

'cohort' do indeed represent 'identities'. These may in fact be outdated ageist stereotypes that older people can, and possibly should, reject.

Table 6 Study participants by age and cohort

Age related	Cohort	Participants (pseudonyms)
Pre boomers (Old old)	Pre World War Two Cohort (1922-1927)	Geoff (1926) (Q)
	World War Two Cohort (1928-1945)	Tom (1928) (F and I) Robert (1940) (I) Shirley (1942) (I) Billy (1944) (I) Rosie (1944) (W) Howard (1945) (F and I)
Baby boomers (New old)	Baby Boomer Cohort #1 (1946-1954)	Douglas (1946) (F) Kathleen (1946) (Q) Noreen (1947) (Q) Gavin (1948) (F) Clara (1949) (I) Jonathan (1950) (F and I) Eddie (1950) (I) Penny (1950) (I and W) Michael (1951) (F) Iris (1952) (F) Julia (1952) (I) Sanjay (1953) (F) Graham (1953) (I) Marie (1954) (I) Anna-Maria (1954) (I) Sadie (1954) (I)
	Baby Boomer Cohort #2 (1955-1960)	Francis (1955) (I) Elizabeth (1955) (I and W) Charles (1956) (I) Vanessa (1957) (F and I) Pierre (1958) (I) Harriet (1958) (I) Ernest (1960) (W)

2.7 Summary

The preceding chapter has demonstrated the grounded theory methodology and method to be followed in this research, and its accompanying phenomenological and discursive approaches. The practicalities involved in carrying out the research and analysis have also been highlighted.

The next two chapters highlight the literature reviews (the sensitising literature review and the subsequent literature reviews) that were carried out in line with a grounded theory approach to research.

Chapter Three: Preliminary (Sensitising) Literature Review

In line with a grounded theory approach, this chapter represents the sensitising literature review carried out in advance of the study taking place. It was carried out to alert the mind to the research field involving older people and technology generally, to the heterogeneity of older people, and to certain debates about the usage of ICT that may occur in talking to older people. This chapter starts with the work of Richardson (2006) as it provides a convenient and also critical survey up to the year 2006 of pre-existing work in the field.

3.1 General overview of the literature on older people and computers from the work of Richardson (2006)

An overview of the field of research involving older people and computers was carried out by Richardson (2006) in a PhD thesis entitled 'Interruption events and sensemaking processes: a narrative analysis of older people's relationships with computers'. This marked a convenient place to start the process of carrying out a sensitising literature review of ageing and ICT usage since it provided a meta-view of work that had been previously carried out, and referred to many different types of documentation about older people. Richardson's (2006) analysis provided a welcome stake in the ground for the present study, and acted as a point of departure for further literature reviews carried out in conjunction with this research.

3.1.1 Identifiable Master Narratives

In keeping with the title of her thesis, the schema Richardson (2006) develops for assessing the field is based on a determination of the underlying master narratives of the literature she reviews. Her schema is given below as it is a concise way of visualising the literature and the narratives which drive the production of the individual studies concerned. The 'narrative approach' is consistent with a 'social constructionist' perspective which, according to Richardson (2006, p.11), argues that social phenomena:

> do not simply exist *out there,* but are instead the negotiated products of ongoing construction, interpretation, and sensemaking in which social actors engage with others to produce social reality.

The researchers in the field of older people and computers have been identified as being engaged in negotiating the following three constructs, or master narratives, which have been tabulated from Richardson's (2006, pp.19-64) discussion as follows:

Table 7 Master narratives concerning older people and technology (Richardson 2006)

CONSTRUCT	DESCRIPTION	THE NARRATIVE
The enabling machine and elderly individuals	Computers have been identified as functional and communicative tools that can extend the capabilities and social networks of the elderly, once inhibitors to the use of computers have been overcome.	Computer as 'knight in shining armour' and older people as potential victims in need of rescue.
The potential divider and senior citizens	Computers are instruments of change for the development of knowledge-based economies/societies and the corresponding concerns of governments for the potential marginalisation of some societal members, such as senior citizens, who are not technologised.	Another version of the 'knight in shining armour' narrative. However, this narrative moves beyond helping individuals, to assume an international cast with the computer marching triumphantly across the globe saving nations.
The desirable commodity and grey consumers	Older people are grey consumers – a large potential target market for computer products.	Identifies computers as invested with meaning, and older people as targets for the consumption of that meaning. In a sense, consumption can be seen as a system of signs and meanings. Here again, we have the computer in rescue mode, but attention this time is directed towards those who have the financial means to invest.

3.1.2 Critiques of These Master Narratives

1. *The enabling machine and elderly individuals*

The computer is cast as benign (Richardson 2006, p.20) in the 'enabling machine' narrative but there are other viewpoints available in the wider theoretical literature which do not adopt this 'utopic' view of technology (Richardson 2006, p.21). Some of these viewpoints are discussed in the section on 'Social debates concerning ICT' (below), but principally as they relate to the usage of computers in a social context. The available narrative here is that of older people suffering physiological and cognitive decline (Richardson 2006, p.20). This is evidently a pejorative categorisation of older people and more positive narratives should be made available. It is also a problem–solution approach, designed to provide practical

solutions to the envisaged problem and not to provide theories about the problem itself (Richardson 2006, p.20). In Richardson's (2006, p.21) view it is a non-critical approach.

The 'enabling machine' narrative is one which positions the computer as playing a pivotal role in modern life, thus perpetuating the theory of technology identified as technological determinism (Richardson 2006, p.37). Here, technology is in charge and those who shape the technology are insulated from scrutiny (Richardson 2006, p.38). It also means that older people are constructed as a homogeneous group (Richardson 2006, p.39). The discussion in this thesis concerning 'who are older people?' (below) is designed to move beyond this construction.

The voices of users have been privileged over non-users in this construction (Richardson 2006, p.39). The Sus-IT project is designed, however, to sustain usage, so the project emphasis is, of necessity, aimed at users. However, the present study sees users as positive identity models for non-users to emulate.

2. *The potential divider and senior citizens*

The 'potential divider' narrative re-iterates the story of technological determinism but moves on to encompass not just the individual, but national and global concerns (Richardson 2006, p.41). It is also another example of a problem-solution approach, sought this time by governments rather than academics and practitioners (Richardson 2006, p.40). For Richardson (2006, p.51), the notion of a simplistic 'dichotomous' divide in which social inequality is repackaged so that it can be given a technical fix, is adopted uncritically in these studies.

Non-users of ICT are positioned outside the social system in this narrative. Bringing people 'inside' the system is therefore a normalisation process in which technology acquires a 'taken-for-granted' status (Richardson 2006, p.51).

The literature identified as conforming to this narrative tends to 'fix' or 'freeze' meaning (Richardson 2006, p.52). One way to overcome this would be to adopt a theoretical framework based on the social construction of technology (SCOT) whereby technology becomes interpretively flexible. The present study will

endeavour to determine whether older people have made their own meanings for technology, or whether they feel constrained or dominated by it.

3. *The desirable commodity and grey consumers*

This narrative re-iterates that of *the enabling machine and elderly individuals,* except that the sample population has changed to 'greys' rather than the elderly (Richardson 2006, p.62). The meaning of the computer is still 'fixed' but this time around symbolic connections rather than functional ones (Richardson 2006, pp.62-63). This narrative is also still one of technological determinism (Richardson 2006, p.63).

In Richardson's view little work has been carried out to investigate how the meanings identified in the literature translate into people's lived experiences with the technology (Richardson 2006, p.62). In order to remedy this, the present study will contain a phenomenological element which attempts to understand people's lived experience of using technology for social and other purposes.

3.1.3 Comment on Richardson's General Critique of the Field

Richardson (2006, p.65) suggests that the relationship between computers and older people is still an under-researched area. This can also be taken to mean, implicitly, that the use of ICTs by older people for social purposes, is even less well developed. In particular, Richardson (2006, p.65) states that:

> The literature is largely non-critical, atheoretical, and functionalist, and draws predominantly on one perspective, that of technological determinism, for its theoretical underpinning.

It will be an interesting exercise in this literature review to determine whether there are studies available which have found ways to circumvent these criticisms levelled by Richardson (2006). It will also be profitable to assess whether different master narratives can be identified not mentioned by Richardson (2006), or whether the available literature still falls predominantly within the three categories she has outlined. Richardson's (2006, pp.65-66) own study seeks to use a social constructionist approach, rather than a technologically determinist one or a functionalist one, to assess how older people engage in their own meaning-making

with regards to computers. Her study thus goes beyond the fixed meanings imposed on older people to find the fluidity of meanings they develop for themselves.

An important question might be, however, whether Richardson herself has frozen the meaning of studies in the field of older people and ICT in a slightly reductionist manner, or will the literature review determine whether the researchers have moved fluidly beyond her assessment of the available narratives to begin to frame new ones? There is also a question concerning what is meant by the word atheoretical; does this mean that she views the studies as having no prior theoretical background in which to operate, or alternatively does this mean that the studies generate no new theory about the relationship of older people to computers?

One other important consideration is that Richardson's study (2006) covers older people's relationship with 'computers', whereas the present study encompasses computers and the internet but is not limited to them (e.g. mobile phones), but then only views them in a social context. This literature review will therefore not cover exactly the same ground as Richardson; it will extend out to cover all ICT technologies and narrow in to cover only the social aspects of them.

3.2 Researcher's overview of the literature on the social aspects of ICT usage by older people

This literature review will comprise studies that either mention the social aspects of ICT usage by older people as part of a wider study, or are specifically about such aspects. It is given to elucidate how the field has been constructed by researchers and older people, and to see how and whether it has been theorised.

It should be emphasised that this literature review is only partial, in accordance with the method of grounded theory. In grounded theory there is a debate over how much desk research should be done in advance of the study taking place. Grounded theory is a method intended to create new theory, and therefore there are some purists who would say that the researcher should enter the field with their mind as

open as possible to what the data is yielding. However, the counter argument from other grounded theorists is that no researcher is ever a 'tabula rasa' in any case.[25] In this study a preliminary literature review was also undertaken to determine the type of research questions that had proven useful in studies of the area.

Once the data in the present study had started to coalesce into categories, further literature reviews were undertaken which were more closely related to the developing findings. These were done in order to draw comparisons with the study findings. The research is therefore iterative in approach.

3.2.1 The social aspects of technology as part of a wider study

INDEPENDENCE AND AUTONOMY / OPTIMISATION RATHER THAN COMPENSATION

The stated objectives of Hernández-Encuentra et al.'s (2009, p.228) study are to specify exactly what kinds of technologies are being used by the elderly and for what purposes, and also to get their views on what they would like technology to offer them in the future. The theoretical background of the study is psychological and based on the Model of Selective Optimisation with Compensation (SOC), which is frequently used in developmental psychology and is applicable to different stages and areas of people's lives (Hernández-Encuentra et al. 2009, p.228). This theoretical approach is one whereby individuals are expected to take an active role throughout their lives (Hernández-Encuentra et al. 2009, p.228). In accordance with this (Hernández-Encuentra et al. 2009, p.228):

> they not only respond to the changes that occur in relation to age (biological, social, etc), but they also generate changes in an attempt to bring conditions into line with their preferences, needs or desires.

SOC is therefore a model where "development throughout one's life is understood", particularly with relevance to the following (Hernández-Encuentra et al. 2009, p.228):

- As a **selection** process – selecting from possibilities, aims, or certain domains, and disregarding others.
- As an **optimisation** process – optimising the selections that have been made using the means and resources at their disposal to make them more effective.

[25] These debates and their sources will be given in a later section.

- As a **compensation** process – if the means or resources are not present, then new means are acquired or more accessible goals are instigated.

SOC would hence allow for "the readjustment of skills in accordance with changes in ability associated with age" (Hernández-Encuentra et al. 2009, p.229). Hernández-Encuentra et al. (2009, p.229) intended to use the model to determine the best time in a person's life for the adoption of ICT. In addition to the SOC model, Hernández-Encuentra et al. (2009, p.229) utilise two forms of adaptive movement:

- **Assimilation** – the development of an activity to achieve or avoid an objective, in the case of older people this could entail compensating for a loss through alternative actions.
- **Accommodation** – the readjustment of goals or targets more suitable to the present reality, in the case of older people this could involve changing priorities.

According to Hernández-Encuentra et al. (2009, p.229), these mechanisms affect "how the elderly deal with technology and how they revaluate and modify their objectives with regard to these technologies". Of relevance to the Sus-IT programme is their finding that older people's adoption of ICT is related to the maintenance of their independence and autonomy (Hernández-Encuentra et al. 2009, p.239). They wished to stay engaged with life and society (Hernández-Encuentra et al. 2009, p.240). Any consideration of when to adopt ICT should be based on the following considerations (Hernández-Encuentra et al. 2009, p.241):

> introduction during a period of the lifespan in which it triggers mechanisms for selection and optimization does not have the same implications as when introduced during a period which would activate mechanisms of compensation. The new technologies should be useful as tools for personal development and not as tools to replace what has been lost.

The theoretical background to Hernández-Encuentra et al.'s (2009) study thus disrupts the problem/solution component of *the enabling machine and elderly individuals* narrative. No problem has been found for which technology is the answer. Instead technology is seen as a tool for ongoing personal and social development; this 'active' formulation is a more positive conceptualisation of the relationship between older people and the possibilities provided by computers.

DESIRABLE COMMODITY?

Published in the *Journal of Consumer Marketing,* Eastman and Iyer's (2004) article on the elderly's uses and attitudes towards the internet signals its affiliation with Richardson's (2006) master narrative of '*The desirable commodity and grey consumers'.* One of the factors that Eastman and Iyer (2004, p.210) highlight as having an impact on the elderly's use of the internet is 'Reference group and social impact on Internet use'. Reference group affiliations are seen as a key component in whether a senior citizen is likely to use the internet or not, for example:

> do they associate themselves with reference groups that do/do not display an affinity for technology and is there psychic reward from their reference groups for utilizing technology? (Eastman & Iyer 2004, p.210)

Use of the internet is also seen as dependent on the nature of a senior citizen's social relations, i.e.:

> those seniors who saw the Internet as a useful tool to strengthen social bonds were more likely to use the Internet (Eastman & Iyer 2004, p.210)

Additionally, those seniors who were still working would come into contact with additional reference groups who could have an impact on their likelihood of using the Internet (Eastman & Iyer 2004, p.210). Finally, in this section on key social factors, Eastman and Iyer (2004, p.210) point out that usage is often begun at the "urging of relatives who want to stay in closer touch with them". In their section on 'Benefits of using the Internet for the elderly', Eastman and Iyer (2004, p.211) suggest that they are "finding a new means to reconnect with others". In fact, they state that the biggest reason for senior adult PC usage is personal correspondence (Eastman & Iyer 2004, p.211). In the conclusion to their article Eastman and Iyer (2004, p.217) suggest that future research is needed to:

> compare the social interactions between those seniors who use the Internet and those who do not (i.e. are online seniors more sociable than those who do not go online).

Eastman and Iyer (2004, p.217) also offer a segmentation device based on the Young Old (55-64), the Mature Old (65-74) and the Old (75+). Since the article is aimed at Internet marketers, the focus is on understanding older people in order to improve promotional campaigns and not on older people *per se*. There is a tension here between the benefits provided to older people and the profit to be made out of them.

CHANGING PATTERNS OF COMMUNICATION

White and Weatherall's (2000, p.382) grounded theory study of older adults and technology highlights that older people recognise the computer as being important for its social and communication functions. In particular, they choose to stress from their research that the technology is not only changing the speed of delivery but also the nature of the communication (White & Weatherall 2000, p.382). They therefore suggest that the ways in which ICT may be affecting older adult's communication is worthy of further research (White & Weatherall 2000, p.382). More particularly they suggest analysing the "effect of computer-mediated communication on patterns of intergenerational communication" (White & Weatherall 2000, p.384). To acknowledge this idea of 'change' for people who have not grown up with these social technologies, the present study will encompass ways that older people frame that 'change' both in general and personal terms, implicit in this being the idea of changed social interaction between the generations.

UTOPIC / DYSTOPIC

Richardson et al. (2005) carried out a study regarding older New Zealanders perceptions of computing. One of the benefits most often expressed in this study was the idea of 'connectedness' (Richardson et al. 2005, p.233) that the use of ICT facilitates. In Richardson et al.'s (2005, p.233) study the concept encompasses connections to both information and to the modern world. Older people noted particularly that use of email and the internet had "enhanced connections to family members" and hence "their feelings of inclusion within previously fragmented family networks" (Richardson et al. 2005, p.233). Of special value was the ability to communicate with their grandchildren through email (Richardson et al. 2005, p.233). But email had also "furthered connections to friends, old and new, real and virtual" (Richardson et al. 2005, p.234). Yet, paradoxically the same study found that some people worried that their use of the computer was negatively affecting their interpersonal relationships; they felt guilty about spending time with their computer at the expense of their partner (Richardson et al. 2005, p.236). Her study therefore draws attention to the utopic/dystopic debate highlighted below (Social Debates concerning ICT) with regards to the social usage and social consequences of information and communication technologies. Some of the study questions for the present research are inspired by this particular article, and are designed to determine where older people's opinions lie with regards to whether ICTs have negative or

positive social consequences. Interestingly in this context, Richardson et al. (2005, p.236) quote one older person as saying:

> "It… [sic] dictates who I choose as friends. I can't be bothered to write to people in longhand or ring up on an expensive toll call.

Although, this is cited as an example of how the computer takes up too much time at the expense of other tasks and people, it is interesting for its unvoiced technologically determinist implication that ICT actually dictates one's more immediate social circle through ease of contact via such communication systems as email. People, it appears, will simply communicate (more often) with those with whom it is easiest to communicate. In this context, ICT seems to be held responsible for a moderation of social behaviour; it has been anthropomorphosised into an entity which can exert social agency in its own right. In their study, Richardson et al (2005, p.240) are concerned with the impact on policy of their research findings, and therefore choose to emphasise the positive social outcomes of ICT usage. As a result, they recommend that the New Zealand Government focus:

> less promotional attention on the national economic and government-based benefits of ICTs and more on the 'people-centred' […] social, emotional and informational benefits to individuals and communities (Richardson et al. 2005, p.240).

As this article presented here is not directly concerned with the social uses of ICT, it does not offer a more theoretical basis for understanding the field, other than the idea of social 'connectedness'.

PARTICIPATION AND ENVISIONING FUTURES

Eggermont et al.'s (2006, p.199) study looks at two trends of society in parallel, "the greying of society and the technology-induced transformation of everyday life". To do this, they adopted a three phase approach relying on "methods of participatory technology assessment and technology foresighting" – i.e. participatory and anticipatory techniques (Eggermont et al. 2006, p.199):

- Scenarios of the future were developed (from a literature review, expert discussions, and focus groups with older people).
- These scenarios were turned into a play for older audiences, then group discussions led to the formulation of the 'desired future'.
- Discussions were held to formulate policy recommendations to achieve this desired future.

The initial phase highlighted two key variables. The first of these is the rate of advancement of technology – will society be "permeated by highly innovative technologies" or only "slightly more technologised compared to present day society"? (Eggermont et al. 2006, p.206). The second variable is the rate of adoption of these technologies by older people – high versus low (Eggermont et al. 2006, p.206). From these variables and a consideration of some impacting factors, four future scenarios were developed as follows (Eggermont et al. 2006, p.206):[26]

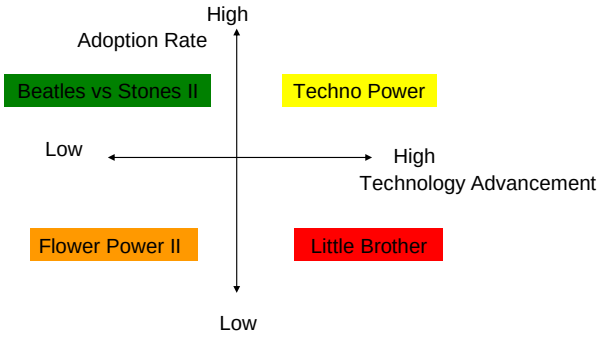

Figure 10 Four future scenarios for older people and ICT (Eggermont et al. 2006)

These future scenarios – with their impact on social relations between and within the generations - are defined as follows (Eggermont et al. 2006, p.206):[27]

Table 8 Future scenarios for social relations (Eggermont et al. 2006)

Beatles vs Stones II	**Techno Power**
Technology is still prominent. There is a growing gap between older people who are healthy and wealthy adopters and those who are not. Not the intergenerational differences but the intragenerational differences are central in this scenario. This is the more realistic scenario.	Highly advanced technological applications (paradigm shift) are adopted by a large proportion of older people and this leads to their empowerment. Senior citizens participate in all societal areas. Ageism does not exist anymore. The intergenerational differences are small. Disadvantage = technology dependence. Most utopian scenario.
Flower Power II	**Little Brother**
Technological advancement is limited, due to societal resistance to more technology. Older people are first in line for fight to return to authenticity[28] and face-to-face contacts. Baby boomers are in their prime. Downside may be missed opportunities. Like the Techno Power scenario this is a positive scenario for older people.	Technology plays a major role, but older people are disempowered. Senior citizens become isolated and estranged. They are huge in number but marginal in society. Younger people rule and use technology to 'assist' the elderly. They feel controlled. Intergenerational gap is large. Worst case scenario for older people.

[26] Eggermont et al.'s own diagram.
[27] Table created from the definitions given in the text.
[28] Authenticity is a key word for the present study.

As their study was not solely concerned with social contact, some of the findings relevant to the field have been extracted below. In terms of the wanted/unwanted future one of the main headings was given as 'Social Relationships' (Eggermont et al. 2006, pp.211):

Table 9 Social Relationships and older people (Eggermont et al. 2006)

Social Relationships	**What we do want**	**What we do NOT want**
	1. ICT that **supports other social contacts** (e.g. e-mailing with friends abroad, making appointments using ICT, distributing and receiving information with regard to club life, keeping in touch with other people when immobile, etc.) 37.8% 2. **Personal face-to-face contacts** (family life, parties, etc.) 24.4%	1. **Disappearance of physical human contact** and its negative consequences (loneliness, bad family relationships, etc.) 48.8%

Under the majority of the other main topics in the future section – 'Health', 'Leisure', 'Work, Education and Learning', Public and Private Services', 'Housing' and 'Mobility outside the Home' (the only exception here being 'Political Participation') – the disappearance of human or face-to face contact was also stated as something that was NOT wanted (Eggermont et al. 2006, pp.211-212). This highlights a key concern voiced by older people in this study about the overall social impact of ICT usage in all walks of life, and how it must not be allowed to replace what they see as the more authentic form of human contact (Eggermont et al. 2006, p.213). Eggermont et al. (2006, p. 213) saw this as older people's expression of "how they value the right of self-determination; they do not want their lives to be led by others". Here we see the benchmark of face-to-face contact in operation (see section on Social Debates below). Since their study was not specifically about the social aspects of ICT usage by older people, there is no underlying theory to be extracted from the research. However, of relevance to NDA and Sus-IT, the study ranks participatory techniques highly and has incorporated them in novel ways, illustrating what can be done with time and creativity. The study engages with Richardson's (2006) 'the potential divider and senior citizens' master narrative in that it acknowledges that ICT could act as a potential 'social divider' by having a negative impact on the social lives of older people under some of the identified 'future scenarios', for example by reducing face to face contact. But, on the other hand, the study's participatory methods allow older people to explore ideas directly, allowing the unfreezing of meanings related to

ICT and the creation instead of 'older person-led' narratives rather than ones that have been imposed on them from without.

3.2.2 The social aspects of technology as a main topic in the literature on older people and technology

UTOPIC / DYSTOPIC

Sum et al.'s (2008) short paper is based on the results of their online questionnaire which they used to survey 222 adults over the age of 55 about their internet use and its impact on social well-being. In doing so, this again draws attention to the ongoing debate about "whether Internet use increases or decreases social connection and about its psychological benefits" (Sum et al. 2008, p. 208). The study found that "using the Internet for communication with relatives and friends was specifically associated with lower levels of social loneliness" (Sum et al. 2008, p. 210). By contrast, "using the Internet for communication with unknown people was associated with greater levels of family loneliness" (Sum et al. 2008, p. 210). The study concludes that (Sum et al. 2008, p. 210):

> it is appropriate to alert seniors to different effects of the Internet and lead them to the use of specific functions of the Internet with the aim of reducing feelings of loneliness in order to increase their well-being.

This study purports to use Weiss's theory of loneliness but fails to elaborate on either the theory itself or their specific use of it.[29] From their paper it is thus difficult to determine whether this would make a valid contribution to the theoretical underpinnings of the study of older people's use of ICTs in a social context. In passing it also alerts the reader to the idea of ICTs as a 'change' factor within the social lives of older people.

MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS

Ling (2008a) invites us to consider whether we should be concerned that the elderly do not text. In a sense this reframes Richardson's (2006) problem/solution narratives by asking if there is actually a problem that needs solving. Various other key questions are posed for consideration. The first of these is whether we should view

[29] The citation is given as:
Weiss, R. (1973). *Loneliness: the experience of emotional and social isolation.* Cambridge: MIT Press.

older people as "potential users should the technology become more user-friendly" or are the "elderly, and in particular the "older" elderly […] not a part of the digital world"? (Ling 2008a, p.334). The latter question, in a sense, revolves around whether this is an issue related to the life phase in which that person finds themselves or of the birth cohort to which that person belongs, but it is also a matter of technology design (Ling 2008a, p.334). Problems with design move any potential issue away from the person to the technology itself; the older person is not, or does not have, the problem but technology is/does. The second question posed by Ling (2008a, p.334) is:

> are we the agents of our own situation or do the actions of others play into and help to form our own relationship to various artefacts in society?

If there is an expectation that older people do not text, then no-one will text them, and so they will not be given an opportunity to engage in this form of social dialogue (Ling 2008a, p.335). This again moves the 'problem' away from older people and frames it instead within the context of their social circle. Ling (2008a, p.337) suggests that the ability to determine the potential role that a mobile phone will play in people's lives comes from their perceived needs and desires. According to Ling (2008a, p.337) this forms part of the theory of the uses and gratifications approach to understanding technology adoption. He (2008a, p.337) also goes on to say that these needs and desires can be socially informed by interaction with others in society. Reframing the issue in societal terms does remove the focus away from older people as being the problem, but the unfortunate side-effect is that it denies them agency in their social situations. Older people need to signal their desire to text, but the barriers to this need to be overcome (Ling 2008a, p.339). Mobile phones designed to facilitate text entry (large keys, intuitive predictive text), training, and a motivation to begin may all be required (Ling 2008a, p.339).

DESIGN FOR AMBIGUITY AND LACK OF STIGMA

Sokoler and Svensson (2007, p.298) frame their experience of designing socially-oriented technology within the social aspects of growing older. These they perceive to be:

> diminishing social networks, changed patterns of interactions with family, moving to a new place with new neighbours, and the loss of a spouse (Sokoler & Svensson 2007, p.298)

But this is consistent with Richardson's (2005) master narrative of *the enabling machine and elderly individuals,* in that the social aspects of later life are perceived negatively as a problem to be solved by utopic technology. Paradoxically, the ideas backing up their method of design are deliberately aimed at circumventing the stigma associated with such a 'diminished' view of an older person's social context. Their discussion is supported by the following perspectives (Sokoler & Svensson 2007, p.99):

- A perspective on the population of older adults emphasizing that it is a population of resourceful individuals
- A perspective on social interaction emphasizing its circumstantial nature as an inherent part of everyday human activities
- A perspective on the role of digital technology emphasizing its role as merely one of many resources present for human action in the world

These perspectives alter the balance of *the enabling machine and elderly individuals* master narrative. The first perspective enables a more positive discourse within which to site the older person, who is no longer merely a passive recipient of technology but an active, 'resourceful' individual for whom the problematising, and often embarrassing, stigma of lonely isolation has been removed. The second perspective allows for social interaction to take place more naturalistically rather than being forced by a change to technology; technology is thus not deterministic in this perspective but allows for human choice and meanings to intervene and predominate. In the third perspective, technology is not the only saviour of older humankind but takes its proper place amongst a range of available options for social interaction and expression. Underlying the analytical orientation to their work, Sokoler and Svensson (2007, p.299) note three key influential social thinkers – Garfinkel, Goffman and Sacks.[30] It is important for older people to be able to increase their social circle without signalling the stigma associated with loneliness (Sokoler & Svensson 2007, p.300). In connection with this, Sokoler and Svensson

[30] Their citations are (as they cite them):
GARFINKEL, H., 1967, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall).
GOFFMAN, E., 1959, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books).
GOFFMAN, E., 1963, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall).
GOFFMAN, E., 1967, *Interaction Rituals: Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill).
SACKS, H., 1992, *Lectures on Conversation: Volumes I and II* (Oxford: Blackwell).

(2007, p.300) note Sacks as suggesting that in everyday life people need a "ticket to talk", which can be as simple as walking the dog in the park. Sokoler and Svensson's (2007, p.300) work is based on the belief that:

> the ways in which people present themselves and interact with others in everyday life builds on an inherent ambiguity of intentions and purposeful actions. People tend to say and do things less explicitly in order to save themselves from embarrassment and give room for impression management (Goffman 1959, 1967)

They also note gardening as a key way in which these ambiguous interactions can occur (Sokoler & Svensson 2007, p.301). Such everyday activities allow for visibility (being noticed) and availability (for social interaction) (Sokoler & Svensson 2007, p.301). These ideas concerning everyday social activity extend into digital technology design practice, such that the technology should be non-stigmatising, not techno-centric, more inclusive and non-monolithic (Sokoler & Svensson 2007, p.302). Three themes for design permeate the study (Sokoler & Svensson 2007, p.302):

- Allowing room for ambiguity by leaving things unsaid.
- Utilizing existing everyday activities when looking for enablers of social interaction.
- The integration of digital technology with other resources for human interaction.

Sokoler and Svensson's (2007, p.303) design concept is the idea of the PresenceRemote (PR), an enhanced TV remote control, which would tap into an older person's usual everyday activities, and make it possible for people "to notice others and be noticed within [their] community as [they] watch TV". When the TV is off but the PR is on, it would indicate how many people in the community have their TV turned on, which may lead to switching on the TV and going to the most popular channel being watched by the community (Sokoler & Svensson 2007, p.304). When both TV and PR are on, the PR will display the names of buddies who are watching TV; should one of these be selected the PR would hand over to a mobile phone which would leave the TV viewing experience intact (Sokoler & Svensson 2007, p.304). This should be compared to other TV technologies (e.g. Amigo TV) which propose to make watching television more community orientated by allowing comments to be exchanged on screen about the programmes being viewed (Sokoler & Svensson 2007, p.303). In the work of Garfinkel, Goffman and Sacks, Sokoler and Svensson (2007) seem to have found a set of social theoretical principles which allow for sociotechnical concepts to be developed that could help to eliminate the ageing-

as-problem narrative inherent in the studies identified by Richardson (2006). As a result, their study also gives a useful theoretical background which Richardson (2006) had noted as being lacking generally across the field of research.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION/INCLUSION

Haddon's (2000) study adopts Richardson's (2006) narrative of *the potential divider and senior citizens*, whereby social exclusion is the problem and ICT is the fix, although the study is slightly broader than older people since it also encompasses single parents. Haddon (2000, p.389) asks what it means to actually 'participate' in society, in other words what social roles should people fulfil? These questions refer back to older discussions of social rights and citizenship (Haddon 2000, p.389). Alongside this, Haddon (2000, p.389) goes on to query "what role ICTs, both current and future, might play in relation to social exclusion". The aim in this study becomes to explore (Haddon 2000, p.389):

> How the specialness of many ICTs, and by extension of newer or future ICTs, lies in their particular role of facilitating connection with wider society. This is especially so through the interpersonal and mass media of communication which both practically and symbolically enable participation in the social and cultural world.

This study focuses on TV and telephony in order to assess the future usage of the internet. At the time of the study the people involved had had no access to the internet (Haddon 2000, p.403). This is perhaps a reflection of the age of the study and how quickly things have moved on. Twelve years of internet usage have now elapsed since this study appeared in the literature. However some of the questions posed by the article may still have validity (Haddon 2000, pp.403-404):

- Can a lack of access to the technology mean that (new forms of) information or communication passed around within social networks are missed?
- Just how important is it for different social groups to have new forms of maintaining links with distant social networks?
- To what extent will different social groups perceive the content of the web ambivalently, just as they do in regards to TV content?

This article is useful for the questions it raises (rather than answers perhaps) about the nature of social 'participation', although it does not really add to theory nor challenge the debate surrounding the master narrative with which it engages. It is

presented to show the type of study that has been included under the remit of the social uses and consequences of ICT.

Another study which posits itself under the banner of social inclusion is that of Mennecozzi et al. (2001)[31] who use 'familiarity' based design in the construction of an interactive table-top device specifically targeted at older people. This method of design gives preference to new artefacts that "embody meanings and practices already known by seniors, and that do not force them to 'adapt' to new paradigms and to learn a new language" (Mennecozzi et al. 2001). The study aimed to analyse the following elements of older adults' social interaction (Mennecozzi et al. 2001):

- The composition of elder's social network
- The channels through which relationships are maintained
- The social norms and the role of the artefacts in sustaining these relationships

The study used participatory focus groups with stimulus material in the form of comic strips to elicit the discussion and ideas on which the hypothesis for design was eventually based (Mennecozzi et al. 2001). The stimulus material unfortunately portrays older people as sad and lonely, which conforms to one of the problematising negative stereotypes of age. Old age is thus a 'problem' of loneliness, a meaning imposed on older people from without, and the problem is to be solved by our usual hero - 'socialite' technology. This said, the study produces some useful findings which have been beneficial for the production of research questions for the present study. The first of these is the configuration of factors characterising communications with close friends and relatives, which can be given diagrammatically as below (Mennecozzi et al. 2001):

[31] Although the date on the article is given as 2001, the citations refer to publications published after this date. The latest citation year being given as 2008.

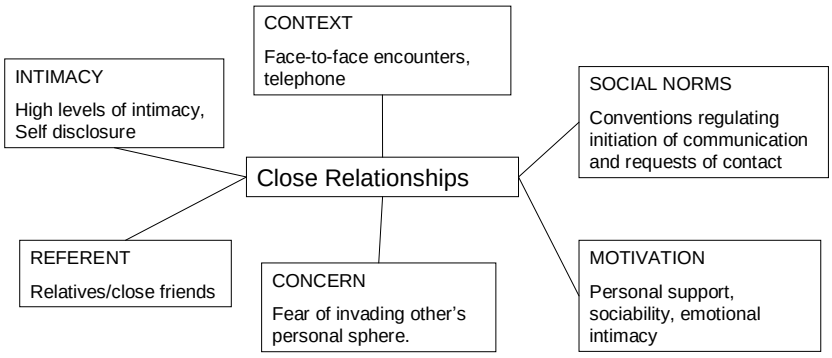

Figure 11 Characterising communications with close friends and relatives (Mennecozzi et al. 2001)

The second of these is a configuration of factors defining the relationship between older adults and their peer group (Mennecozzi et al. 2001):

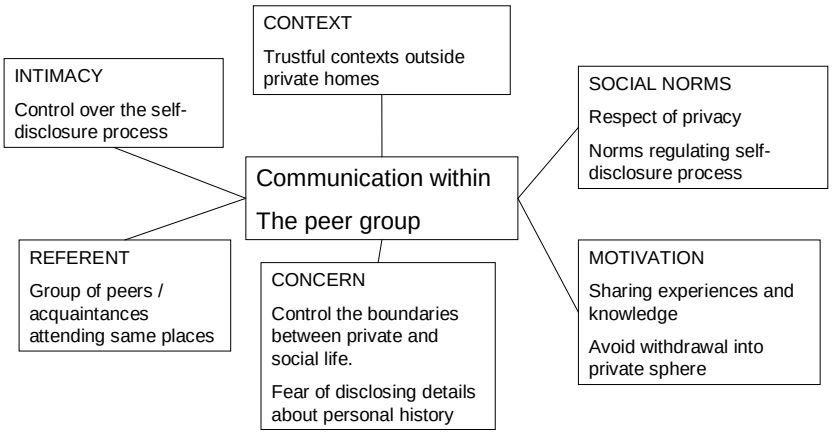

Figure 12 Characterising communications within the peer group (Mennecozzi et al. 2001)

These diagrams provide a useful way of summarising and visualising the social world of older adults. To enable support for the private sphere, the table top device provides a 'Social Window', which gives access to the closest social network (Mennecozzi et al. 2001). Contrastingly, to enable support for the public sphere the device provides a 'Public Square' (Mennecozzi et al. 2001). Although this purports to be a device enabling e-Inclusion, it is not of itself inclusive since it is aimed at older people and not the general population. This raises the question of whether the

functionality is compatible with other computing devices currently available; lack of compatibility would dramatically reduce the social community available to the older person. It is also possible that its novel design may have a stigmatising effect signalling that the person who is using it is old, an unwanted side-effect of designing an artefact with only one audience in mind.

3.2.3 Comments on the field and moving the field forward

The available literature on the social uses of ICT does indeed complicate and extend Richardson's (2006) three master narratives. Some of the research makes valuable attempts to go beyond the formulation of later life as a problem to be solved, to find more dignified and positive approaches to the concept of ageing which involve notions of ongoing personal and social development. The research however remains incomplete in that there is no comprehensive research into what social uses are being made of ICT by older people as the research often focuses on one 'issue' or on developing one particular piece of new technology.

The present study intends to move the field forward by:

- discovering what kinds of positive, active 'digital identity' can be created by older people in their social uses of ICT rather than engaging with negative constructs (although these will no doubt be highlighted in conversations with older people).
- making a substantial contribution towards determining the actual social uses of ICT made by older people, and how they feel about it and experience it on a day-to-day basis.
- using a grounded theory approach to create new theory which will combat Richardson's (2005) criticism that the field is 'atheoretical'.
- Using phenomenology to demonstrate the 'lived experience' of the phenomenon, which is not recorded by any of the researchers reviewed for this study either as an approach or a subject of study.

3.3 Who are 'older people'?

For the purposes of this research, older people can be defined as anyone aged 50 or over during the lifetime of the study, although it is not proposed to involve anyone born after 1960. However, this simple statement hides a fairly complex and heterogeneous set of demographics, as will be explained below.

3.3.1 The term 'older people'

The term 'older people' is in itself contentious. A Eurobarometer survey tried to cut through the academic debate on the issue by asking people directly across 12 states of the EU "what do you prefer to be called?" (Walker & Maltby 1997, p.17). Even bearing in mind that this survey was conducted with people aged 60 and over, the fact that the debate rages over just a subsection of the target group is in itself an illustration of the complexity of the issue. The results from the survey can be tabulated as follows:[32]

Table 10 What older people prefer to be called (Walker & Maltby 1997)

TERM THE PERSON PREFERRED (RESPONDENTS COULD ADD THEIR OWN TERMS)	PERCENTAGE
Elderly	6.6
Older people	27.4
Senior Citizens	30.9
Retired	15
The old/The aged/Old Aged People	10.6
60 plus	1.1
Golden Age/Golden Years/Golden Oldies	0.2
Pensioners	1.1
Others	5.5
None/Don't Know	1.6

It is interesting to note that the most popular term across Europe was 'Senior Citizens', indicating a preference to be thought of as people "who just happen to be older than some others, or as citizens like the rest of the community" (Walker & Maltby 1997, p.18). The issue is a thorny one because as Walker and Maltby (1997,

[32] This has been tabulated from the graph they provide on p.16.

p.18) point out, "labels carry symbolic meanings". The term selected for the study target group – 'older people' – is the next most popular on the list. It has been chosen because the study encompasses more than just those over the age of retirement, and hence it is the more generic term. It also carries less pejorative connotations; for example, 'elderly' with its accumulated association of frailness or feebleness would certainly be out of place here for most people in their 50s. 'Older' is also a relative term, rather than an absolute term, as suggested above; therefore participants are not being labelled as definitively 'aged' or 'old'. However, it should be noted that some of the study participants who are in their fifties still rejected the term 'older'. So even this term was not universally popular amongst the target population. The intention was to tell people the age-range intended by the study in order to circumvent this type of labelling.

3.3.2 Further categorisation of 'older people'

THE THIRD AND FOURTH AGE

A further consideration of the work of Walker and Maltby (1997, p.17) indicates that the target population (the people aged fifty plus) can be subdivided into two main groups :

- the third age (50-74) – defined as "the period of life when, freed from paid work and parenting, people can involve themselves in active, independent life" (Walker & Maltby 1997, p.17).
- the fourth age (75 and over) – defined as "the age of eventual dependence" (Walker & Maltby 1997, p.17).

This concept of 'the third age', as defined above, is one of the main reasons for the lower age value of this study being set at 50. Sus-IT aims to prolong this period of 'autonomy' by appropriate use of information and communications technologies, so that the age of 'eventual dependence' is staved off for as long as possible.

CATEGORISATION DEPENDENT ON YEAR OF BIRTH – 'BABY BOOMERS' AND 'PRE BOOMERS'

The categories and labels given so far are in a sense ahistorical, in that they do not depend on the actual year when a particular person was born but denote the age that they have reached.[33] However, it has been recognised that the era through

[33] Although in a sense, it could be said that the categories and labels are in themselves historical phenomena as they change over time.

which a person lived can have a lasting effect on attitudes and beliefs. Categorisation has therefore been introduced to enable distinctions to be drawn dependent on the generation to which an individual belongs. At the time of writing one of these categories is the 'new old', otherwise known as the 'baby boomers' – those who were born between 1945 and 1965 (Huber & Skidmore 2003, p.32)[34]. These people would now (2010) be aged between 45 and 65.[35] The 'baby boomer's should be set in contradistinction to the 'pre-boomers' who would now be classed as the 'old old' and at the time of writing (2010) would be over the age of 65. Whilst wary of making sweeping generalisations, Huber & Skidmore (2003, p.32) think it is a worthwhile exercise to try and pinpoint some of the characteristics of the 'baby boomer' generation. Huber & Skidmore (2003, p.33) do this partly out of a recognition that this is a 'vanguard generation', or in other words they have actively instigated the changes they have lived through. The key differences between 'baby boomers' and 'pre boomers' can be given in the following table produced by Huber & Skidmore (2003. p.41):

Table 11 Differences between pre boomers and baby boomers (Huber & Skidmore 2003)

Pre boomers (old old)	Baby boomers (new old)
Deferential	Insurgent
Conservative	Liberal
Collectivist	Individualist
Insiders	Outsiders
Mainstream	Counterculture
Austerity	Consumption
Rationing	TV dinners

These differences, it is argued, are a product of key historical events and experiences, notable amongst these being the 'pre boomers' experience of the Second World War and the 'baby boomers' association with Sixties countercultures (Huber & Skidmore 2003, p.34). These forces, as outlined below, help to explain the elements of the above table:

[34] This is taken from a report produced by Demos – "Demos is a think-tank focused on power and politics. We search for and communicate ideas to give people more power to shape their own lives. Demos' vision is a democracy of free citizens, with an equal stake in society" (DEMOS 2010).
[35] This is a particularly interesting category for me as I fall into the last year of the Baby Boomers - being born in 1965, I reach 45 this year (time of writing this section is 2010).

- **Individualism v Collectivism, Mainstream v Counterculture and Insiders v Outsiders** – the so-called Dunkirk Spirit of wartime led to a greater feeling of collective solidarity amongst 'pre boomers'. Baby boomers did not experience the shaping processes of this group force but instead developed a form of individualism based on the Sixties distrust of 'the establishment' and the prevailing countercultural tendencies (Huber & Skidmore 2003, p.34). The 'baby boomers' thus set themselves outside of mainstream culture. However Huber and Skidmore (2003, p.25) view all of this as somewhat ironic since the 'baby boomers' now are the establishment.
- **Deferential v Insurgent** – The 'baby boomers' distrust of the establishment marks a move away from the deferential attitudes of the 'pre boomer' generation (Huber & Skidmore 2003, p.35).
- **Austerity v Consumption and Rationing v TV Dinners** – Baby boomers have grown up in a consumerist society, with greater affluence, and subject to the forces of advertising (Huber & Skidmore 2003, p.35). All these influences have encouraged them to define themselves by the products and services they choose for themselves (Huber & Skidmore 2003, p.36).
- **Conservative v Liberal** – the liberalism of the 'baby boomers' can be explained by their being the 'vanguard of the sexual revolution' or the 'architects of the permissive society' (Huber & Skidmore 2003, p.38). Such liberalism extends beyond sexual attitudes to encompass e.g. politics, drugs (Huber & Skidmore 2003, p.39).

Huber and Skidmore (2003, p.43) summarise in tabular form other key influences affecting the 'baby boomer' generation:

Table 12 Key influences affecting the baby boomer generation (Huber & Skidmore 2003)

1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
Benefitting from introduction of comprehensive secondary education and NHS	Berlin Wall built	Divorce Reform Act implemented	80s boom	Thatcher resigns
Onset of TV Age	Economic growth and consumer spending boom	Environmental movement, CND	Aids	Black Wednesday
	Rapid expansion of higher education	Winter of Discontent	Live Aid	Tony Blair, 'New Labour' elected
	Protest movements – Vietnam, feminism, race relations, gay rights	Margaret Thatcher elected	Retreat of welfare state, and privatisation	
	Rock, Beatles, drug culture, flower power	Recession and high unemployment	Divorce and family breakdown	
	Pill available on NHS		Black Monday, house price crash	
	First moon landing		Health and fitness boom	

			Berlin Wall falls	

Huber & Skidmore's (2003, p.47) report goes on to argue that the picture drawn so far of the 'baby boomer' generation, which tends to homogenise them as a demographic, is part of a sociocultural construct that has developed over time, but that the actuality of them as an 'age cohort' is slightly more complex due in part to the following:

> [the late baby boomers] were born into a period of prosperity – experiencing the consumer spending boom of the 1960s and comprehensive secondary education. But by the time they came to enter the labour market at the end of the 1970s, the economy was entering a recession, resulting in sharp rises in unemployment… Some of this group have never had a permanent full-time job. The spirit of radicalism and freedom, enjoyed by the preceding baby boom cohort was missing… 1984 saw the first person diagnosed with AIDS, and so marked the end of the sexual revolution. In contrast with the 1960s, the 1980s were symbolised by the rise of the 'yuppie' and the imperatives of the private sector. (Huber & Skidmore 2003, p.43)[36]

They are therefore an internally riven grouping whose heterogeneity can be understood from the following table (Huber & Skidmore 2003, p.47):

Table 13 Difference between the baby boomers as a sociocultural construct and as an age cohort

Boomers as a sociocultural construct	Boomers as age cohort
Homogeneity	Heterogeneity
Middle-class	Major class differentials
68ers	Mixed motifs (e.g. Yuppie)
Monoculturalism	Multiculturalism
Affluence	Income inequality
Highly Educated	Many poorly qualified
Gender equality	Persistent gender inequality
Sexual Revolution	AIDS generation

FULL DEMOGRAPHIC CATEGORISATION SCHEMES

The baby boomer and pre boomer cohorts should be understood within the overall context of the following birth cohort classification systems. These are American classification systems. The first one given below, according to Wikipedia (2010), was developed by Schuman and Scott in 1989:

[36] Huber & Skidmore are citing Evandrou (ed.), *Baby boomers – Ageing in the 21st century*

Table 14 Demographic categorisation scheme (Schuman & Scott 1989)

Name of Cohort[37]	Time Period	Events	Characteristics
Depression Cohort	1912 to 1921	The Great Depression, high levels of unemployment, poverty, lack of creature comforts, financial uncertainty	strive for financial security, risk averse, waste-not-want-not attitude, strive for comfort
Pre World War II Cohort	1922 to 1927	men leaving to go to war and many not returning, the personal experience of the war, women working in factories, focus on defeating a common enemy	the nobility of sacrifice for the common good, patriotism, team player
World War II Cohort	1928 to 1945	sustained economic growth, social tranquility, The Cold War, McCarthyism, drug culture	conformity, conservatism, traditional values (manners, taboos) traditional family values
Baby Boomer Cohort #1	1946 to 1954	assassinations of JFK, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, political unrest, walk on the moon, Vietnam War, anti-war protests, social experimentation, sexual freedom, civil rights movement, environmental movement, women's movement, protests and riots, experimentation with various intoxicating recreational substances	experimental, individualism, free spirited, social cause oriented
Boomer cohort #2 - "Generation Jones"	1955-1965	Watergate, Nixon resigns, the cold war, the oil embargo, raging inflation, Disco, gasoline shortages	less optimistic, pragmatic, general cynicism
Generation X Cohort	1966 to 1980	*Challenger* explosion, Iran-Contra, Reaganomics, AIDS, Star Wars, MTV, the home computer, safe sex, divorce, single parent families, end of cold war-fall of Berlin wall, desert storm	quest for emotional security, independent, informality, entrepreneurial
Millennial Cohort (Generation Y)	1981 to 2001	rise of the internet, September 11 attacks, cultural diversity, two wars in Iraq, Global financial crisis of 2008–2009	quest for physical security and safety, heightened fears, acceptance of change, technically savvy, environmental issues

[37] This is taken from Wikipedia – the original is from Schuman and Scott (1989).

The following classification system is from the US Census Bureau (Wikipedia 2010):

Table 15 Demographic categorisation scheme (US Census Bureau)

Name of Cohort[38]	Time Period
Classics	1900-1920
Baby Bust (I)	1920-1945
Baby Boomers	1945-1965
Generation X (Baby Bust II)	1965-1976
Echo Boomers	1976-1994

These two full classification schemes have been included so that the target population can be set in a demographic context alongside their children and grand-children, who either experienced ICTs through work or grew up with them. According to Wikipedia (2010) Schuman and Scott's scheme refers particularly to the Generation Y-ers (the Millennial Cohort) and that their key formative influence is that of the rise of the internet.

3.4. Social Debates concerning ICT

This section provides a very brief introduction to three key social debates concerning information and communication technologies, although reference has been made to them in the preceding sections already. The first of these concerns those who feel that the new media are a force for social good versus those who take the view that they are actually eroding community. The second of these debates concerns whether we control these media or they control us; do we socially construct their meaning between us, or are we (socio)technologically determined by them? The third debate concerns whether we should privilege face-to-face communication as the standard by which all other communication should be judged, or whether we should examine each new method of social interaction on its own merits to see what benefits it affords. They are raised here in order to demonstrate later where older people call on these discourses specifically in their discussions.

[38] From Wikipedia.

3.4.1 Constructing new community or eroding old community?

There exists a debate within the theoretical literature on the precise nature of the cumulative social impact of information and communication technologies. Whilst it should be noted that some authors hold to a predominant view which is either overtly pessimistic or optimistic, it is possible for some authors to discuss both angles in their work.

A PESSIMISTIC VIEW

A predominantly pessimistic view is taken in Bugeja's (2005, p.ix) book *The interpersonal divide,* a phrase which signals:

> the social gap that develops when individuals misperceive reality because of media overconsumption and misinterpret others because of technology overuse.

Bugeja (2005, pp.40-41) maintains that it is part of the "human condition" to "interact with each other face-to-face in physical habitat, developing language and social skills", and from this "we learn the importance of timing and articulation". The use of ICT, he argues, is causing us to lose those aptitudes because we are enticed to "interact on impulse" (Bugeja 2005, p.41). Bugeja (2005, pp.41-42) argues that communication suffers when:

- Contact is untimely rather than opportune (communication is then experienced as an interruption of some other activity)
- Content is capricious rather than cogent (impulse leads to a failure to articulate our thoughts properly)
- Dialogue is mediated rather than meaningful (electronic communication filters out some of the cues, content, motive)
- Consciousness is divided rather than directed (the real interrupts the virtual and vice versa)

Bugeja (2005, p.78) questions whether such communication gives us true social support, or whether these are "pale, uni-dimensional pieces of social interaction". Is it true social interaction or just a soliloquy (Bugeja 2005, p.78)? Here Bugeja is questioning whether we are just talking to ourselves if, devoid of all other human content, we are dealing solely in electronic words (Bugeja 2005, p.78). In fact, he maintains that in cyberspace "activities are simulated rather than authentic" and "people de-evolve in virtual environments into symbols (hypertext, pixels, logins)"

(Bugeja 2005, p.84). Overuse of such inauthentic technology as a mode of communication, it is argued, will have a subsequent effect on our ability to communicate authentically face-to-face, which will erode our relationships (Bugeja 2005, p.168). But it will also erode our relationships simply because we have less time for them due to our preoccupation with the technology (Bugeja 2005, p.180).

Bugeja evidently privileges a face-to-face view of human social contact, but in a dispersed world where people's relatives and friends are no longer in close proximity does this then mean that a social life is precluded? Bugeja's pessimistic view thus has pessimistic consequences. Is a redefinition of the idea of 'social' required, so that it is more encompassing of the new social modalities afforded by technology?

AN OPTIMISTIC VIEW

The title of Ling's (2008b) book *New tech, new ties* goes part way to providing an answer to the question posed above, by suggesting that we do not need to have a static view of what 'social' really means, since we can define new social ties in accordance with what each new piece of technology is able to provide. This would seem to be a more open and accepting response to how technology might become a factor in "reshaping social cohesion" (Ling 2008b)[39]. This phrase in itself is an optimistic one since it suggests that new technology can indeed move us towards, rather than away from, a socially cohesive society, even if that society now takes a different form than previously was the case.

Ling's (2008b, p.5) theoretical background is taken from the work on ritual and how it provides the "catharsis underlying social cohesion" as developed by Durkheim and elaborated by Goffman and Collins. Durkheim's sociological work appeared in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries so it is noteworthy that the very latest technology of the twenty-first century is being underpinned by theory that pre-existed such phenomena by quite a margin of time. This theoretical background of Durkheim/Goffman/Collins occurs in other works concerning the social aspects of ICT, as has become apparent in the literature review section above, though as Ling points out (2008b, p.6) none of these thinkers "examined mediated interaction":

[39] This is contained within the subtitle of Ling's work.

> Durkheim worked in a period before the broad adoption of telephony and described a society for which access to this technology was far in the future. Goffman was somewhat open to the examination of mediated interaction, but his main focus was clearly on the co-present. Collins is explicit in saying that to engender cohesion a ritual cannot be mediated, Indeed, he says, physical co-presence is a requisite aspect of ritual interaction.

Ling (2008b, p.6) seeks to examine whether 'ritual' can transcend the co-present and the co-temporal, without suggesting that co-present interaction should lose its place in society or be substituted by the idea of a cyber-utopia. Ling's (2008b, p.29) title also owes something to the work of Granovetter (1973) and his analysis of 'strong' and 'weak' ties:

> He shows how weak ties between groups allow for the efficient flow of information. The use of casual connections, as opposed to the more heavy weight interpersonal links […] are more spurious and are not necessarily encumbered with the same levels of trust and reciprocity. But "whatever is to be diffused can reach a larger number of people, and traverse greater distance (i.e. path length), when passed through weak ties rather than strong ties". (Ling 2008b, p.29)

Ling's (2008b) work is an example of how new 'ties' can come into being, whilst also assessing how they can contribute to maintaining either of Granovetter's (1973) formulations.

Ling's (2008b, p.83) work "is premised on the idea that mobile communication allows for the execution of rituals that in turn result in social solidarity". As Ling writes, "[i]n Collins's framework, it facilitates the success of some ritual interactions (joking, banter, gossip, flirting)". Ling (2008b, p.83) does allow for the idea, though, that in certain instances the mobile phone can "hinder the success of other ritual interactions (the mobile phone as a secondary engagement)". Indeed, it can act as a barrier to interaction in focused co-present situations (Ling 2008b, p.102). But Ling's (2008b, pp.156-7) overall thrust is that "the mobile phone extends the opportunities that we have to know each other", i.e. "it extends the ritual reach of society beyond co-presence" into "connected presence". "Connected presence", notes Ling (2008b, p.171), is Licoppe's term for short, frequent calls and messages, rather than the longer but less frequent conversation for which time has to be set aside. The advantage of this flow of interaction is that it "helps to maintain the feeling of a permanent connection" (Ling 2008b, p.171). Ling (2008b, p.172) does point out, however, that there may be generational differences to the acceptance of this mode

of communication and that "[o]lder users who favour the more staid form of conversational interaction are perhaps unaffected" by the need for "connected presence". Overall, Ling's (2008a) analysis of the mobile phone's impact on social cohesion is an optimistic one, but this is balanced by considerations of possible negative impacts.

3.4.2 Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) or Technological Determinism

Another key debate in the field concerns whether humans determine the technology and the uses to which it is put, or conversely whether human social behaviour is determined *by* the technology. As Rafaeli et al. (2005, p.59) explain:

> [a]lthough networks are complex technological structures, a network is, by definition, *socially* constructed. It grows out of the need of people to interact with others for work or leisure purposes (Fulk *et al.,* 1995). In fact, the value of the network lies in the number of users and the intensity of use and is not mandated by the hardware or protocol (Metcalfe, 1995; Reed 1998). The network infrastructure is essential but may be useless if people choose not to use it. This is in contrast to technological determinism claims that networks are used because they were constructed.

Rafaeli et al. (2005, p.60) go on to argue that if "technology accounted for human behaviour, people would behave much more uniformly". Their argument thus recognises that there are positions in the debate which suggest that human actions are conditioned by the technology they use. However, their discussion attempts to persuade people towards the idea that humans are more in control than this, as can be evidenced by the suggested variations in behaviour with respect to technology.

3.4.3 Benchmarking using Face-to-Face Processes or Technological Affordances?

Rafaeli et al. (2005, p.60) query whether face-to-face social processes should be set up as the ideal benchmark against which all others should be judged. As Rafaeli et al. (2005, p.61) point out:

> [t]he Internet itself is a plurality of media operated by diverse technologies which constitute a culture or social space in its own right.

They therefore submit that computer mediated communications "deserve treatment on their own terms" (Rafaeli et al. 2005, p.61). Accordingly, they conclude that these environments should come "out from the shadow of what used to be called 'real life'" and "be examined against the affordances [they] make" (Rafaeli et al. 2005, p.61).

3.5 Summary

The debates highlighted in this chapter are part of the prevailing *Zeitgeist* and as such older people will have access to them, although in some cases perhaps unwittingly. As part of the study, therefore, it will be interesting to see where people lie along the spectrum of opinion from pessimist to optimist. Such opinions can be formed according to personal confidence level, with the hypothesis that those people who feel confident with the technology may experience ICT as a positive social force which they can control in personally useful ways. Those who feel less confident with technology may feel that they are unable to venture forth freely into this social environment for fear of unintended consequences over which they are powerless. Also, the older person's prior background in predominantly face-to-face environments may mean that the new media can only be seen as a social environment which lacks certain cues necessary to the proper manufacture and maintenance of their social milieu. Such a 'negative' view would negate the social 'affordances' that new technology could bring, and which those who are brought up with ICT may tend to take for granted and do not seriously question. It is entirely possible, however, that those older people who are well versed in such debates can negotiate their way through and beyond them.

The next chapter will look at literature that was accessed alongside the cyclical data collection, analysis and write-up phases of the research process. It was commenced after the primary focus of the research had turned to matters of (digital) identity. This literature review is therefore more specific to identity and technology matters and is not about older people *per se*.

Chapter Four: Subsequent Literature Reviews (Personal Identity and Digital Identity)

4.1 Introduction to the chapter

This chapter consists of two main sections which explore notions of personal identity followed by notions of identity that are more specifically impacted by the age of the computer and the internet. The System Map generated by this study incorporates a view of identity which negotiates a way between both personal and digital identity, hence the reason for examining debates in these dual arenas.

Section One: Personal Identity - This begins by examining various views on personal identity which can be traced over the course of the Modern period stemming from the work of Hall (1992); in particular Hall refers to 'The Enlightenment Subject', 'The Sociological Subject' and 'The Postmodern Subject'. Whilst these have a long historical lineage, they nonetheless all appear to persist concurrently in the prevailing Zeitgeist. They therefore act as discourses to be drawn on by older people (wittingly or otherwise), and this explains their discussion in this section. The positions can be seen to successively disrupt and perhaps supplant each other in critical thinking as the Modern period progresses. The section progresses on to examine how Giddens (1991) work on *Modernity and self-identity* might itself be seen to counteract Hall's last picture of identity which he has termed 'The Postmodern Subject'. The section ends with several other sociologically related perspectives on identity from the meta-analysis of Jasso (2003).

Section Two: Identity in the age of the computer and the internet - This section will then move on to discuss views of (digital) identity from researchers and commentators interested in the impact of technology specifically, and how it too can be implicated in the self-project. The section begins by looking at the views of Turkle (1995) who adopts the postmodern turn in thinking about identity and technology. It then counters this view by moving onto examine the 'Giddens'-like position of Thompson (1995). The section then continues by examining potential definitions of Digital (Online) Identity. Finally, the section ends with perspectives from the academic literature which implicate identity with technology in various ways.

Overall - it should be recognised that whilst there are conflicting views of sociologically informed (digital) identity, the present study - with its resultant System Map of (Digital) Identity - dovetails with the 'reflexive' approach of Giddens (1991). Technology, in the present study, is implicated in the reflexive project of the self, such that it acts as a mediator for identity choices which can then be played out using technology. It is therefore an identity change agent.

4.2 Personal Identity

4.2.1 Hall (1992) - Three concepts of identity

The concept of identity is a highly contested one within the arena of current social theory. What is at stake, according to Hall (1992, p.274), is the idea that "the old identities which stabilized the world for so long are in decline, giving rise to new identities and fragmenting the modern individual". Hall (1992) outlines one way of thinking about the lineage of thought concerning the changing notions of modern identity during different periods of history, all of which feed into the current debate. Whilst Hall's (1992) exposition is, of necessity, an oversimplification, it nonetheless provides a useful and succinct means of articulating the field both historically and contemporarily. Hall's (1992, pp.275-277) account posits three different conceptions of identity as follows, which account for how "the conceptualization of the modern subject has shifted at *three* strategic points during modernity" (Hall 1992, p281):

- **The Enlightenment subject** – "conception of the human person as a fully centred, unified individual, endowed with the capacities of reason, consciousness and action, whose 'centre' consisted of an inner core which first emerged when the subject was born, and unfolded with it, while remaining essentially the same – continuous or 'identical' with itself – throughout the individual's existence."

- **The sociological subject** – "reflected the growing complexity of the modern world and the awareness that this inner core of the subject was not autonomous and self-sufficient, but was formed in relation to 'significant others', who mediated to the subject the values, meanings and symbols – the culture – of the worlds he/she inhabited."

- **The postmodern subject** – "conceptualized as having no fixed, essential or permanent identity. Identity becomes a 'moveable feast': formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us."

THE ENLIGHTENMENT SUBJECT

As Hall (1992, p.281) writes "it is now a commonplace that the modern age gave rise to a new and decisive form of *individualism*". The birth of this "sovereign individual" is deemed to have taken place "between the Renaissance humanism of the sixteenth century and the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century", and "represented a significant break with the past". Previously, human beings were seen as occupying a divinely ordained position within the 'great chain of being' of the medieval and feudal world, an order of things which had "stable moorings in traditions and structures" (Hall 1992, p.281). Hall (1992, p.282) notes that Renaissance humanism "placed Man (*sic*) at the centre of the universe", and the Enlightenment was "centred on the image of rational, scientific man". One of the primary formulations of this position was given by René Descartes (1596-1650), who had been unsettled by the "metaphysical doubt" which surrounded "the displacement of God from the centre of the universe" (Hall 1992, p282). Hall (1992, p282) explains that Descartes overcame the problem by making God "the Prime mover of all creation", but then explaining "the rest of the material world in mechanical and mathematical terms". Descartes also postulated two different substances - "spatial substance (matter) and thinking substance (mind) – thus leading to the "*dualism* between 'mind' and 'matter' which has troubled Western philosophy ever since" (Hall 1992, p.282). Hall (1992, p.282) relates that Descartes placed the individual subject at the centre of 'mind', and so he was constituted by his "capacity to reason and think" – "Cogito, ergo sum". The concept of the modern individual enabled him to rise above his place "in a rigid hierarchical society" and instead placed stress on his personal existence (Hall 1992, p.283).

THE SOCIOLOGICAL SUBJECT

In the eighteenth century, however, as Hall (1992, p.283) notes, the credibility of this "individual subject-of-reason" was beginning to be stretched by the increasing complexity of modern societies. Industrialisation meant that the individual was becoming "enmeshed in the bureaucratic administrative machineries of the modern state" (Hall 1992, p.284). Hall (1992, p.284) suggests that as result of the new social formations of modern capitalism, "a more *social* conception of the subject then emerged". This way of thinking was advanced in the twentieth century by the discipline of sociology, which "provided a critique of the 'rational individualism' of the

Cartesian subject" (Hall 1992, p.284). Hall (1992, p.284) notes that the sociologists were concerned with developing:

> an alternative account of how individuals are formed subjectively through their membership of, and participation in, wider social relationships; and, conversely, how processes and structures are sustained by the roles which individuals play in them.

According to Hall (1992, p.284) some of the key players in this developing sociological arena were:

- **Mead and the symbolic interactionists** – who posited that "identity is formed in the 'interaction' between self and society" (Hall 1992, p.276). In this view of identity, "the subject still has an inner core or essence that is 'the real me', but this is formed and modified in a continuous dialogue with the cultural worlds 'outside' and the identities which they offer" (Hall 1992, p.276).
- **Goffman** – who was "highly attentive to the way the 'self' is presented in different social situations, and how conflicts between these different social roles are negotiated" (Hall 1992, p.284)
- **Parsons** – who "studied the 'fit' or complementarity between 'the self' and the social system" (Hall 1992, p.284).

Hall (1992, p.284) deems these key players to be "mainstream sociology" in that they retain a type of Cartesian dualism, constructing the issue "as a relation between two connected, but separate, entities: here, the individual *and* society'". As Hall (1992, pp.284-5) argues this type of reciprocity "is very much a product of the first half of the twentieth century, when the social sciences assumed their current disciplinary form". However, in spite of this, in the same time period another picture of the individual "was beginning to emerge in the aesthetic and intellectual movements associated with the rise of Modernism" and that was of the "isolated, exiled or estranged individual, framed against the background of the anonymous and impersonal crowd or metropolis", as exemplified in the writings of Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin and Franz Kafka (Hall 1992, p.285). Hall (1992, p.285) also notes that sociologists such as George Simmel, Alfred Schutz and Siegfried Kracauer were trying "to capture the essential features of modernity in famous essays on 'The Stranger' or 'Outsider'". Such writings marked a turn towards the analysis of the concept of estrangement or societal alienation.

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In this conception of identity, the modern subject is not just estranged, but dislocated (Hall 1992, p.285). Hall (1992, p,285) argues that modern subjectivities are being fragmented through a series of dislocating processes, or "ruptures in the discourses of modern knowledge", such that the Cartesian subject has been finally decentred. Hall (1992, p.285) suggests that there are five key advances in the human sciences which have had a major impact on the concept of a fractured identity:

- **Marxist thought** – those who re-read Marx in the 1960s such as Louis Althusser, noted that he put social relations, in terms of "modes of production, exploitation of labour power and the circuits of capital", at the centre of his theory rather than "an abstract notion of Man" (Hall 1992, p.286).
- **Freudian unconscious** – the idea of the unconscious which operated in a completely different way to that of the logic of Reason, directly challenged Descartes "concept of the knowing and rational subject" (Hall 1992, p.286). Identity in Freud's work is "something formed through unconscious processes over time, rather than being innate in consciousness at birth" (Hall 1992, p.287). Identity is therefore never a finished thing, but is an ongoing process of identification necessitated by a lack of wholeness which needs to be filled from outside (Hall 1992, p.287).
- **Saussurian linguistics** – in Saussure's theory of language, language is something which predates any individual; it is a social rather than individual system (Hall 1992, p.288). When an individual speaks they "activate the vast range of meanings which are already embedded in our language (Hall 1992, p.288. Saussure also argues that "the meanings of words are not fixed in a one-to-one relation to objects or events in the world outside language" (Hall 1992, p.288). Meaning therefore "arises in the relations of similarity and difference which words have to other words" (Hall 1992, p.288). Thus in identity terms, "I know who 'I' am in relation to 'the other'" (Hall 1992, p.288). Philosophers such as Derrida, who have been influenced by Saussure, argue that just as language and meaning are not fixed, then correspondingly identity cannot be fixed, since identity is structured like a language (Hall 1992, p.288).
- **Foucault's genealogy of the modern subject** – Foucault's genealogy is based on the idea of disciplinary power, which is premised on "the regulation, surveillance and government of, first, the human species or whole populations,

and secondly, the individual and the body" (Hall 1992, p.289). This disciplinary power is furthered through "administrative regimes, the expertise of the professional, and the knowledge provided by the 'disciplines' of the social sciences" (Hall 1992, p.289). Individuality is brought under observation, documented, and then overall phenomena can be measured (Hall 1992, p.289). Paradoxically, this means that "the more collective and organised is the nature of the institutions of late-modernity, the greater the isolation, surveillance and individuation of the individual subject" (Hall 1992, p.289-90).

- **Feminism** – was another one of those social movements to surface during the 1960s, which reflected both the weakening of class politics and the fragmentation of political organisations into separate social movements (Hall 1992, p.290). These movements were premised on "what came to be known as *identity politics*" (Hall 1992, p.290). Feminism's key contribution to the "conceptual de-centring of the Cartesian and the sociological subject" lay in its exposing of "the issue of how we are formed and produced as gendered subjects, in so doing it "politicized subjectivity, identity and the process of identification (as men/women, mothers/fathers, sons/daughters)" (Hall 1992, p.290).

As Hall (1992, p.291) notes, the implications of the lineage of modern identities as developed here do not necessarily find universal agreement amongst social scientists, however they do have "unsettling effects on late-modern ideas". The fragmented postmodern subject, with its "open, contradictory, unfinished" identities, lies open to further debate (Hall 1992, p.290).

4.2.2 The view from Giddens (1991) – The reflexive project of the self

Giddens (1991, p.27) takes the opportunity to criticise the 'postmodern subject' in his work, noting that it "has become commonplace to claim that modernity fragments, dissociates" and that such "fragmentation marks the emergence of a novel phase of social development beyond modernity – a postmodern era." In fact, Giddens (1991, p.27) claims that the reverse is more consistent with actuality in that:

> the many diverse modes of culture and consciousness characteristic of pre-modern 'world-systems' formed a genuinely fragmented array of human social communities. By contrast, late modernity produces a situation in which humankind in some respects becomes a 'we', facing problems and opportunities where there are no 'others'.

Giddens' (1991, p.27) view of the intervention of the media into modernity's arena is that it enables the representation and hence the encountering of distant realities which are rare in everyday life. However, for Giddens (1991, p.27) the media "do not mirror realities but in some part form them", but he refutes the idea that this should be taken to mean "that the media have created an autonomous realm of 'hyperreality' where the sign or image is everything," which is the premise of a postmodern argument. Giddens (1991, p.148) also refutes the idea that the "disembedding mechanisms" of society - alluded to by upholders of the postmodern position - tend to "empty out" the self in a 'postmodern' manner. Instead, he argues that these mechanisms "simply remove prior supports on which self-identity was based, and at the same time allow the self to "achieve much greater mastery over the social relations and social contexts reflexively incorporated into the forging of self-identity" (Giddens 1991, p.148-9).

For Giddens (1991, p.32), reflexivity is the key to understanding the 'self' such that in "the context of a post-traditional order, the self becomes a *reflexive project*". He (1991, p.32-33) notes that "transitions in individual's lives have always demanded psychic reorganisation" and that in "traditional cultures" this was ritualised in terms of "rites of passage" which were "clearly staked out". Giddens (1991, p.32) delineates this historical position from "the settings of modernity" whereby "the altered self has to be explored and constructed as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change". "Abstract systems" feature as an integral part of Giddens (1991, p.33) thesis in that they are "centrally involved not only in the institutional order of modernity but also in the formation and continuity of the self". This idea is reflected in the System Map of the present thesis in the ways in which ICT (and the machinations of its stakeholders) can be implicated in the self-projects of older people through providing various materials for incorporation, methods to assist with potential psychic transitions, and also by being an 'object to think with' about the human condition more generally. As Giddens (1991, p.84) notes, mediated experience "influences pluralism of choice" and makes visible "a multifarious number of milieu" all of which can affect "lifestyle choices".

4.2.3 Jasso (2003) – Four sociobehavioural theories

Jasso's (2003) paper presents and contrasts four different theoretical perspectives – identity, social identity, comparison and status - which are summarised here to provide alternative views on notions of identity from a sociological perspective. They can be tabulated as follows, complete with their quantitative characteristics, their qualitative characteristics and their primordial outcomes (Jasso 2003, p.41):[40]

Table 16 Jasso (2003) - Four Sociobehavioural Theories

Elements in the Common Core	Theories			
	Identity	Social Identity	Comparison	Status
Quantitative Characteristics	resources role competence role enactment role performance	attribute characteristic dimension	goods cardinal ordinal	goods cardinal ordinal
Qualitative Characteristics	1. society 2. attribute group master status network social category	1. superordinate category/group 2. group social category subgroup	1. comparison aggregate group social aggregate 2. subgroup	1. group 2. subgroup
Primordial Outcomes	self-concept self-efficacy self-esteem self-evaluation self-meaning self-verification self-worth status	self-conceptualization self-enhancement self-esteem status	happiness justice evaluation self-esteem self-worth well-being	deference esteem honor prestige respect status

A very brief outline of these theories, as described by Jasso (2003, pp.3-12) is given here:

1. **Identity** – The self is "a collection of identities". These identities consist of "a complex of role-related phenomena" situated in "networks of relationships among actors" (e.g. teacher and student).[41]
2. **Social Identity** – This incorporates "social categorization theory" and focuses on "group and intergroup processes and relations". Identities here "are associated with membership in a social category", and this defines who one is "in terms of the defining characteristics of the category".[42]

[40] Jasso (2003) defines these as follows. Quantitative characteristics are ones of which there can be more or less e.g. competence. Qualitative characteristics are ones that are unorderable e.g. country of residence. Primordial outcomes are a variety of ends e.g. self-esteem.
[41] Jasso (2003) associates these theories with the work of Stryker and that of Burke.
[42] Jasso (2003) associates these theories with the work of Tajfel and that of Turner.

3. **Comparison Theory** – In this theory, self-esteem is related to the comparison that people make between their "holdings of goods" and the levels of these goods that they feel it is appropriate for them to hold.[43]
4. **Status Theory** – In this theory, individuals accord status to others (and also to the self) so that some people hold more status than others. This status distribution "gives rise to subdistributions in subgroups" and "social distance between subgroups". In itself it is a form of comparison of the self, as in the previous theory.[44]

The present study acknowledges theory 1 in the way that older people are situated in a network of roles, for example that of grandparent with grandchild. With regards to theory 2, older people also acknowledge that they are part of various social groups, for example they are part of an extended family, or may feel themselves to be "digital citizens". The latter two theories given above concern comparisons, and the older people in this study frequently compare their own attributes to those of technology (technology can do tasks better than me), or even other users of technology (such as 'younger people' who were brought up with the technology).

4.3 Identity in the age of the computer and the internet

This section presents both a postmodern view of ICT's potential impact on the project of the self (Turkle) and also a counteracting position from Thompson. The work of Turkle has, however, had a pervasive influence over the present thesis, but in a manner that does not necessarily lead to the adoption of the postmodern position. It is, however, useful to point out this position as older people may in fact be familiar with it and/or allude to it.

4.3.1 Sherry Turkle – Life on the Screen

> We are moving from modernist calculation toward postmodernist simulation, where the self is a multiple, distributed system.
> (Wired 1996, p.1)[45]

[43] Jasso (2003) associates 19th century work on this with James, Marx and Durkheim. Jasso (2003) associates 20th century work on this with Stouffer, Festinger, Lipset, and Berger et al. (to name just a few).
[44] Jasso (2003) associates Status Theory with Ridgeway, Blau, Goode, amongst others.
[45] Citing Sherry Turkle, in review of her book *Life on the screen: identity in the age of the internet.* The title of this section takes its lead from Turkle's work.

The computer as initially introduced was viewed as a mere calculating machine, which harnessed clear and unambiguous programming methods (Wired 1996, p.1). Turkle calls this the "modernist computational aesthetic" (Wired 1996, p.1). In this conception of the computer (Wired 1996, p.1):

> Programming was a technical skill that could be done a right way or a wrong way. The right way was dictated by the computer's calculator essence. The right way was linear and logical. This linear, logical [model] guided thinking not only about technology and programming, but about economics, psychology, and social life.

For Turkle this model of the computer and programming became an object-to- think-with about different aspects of the human condition (Wired 1996, p.1). In this model, the complexities of the world could be analysed by providing "unifying pictures" and by breaking things down into component parts (Wired 1996, p.1). However, more recent changes in programming technologies have led to new metaphors and objects-to-think-with, which lend a postmodern turn to views of the world and of the self, as Turkle explains (Wired 1996, p.1):

> Windows have become a powerful metaphor for thinking about the self as a multiple, distributed system," […] "The self is no longer simply playing different roles in different settings at different times. The life practice of windows is that of a decentered self that exists in many worlds, that plays many roles at the same time. Now real life itself may be, […] "just one more window."

Hence computational models of the self now "embrace a postmodern aesthetic of complexity and decentering" (Wired 1996, p.2). As Turkle writes (1995, p.17) the complex, abstract ideas concerning human identity embodied in the work of the French philosophers such as Lacan, Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari and Derrida, and characterised by such terms as ""decentred", "fluid", "nonlinear" and opaque"", challenge the Modernist view which can be expressed in terms such as ""linear", "logical", "hierarchical", and by having "depths" that can be plumbed and understood". Computers and the internet are now providing accessible examples of how the anti-intuitive nature of French philosophy can be manifested; as Turkle (1995, p.15) highlights, in "computer-mediated worlds, the self is multiple, fluid, and constituted in interaction with machine connections". Thus Turkle's (1995, p.24) work draws attention to the idea that "we have used our relationships with technology to reflect on the human". We have also "sought out the subjective computer"; there is an expectation now that computers will do things *to* us instead

of just *for* us (Turkle 1995, p.26). People now engage in computer-mediated experiences in the hope that they will impact on their personal subjectivity, by either providing material that can change "their ways of thinking or will affect their social and emotional lives" (Turkle 1995, p26).

Turkle (1995, p.47) elaborates further on the ideas of the French philosophers by explaining that they incorporate the idea of "worlds without origins", or in other words "simulacra", which refer to "copies of things that no longer have originals". Turkle (1995, p.47) gives the example of Disneyland's Main Street as one instance of a simulacrum. Postmodernism is therefore a "world of surface", where signifiers have no signifieds, in contrast to previous "epistemologies of depth". Turkle (1995, p.47) explains that postmodernism's "ways of knowing" are "through an exploration of surfaces". Computers are becoming new objects-to-think-with precisely because they are such "carriers of new ways of knowing" (Turkle 1995, p.48). Turkle (1995, p.33) cites the environmental differences between her Apple II and the later Macintosh computer as provoking a shift in thinking from a depth to a surface style. As Turkle (1995, p.33) relates her Apple II supported a modernist interpretation because it embodied the idea that "understanding proceeds by reducing complex things to smaller elements" such that it was eventually possible to uncover "the hidden mechanism that made things work". Turkle (1995, p.34) cites Darwin, Freud and Marx as operating from within such a model in order to determine their theories of the self and the world at large.[46] By contrast, Turkle (1995, p.34) suggests that the Macintosh provided "a radically different way of understanding" since it "encouraged users to stay at a surface level of visual representation and gave no hint of inner mechanisms". For some of the 80s, IBM with its personal computer (reductionism) and Apple with its Macintosh (simulation and surface) were locked in a 'modern versus postmodern' competition, which ultimately came to a head with the introduction of Microsoft Windows in 1985, which gave the "feel of the Macintosh interface" (Turkle 1995, pp.36-7). At a similar time (1984), William Gibson wrote his landmark novel *Neuromancer* which "represented the satisfactions of navigating simulation space" or "cyberspace", or in other words, the space that exists within "a matrix of computers" and is no longer "reducible to lines of code, bits of data, or

[46] However, as previously noted their thinking also contributed to the break down of the Modernist method.

electrical signals" (Turkle 1995, p.42). The idea of cyberspace has become a universal spatial metaphor for thinking about the realm of the internet.

Turkle (1995, p.48) notes, similarly to Lawler above, that to appropriate various objects for the purpose of developing and assimilating ideas has been termed "bricolage" by Claude Levi-Strauss. Bricolage is a term that can also apply to the appropriation of materials in the processes of developing ideas about personal identity. Avatars, amongst other things, can provide identity simulations which are "fluid and multiple", and need no longer point back to an original identity; taken to extremes they too can become virtual 'identity' signifiers with no real-world signifieds (Turkle 1995, p.49).

Turkle (1995, p.263) argues that to see the self in this multiple way, is not necessarily injurious to a sense of wellbeing, and a voyage via the internet into multiple selves can become a means to personal growth. As Turkle (1995, p.263) writes "virtual spaces may provide the safety for us to expose what we are missing so that we can begin to accept ourselves as we are". In this way, virtuality can become a "transitional space", where new subjectivities can be practised or acquired (Turkle 1995, p.262-3).[47]

4.3.2 John Thompson – The media and modernity

Commentators such as Thompson (1995, p.210) take issue with the idea that the self is "a product or construct of the symbolic systems which precede it". This manner of thinking he describes in the following way (Thompson 1995, p.210):

> A variety of terms have been introduced, from Althusser's 'interpellation' to Foucault's 'techniques' or 'technologies' of the self, to try and specify the ways in which individuals are turned into subjects who think and act in accordance with the possibilities that are laid out in advance. Of course, the dominant symbolic systems (what some used to call 'ideologies', but what many now prefer to call 'discourses') will not define an individual's every move. Like a game of chess, the dominant system will define which moves are open to individuals and which are not – with the trivial difference that, unlike chess, social life is a game that one cannot choose not to play.

[47] Or possibly a liminal/liminoid space (see later sections).

Thompson's (1995, p.210) criticism of such ideas stems from the rejection of the "impoverished conception of the self" to which these theories are deemed to lead. Thompson (1995, p.210) states that his approach "differs fundamentally" from this given outline, and is based on the "tradition of hermeneutics" which he derives from Ricoeur. It is also suggested that his own approach "bears an affinity to the work of the symbolic interactionists and others" (Thompson 1995, p.210). In Thompson's (1995, p.210) perspective:

> the self is viewed neither as the product of an external symbolic system, nor as a fixed entity which the individual can immediately and directly grasp; rather, the self is a symbolic project that the individual actively constructs. It is a project that the individual constructs out of the symbolic materials which are available to him or her, material which the individual weaves into a coherent account of who he or she is, a narrative of self-identity. This is a narrative which for most people will change over time as they draw on new symbolic materials, encounter new experience and gradually redefine their identity in the course of a life trajectory.

This is a vision of the self as an "active, creative character", but it does not mean that the "self is socially unconditioned" (Thompson 1995, p.210). Also, not everyone has equal access to the same resources, and material conditions can impact on this, especially in an increasingly digital world (Thompson 1995, p.210-1). Thompson (1995, p.211) suggests that "the development of communication media has had a profound impact on the process of self-formation", through supplementing and potentially displacing once local forms of knowledge with more global concerns. This new knowledge, Thompson (1995, p.212) argues, "enriches and accentuates the **reflexive organization of the self**".[48] These mediated symbolic resources confront the individual with "new possibilities" so that it becomes difficult to fall back on "more stable frameworks of understanding" (Thompson 1995, p.212). This aspect of mediated communication can be enlightening as well as unsettling (Thompson 1995, p.212).

Some of the more unsettling and negative aspects of mediated communication which impact on self-formation are given by Thomson (1995) as follows:

[48] Emphasis added – note the reference to the idea of a reflexive view.

- **Ideology** - "the media increases the capacity to transmit potentially ideological messages", however we cannot vouch for how these materials will be received and "incorporated reflexively" into people's lives (Thompson 1995, p.213). These messages therefore have the power to maintain asymmetrical forms of power (Thompson 1995, p.213).
- **Dependency** – Thompson (1995, pp.214-5) notes that there is a possible paradox at work in the processes of self-formation through mediated symbolic forms, and it is one which concerns the individual becoming "dependent on social systems over which he or she has relatively little control". This paradox of "reflexivity and dependency" can also be restated as the paradox of "indivualization and institutionalization" (Thompson 1995, p.215).
- **Symbolic overload** – the individual is increasingly confronted with "countless narratives of self-formation" which cannot all "be effectively and coherently assimilated" (Thompson 1995, p.216). The individual therefore needs to be able to become "selective in terms of the material they assimilate" (Thompson 1995, p.216).
- **Absorption** – mediated materials go beyond being just a source on which to draw for an individual's self project, and become instead "an object of identification" or central preoccupation in someone's life (Thompson 1995, p.218-9).

Thompson (1995, p.232) takes issue with the postmodernists view that in this mediated world, which has given rise to a "profusion of messages", the self has "been absorbed into a disjointed array of mediated signs". He does not agree that "the multiple, shifting images *are* the self", preferring instead to think that in "the project of self-formation" the self is "not dissolved or dispersed by media messages, but rather is opened up by them" (Thompson 1995, p.233).

Living in a mediated world opens up the realities of the globe to inspection, such that issues and events assume more urgency, hence increasing "the burden of responsibility" which "weighs heavily on the shoulders of some" (Thompson 1995, p.233-4). As Thompson (1995, p.234) elaborates:

> This moral circumstance, in which mediated experience can give rise to claims on the self and to a sense of responsibility for distant others or events, is relatively new as a widespread phenomenon. It has highlighted a set of issues – concerning, among other things, the long range impact of human actions and the high risk stakes of an increasingly interconnected world – which cannot be readily accommodated within the traditional frameworks of moral and political thought.

It will become evident in the course of this thesis, that through their usage of ICT, older people have become alerted to these global issues, and have been keen to apprise the researcher both of their personal opinion on such matters and on the methods they would like to adopt to overcome them. Several of the older people (for example Charles, Tom, Pierre) who participated in this study obviously feel these burdens of global responsibility quite heavily.

4.3.3 What is '(digital) (online) identity' - some potential definitions?

4.3.3.1 The technological view

> The networked environment in which we live and work requires digital identity – it is the key by which we are able to communicate, interact, transact, share reputations and create trusted relationships with people, business and devices electronically. Roussos *et al.* (2003) note that digital identity is the electronic representation of personal information of an individual or organisation (name, address, phone numbers, demographics, etc.)[49]
> (Satchell et al. 2009, p.2)

Digital identity in this sense operates at a technological, rather than personal, level. It concerns the technical practicalities which enable "activities, transactions and interactions in a variety of digital environments" (Satchell et al. 2009, p.1). Digital identity as intended here is the subject of debates concerning identity management and the merits of "federated systems" which according to Satchell et al. (2009, p.1) offer:

[49] The reference is given as Roussos, G., Peterson, D., and Patel, U., 2003. Mobile identity management: an enacted view. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce,* 8, 81-100.

> a streamlined, consolidated representation of the person's digital data, allowing the user to gather multiple identities together under one umbrella. For example, rather than requiring the user to remember numerous login details, only one user name and password is required (Gengler 2004).[50]

Various issues can be seen to be at stake in the field of identity management. One of the problems pointed out by Satchell et al. (2009, p.3) - in line with Clarke (2004)[51] - is that the benefits of these systems are largely accrued by the providers since they "gain valuable information while the user's privacy is being compromised by the compilation and circulation of detailed user profiles". Identity management systems are also tasked with the need to inspire confidence in their ability to control accurately the authentication process behind each individual assertion of identity in various online transactions (Satchell et al. 2009, p.4). For the above reasons (and others) Satchell et al. (2009, p.4) note – referring back to Clarke (2004) again - that there are thus trust issues between users and service providers, with users becoming "reluctant to reveal details about themselves, instead preferring to provide as little information as possible". It can be seen from the above that federated identity management systems are concerned with one person having one digital identity for practical technical reasons, as well as for the ability to glean more detailed intelligence on the person in question.

4.3.3.2 The personal view

In practice, people do not have single digital identities in the technical sense, or even on a personal, human level. As Satchell et al. (2009, p.2) write, "the identity of a person comprises a large number of personal properties" and "all subsets of the properties represent partial identities". The notion of digital identity, however, as Satchell et al. (2009, p.2) point out, "provides an additional perspective", so that whilst there may be "a strong correlation between real life and digital identity", digital identity "breaks from the constraints of everyday life" so that users can "transcend the limits of the real world". In this way users can "shed the human qualities of age, gender, race, disability, and even […] disease". This notion of the ability to play and experiment with identity online presents a challenge to the idea

[50] The reference is given as Gengler, B., 2004. Standard ID clears a path in password jungle, IT Alive Section, *The Australian*, p.4.
[51] The reference is given as Clarke, R., 2004. *Identity Management*, Xamax Consultancy.

that "digital identity should be thought of in terms of the restriction of information or anonymity" (Satchell 2009, p.2).

4.3.3.3 The personal and technological view in diagram form

Cavazza (2006) has created the following diagram to map some of the key factors which are encapsulated within the idea of 'digital identity', and also to give a feel for some of the online applications which can be associated with each factor. Twelve factors are highlighted here, suggesting that digital identity is a composite, multi-faceted concept, which needs to be viewed in several different ways simultaneously. Digital identity is not seen as a single idea but a conglomeration of, for example "What I say", "What I share", "What I buy", "What represents me" and "Who I know". Taken together these factors build a picture of the complexity of a person's digital identity and how it is, and can be, managed. Although these are mostly personal factors, Cavazza's (2006) digital identity diagram does involve an element of the technological since he acknowledges that part of the overall 'map' involves the technologies involved in the certification of digital identity, which is beyond the user's personal control (as is to some extent the idea of 'Reputation' since this is what is said by others).

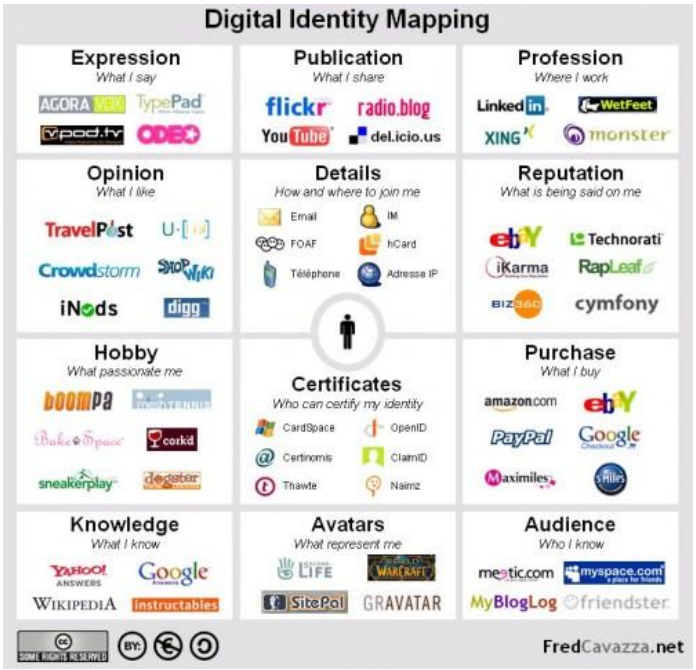

Figure 3 Digital identity mapping (Cavazza 2006)

4.4 Views from the academic literature

4.4.1 Technological versus Individual Identities and their Management

In the paper noted above by Satchell et al. (2009) there are already allusions to the idea that 'digital identity' has a technical component based on the idea of user authentication and security. Various papers point to the idea of "federated identity management systems" which link together all of an individual's multiple electronic attributes which are otherwise stored across many different systems - see for example CSO (2011) for a set of White Papers on the topic of "Federated Identity". There are also references to the notion of a "Single Sign On" in which a single method of entry is trusted across many systems – see for example Find White Papers (2011). However, as Wessels (2010, p.1) points out, we need to look beyond the purely technical in our understanding of the totality of digital identity:

> industry addresses the security of individual data through technological solutions which secure networks, but this focus does not fully take into account the way users manage their identities. Despite research in the areas of privacy and digital technology from political, legal and surveillance perspectives, there is a lack of understanding about the ways users practice and manage their identity.

Wessels (2010, p.4) also suggests that we need to look further than the term users, since "exploring identity in ways that go beyond researching 'users' is now recognised as important in media and communication studies". According to Wessels (2010, p.4), the term 'user' originates in system design and covers many categories including "end-users" and "user-organisations", however it does not encapsulate the idea that there are "diverse members of society with different identities, roles and practices".

Identity is being subjected to a process of flux through diversifying online forms characterised by Wessels (2010, p.4) as "interactivity and networking" so that:

> on the one hand, access to e-government services as well as commercial e-services requires methods of authentication which are often based on citizen, financial and other profiles; and, on the other hand, people need cultural resources to create profiles to participate in social networking sites. Taking these issues together, it becomes apparent that identity is both situated and mediated.

Wessels (2010, p.4) also argues that technology is both enabling new forms of "cultural expression" and also allowing these to be articulated, which in turn is

changing individual "perceptions of privacy and self-expression". According to Wessels (2010, p.4), Silverstone's (2005)[52] formulation of "mediation" is relevant here as it is an "uneven, dialectical process of institutionalized knowledge being inscribed in emerging technologies with a continuous and creative engagement by people in the system". Thus mediation leads to ICT being used as a source for cultural materials which impact on the processes of identity formation and expression. Mediation also addresses "the relationship between online and offline worlds and perceptions of the real and the virtual which, in so doing, addresses the social relations of identity" (Wessels 2010, p.5).

Wessels (2010, p.6) notes that Fishenden (2007)[53] claims that identity and electronic identity span "many different contexts and purposes" for example:

- Individuals have multiple individual identity relationships (e.g. with their employer, with their bank, with different parts of government)
- Role based identities (related to employment or position)
- Group identities (from families through to companies)

Here, "identity is a context-sensitive and multi-dimensional concept" and one which "draws attention to the weakness of identity solutions that are architected on assumptions of one universal identity that can be used for all interactions".

Wessels (2010, p.7) argues that considerations of security, and privacy are complicated further by changing perceptions of the public and private domains: firstly, social networking sites "generate a sense of semi-publicness that blurs the established divide between public and private domains"; and secondly people create "'work identities' and 'weekend identities' which interact with different communication environments", and these can also become blurred as people operate their private lives on mobile phones during their work time or work from home in the evenings.

[52] Wessels gives the citation as Silverstone, R. (2005a), 'The Sociology of Mediation and Communication' in C. Calhoun, C. Rojek and B.S. Turner (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Sociology* (London: Sage), 188-207. This citation and the ones which follow are presented in the format given by Wessels.
[53] Wessels gives the citation as Fishenden, J. (2007) – 'eID – Identity Management in an Online World' ntouk.com/papers/eIDdoc, accessed 16th January 2009.

Wessels (2010) study concluded that "people have various perceptions of digital communication in relation to risks to privacy and identity", highlighting in particular a difference between older and younger participants:

> The older focus group participants think that digital communication is not entirely secure and that there are different levels of privacy. These participants see online identity through the requirements of the online identification systems, and they have clear boundaries between their online practices and their offline 'real' identity. The students, on the other hand, have a different view. They state that their identities are multidimensional and that the way they interact online reflects the different aspects of their identities, which vary in relation to the domain in which they are communicating.

4.4.2 Dynamics of Identity Formation and Expression in Digital Culture and Capitalism

Wessels (2009) notes that Berners-Lee's original vision for the world wide web was the enabling of individual expression in an open and accepting decentralised environment, but where the individual did not undermine society as a whole, as she quotes:

> We don't find the individual being subjugated by the whole. We don't find the needs of the whole being subjugated by the increasing power of the individual. But we might see more understanding in the struggles between these extremes.[54]

Commercialisation is seen to be a disrupting factor in Berners-Lee's vision since it is extending capitalist social relations into all dimensions of life including the internet and identity (Wessels 2009, p.254). As Wessels (2009, p.255) notes there is a "contradiction between commercialization on the one hand and Berners-Lee's vision on the other hand, which raises issues in the positioning of the self in the Social Web and socio-cultural life". Wessels (2009, p.255) also notes Turkle's[55] view that "the windows interface is a symbol for thinking about the self as a multiple and distributed system". The influence of such structures "raises the issue of how modes of information structure the development of identity in socio-cultural life" (Wessels

[54] Wessels gives the citation as: Berners-Lee, T. (1999), *Weaving the Web: The Past, Present and Future of the World Wide Web by its Inventor,* San Francisco, Harper Collins
[55] Wessels gives the citation as Turkle (1999), *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet,* London, Phoenix

2009, p.255). Wessels (2009, p.255) notes, in line with Jenkins[56], that recent theorisations of social identity suggest that it is "best understood as a process" and is "made meaningful through an individual's interactions with others in the social world". There is an ongoing debate here about "the relative influence of social structures and personal creativity in the development of the self" (Wessels 2009, p.255). Wessels (2009, p.255) notes Cohen's (1994)[57] argument that the "'self' is creative", but that individuals "develop senses of themselves within culture". In this view, "culture is not a determining factor in shaping selves but is the meaningful fabric through which human endeavour and selves are constructed" (Wessels 2009, p.255).

Cultural institutions, including digital cultures, thus provide the "context in which selves engage" as well as "providing some of the resources for modes of engagement" (Wessels 2009, p.255). Here, the self is not totally determined by the social and cultural worlds in which s/he acts, but is a creative actor within a social context, lending a measure of autonomy to the individual which restores a sense of personhood that some of the postmodern versions of selfhood deny (see above discussion in the introduction). For Wessels (2009, p.256), self "creativity produces various outcomes" and can be "judged in relation to normative and moral positions". Wessels (2009, p.256) cites Miller's (1994)[58] argument that the "continuous change of modernity sets a precedent for humans to be creative", and this feature of continuous change is "linked with the rise and continuation of capitalism". Ultimately, as Wessels (2009, p.257) relates:

> The cultural context of late modernity is therefore one in which individuals and institutions are negotiating the ways in which they understand themselves and others – and both are in effect – reflexive (Giddens, 1991)[59]

New digital cultures and technologies have their part to play in this reflexive process of self-change, because they can "facilitate (co-)creativity", enable individuals "to be more active" and offer "new modes of participation in a communications environment" (Wessels 2009, p.258).

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[56] Wessels gives the citation as: Jenkins, R. (1996), *Social Identity*, London, Routledge
[57] Wessels gives the citation as: Cohen, A. (1994), *Self Consciousness: an alternative anthropology of identity*, London, Routledge
[58] Wessels gives the citation as: Miller, D. (1994), *Modernity: an Ethnographic Approach, Dualism and Mass Consumption in Trinidad,* Oxford, Berg
[59] Wessels gives the citation as: Giddens, A. (1991), *On Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age,* Cambridge, Polity Press

Spinello (2001, p.147) is another commentator to note that the internet has moved some way from its 'anarchic' origins, regarding "commercial forces as the main culprit in the transformation of cyberspace from an architecture of freedom to one of control". Market forces, Spinello (2001, p.147) notes, in line with Lessig,[60] "encourage architectures of identity to facilitate online commerce" and this will fundamentally transform the Net's "regulability" over the coming years.

Zackariasson et al.'s (2010) article examines how virtual identities and market segmentation mechanisms can be used for marketing purposes in Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGS). Zackariasson (2010, p.280) draws attention to Bartle's[61] taxonomy of gamers which arranges players into four categories "socializers, explorers, achievers, and killers", and the fact that players can move between categories over time. Following on from Bartle's work and his own earlier work, the research of Yee[62] produces a segmentation based on the three main motivation components of Achievement, Social and Immersion (Zackariasson 2010, p.281).

4.4.3 Identity Management and Moral Condition in Cyberspace

Michelfelder (2000, p.147), in her article 'Our moral condition in cyberspace', discusses whether a new "ethics of responsibility" is required for "cyberspace" based on the reasoning that "modern technology divorces our moral condition from the assumptions under which standard ethical theories were first conceived". Her article considers whether this is the case given that "cyberspace technologies have a radical impact on the nature of the self" (Michelfelder 2000, p.149). Her point of contention is that the "selves who have powers of action" within cyberspace "are not selves in any physical sense", whereas conventional ethical norms "are binding on a self whose physical embodiment is taken for granted" (Michelfelder 2000, p.149). Yet Michelfelder (2000, p.150-1) questions whether cyberspace really is so novel and

[60] This article is a review of : Lessig, R., 1999. *Code and other laws of cyberspace*. New York: Basic Books.
[61] Zackariasson gives the citations as: Bartle, R.A. (1996)), *Hearts, clubs, diamonds, spades: Players who suit muds.* Retrieved from http://www.mud.co.uk/richard/hcds.htm. Bartle, R.A. (2003). *Designing virtual worlds.* Boston, MA: New Riders.
[62] Zackariasson gives the citation as: Yee, N. (2007) Motivations of play in online games. *Journal of Cyber Psychology and Behavior*, 9, 772-775

"other-worldly" that new ethical rules need apply, since every age has its own so-called "information revolution", and "virtuality" is just an activity of "externalizing what had previously been internalized" which is something that humans have been engaged in for a long time. Michelfelder (2000, p.149) draws the conclusion, however, that in spite of the fact that she rejects "any claim that there is a need for a new, cyberspace ethics", this "does not imply there is nothing philosophically interesting about the ethical challenges associated with cyberspace".

Manders-Huits (2010, p.46) examines the idea of "moral identities" in the process of identity management, which are assessed as being "determined by what we value and respond to emotionally in relation to our self-esteem". Manders-Huits (2010, pp.46-7) draws attention to two key ideas concerning identity:

- **"self-informative identity"** – the construction of identity of oneself (associated with self-beliefs, the freedom to experiment with and change one's identity, and the importance of evaluating one's (self-) identity emotionally). This is a reflexive condition
- **"nominal identity"** – attributed identification (constructed in relation to, and in part by, others, and also in accordance with rules set by others such as those inscribed in the technological structure of information technology). This is a non-reflexive condition.

For Manders-Huits (2010, p.48) "moral identity" can thus be understood "as a comprehensive notion of identity" involving both of the concepts given here. Manders-Huits (2010, p.48) goes on to explain that whereas "Identity Management" in the IT sense "presupposes a conception of identity that is fixed, determinate, and consists of attributed, i.e. nominal information, "Identity Management" in the moral sense concerns "both nominal and self-informative identities". The challenge is to determine how the varying online selves can be related to both self-informative and nominal identity (Manders-Huits 2010, p.49). Manders-Huits (2010, p.49) notes that Velleman argues that this process is "no different than constituting a self-informative identity in one's own body", and Korsgaard terms it "practical identity".[63] According to Manders-Huits (2010, p.50) several commentators - including Schechtman[64] - believe that self-understanding can be obtained through autobiographical

[63] Manders-Huits gives the citations as: Velleman, J.D. (2008). Bodies, selves. *American Imago,* 65(3), 404-426. Korsgaard, C.M. (2009). *Self-constitution: Agency, identity and integrity.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[64] Manders-Huits gives the citation as: Schechtman, M. (1996). *The constitution of selves.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

"narratives". However, she also cites Shoemaker[65] as contesting this view since he does not believe "narrative theories can (fully) accommodate attitudes and experiences" (Manders-Huits 2010, p.50).

Manders-Huits (2010, pp.51-3) notes that there are three points of tension in "Identity Management":

- **Computational reductionism** – profiling has a tendency to lose the conception of users as individuals (self-informative identity) and turns them into objects of (algorithmic) computation.
- **Persistence of information** – captured information about identity tends to last thus reifying identities.
- **Dynamic nominalism** – people's identities being shaped by the available labels (categories, profiles, attributed identitfications), such that they are no longer descriptive but constitutive.

Manders-Huits (2010, p.54) argues that technological mechanisms should therefore be designed with flexibility in mind in order to "do justice to data subjects as moral persons".

Vallor (2010, p.157) revisits social networking technology in the context of the virtues of patience, honesty and empathy. According to Vallor (2010, p.166), honesty is "a moral virtue already widely characterized in the media as threatened by the Internet" due to the ability to misrepresent one's identity in terms of "one's age, gender or other personal attributes". Honesty in this respect should therefore be about "the willingness in words and deeds to put one's authentic self in play (Vallor 2010, p.166). However, Vallor (2010, p.166) questions the extent to which "authentic selves" are put into play on social networking sites and so forth given that the "construction of a profile encourages members to construct a carefully edited version of themselves" which may be aimed at gaining "friends" rather than exposing "one's authentic personality". Vallor (2010) notes that here he is drawing on the notion of an "integral or authentic self" which stands in opposition to "postmodern theories of the self"; the concept of an integral self can still be multi-faceted and rooted in personal history and dispositions but this is defined "in such a way that it

[65] Manders-Huits gives the citations as: Shoemaker, D.W. (2010). Self-exposire and exposure of the self: Informational privacy and the presentation of identity. *Ethics and Information Technology,* 12(1). Doi: 10.1007/s10676-009-9186-x.

allows it to be distinguished from inauthentic self-representations". Vallor (2010, p167) does however note that there may be genuine reasons why there is resistance to the portrayal of an authentic self, and this may be to do with "pragmatic motivations like data privacy concerns". Also, it could well be that to "establish different identities online" without these being accountable to each other will prove "to be essential to the development of *other* virtues" (Vallor 2010, p.167).

Parsell (2008, p.42) expresses his concern that social networking technologies can lead to identity polarisation and the creation of pernicious virtual communities that are too "narrowly focussed", which may in turn lead to "increased social cleavage and division". Parsell (2008, p.44) argues the following points:

- People tend to be attracted to others with like opinions
- Being exposed to like opinions tends to increase our own prejudices
- This polarisation of attitudes can occur on socially significant issues (e.g. political outlook)
- Where the possibility of narrowing focus on these issues is available, increased community fracture is likely.

As Parsell (2008, p.44) notes new technologies provide the exact tools to "locate and/or create these narrowcast communities".

Jordan (2005, p.200) turns to the issue of a 'virtual death' in cyberspace and the 'real (moral) dilemma' this posed in terms of identity and trust in an online community. He examines responses to the online chronicling of a 'daughter's death' from leukaemia by a 'mother' who had in fact fabricated the entire story (Jordan 2005, p.200). As Jordan relates (2005, p.203), in spite of the fact that the internet has become a "laboratory" for identity experimentation, "the meaning and function of identity experimentation are not agreed upon". Jordan (2005, p.204) explains that "even anonymity requires an audience" and therefore "online identity is a dialogic construct" whereby the audience plays its part in assessing the performance of an identity and deciding whether to accept it as authentic. Thus, as Jordan (2005, p.205) continues "if identity is dialogic, then a hoax implicates all community members" through their "mutual acceptance of the fraudulent persona". Therefore everyone needs to agree that certain online interactions are just play before "the consequences of hoaxes and pranks" can be "considered harmless fun" (Jordan 2005, p.205).

4.4.4 Identities Turned Inside Out by Technology

Light (2010, p.583) addresses the idea that "information technology holds the potential to alter the discourses of identity", or in other words identities are being turned inside out by technology. Technology can now "see inside people", creating "new performance arenas for the expression of identity" (Light 2010, p.583). Light (2010, p.585) adopts a "post-structural" view with respect to the issues under consideration here. She specifically adopts Butler's[66] notion of "performativity" in connection with identity processes such that one "does" one's identity and similarly "one does one's body". Light (2010, p.586) stresses that "this is not to choose one's identity", which Butler sees as "subject to the norms of society", instead it is to view identities as produced in a set of interactions with others "that inscribes, prescribes and proscribes who we can become". The notion of "performativity" is not about performance since the latter has no "becoming" associated with it (Light 2010, p.586). In this view, one needs the social world in order "to be a certain way" (Light 2010, p.586). This is a "non-essentialist view of identity" processes (Light 2010, p.586). Computer systems here are "components in human moral action" and Light (2010, pp.586-7) asks the question "do the technologies we construct as civilizations have any bearing on who we become as individuals?"

According to Light (2010, p.587), Stiegler[67] argues that "the organisation of organic matter" (technics) is "primordial to human experience" but "these organisations fasten interpretations upon matter and thought", and so we "deprioritize or exclude other interpretations". This can create "identities" which "have a bearing on what we do as well as how we are known"; a process known as inscription (Light 2010, p.587). As Light (2010, p.587) explains, when social systems are put into code, "their rigid underlying hierarchies" alter "the balance of control in interpreting and inventing oneself afresh". They may allow "for certain kinds of creativity while limiting our flexibility in other ways" (Light 2010, p.588). According to Light (2010, p.588), phenomenologist literature, such as that of Merleau Ponty,[68] "gives accounts

[66] Light gives the citation as: Butler J. Performative acts and gender constitution: an essay in phenomenology and feminist theory. In: Case S, editor. Performing feminisms: feminist critical theory and theatre. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP; 1990.
[67] Light gives the citation as: Stiegler B. Technics and time, 1: The fault of Epimetheus. Stanford: Stanford University Press; 1998.
[68] Light gives the citation as: Merleau- Ponty M. Phenomenology of perception. Transl. Smith. London: Routledge; 1945, 1962.

of how tools *extend* bodily function and boundaries and thus impact on identity". Also Goffman's[69] work on back- or front-stage performances when in the presence of others has been explored with respect to technology (such as mobile phones); and most people would feel on a privacy level that "their insides should be backstage" (Light 2010, p.559).

4.4.5 Identity Credibility and Three Elements of Digital Identity

Rowe (2010, p.35) notes that the "digital identity which Web users build on the Social Web is being increasingly used by third party services" whether these be "product recommendation services, authentication mechanisms [or] identity management services". Using digital identity in this way "requires accurate and credible information" (Rowe 2010, p.35). Rowe's (2010, p.35) work therefore assesses the credibility of the information provided in "representations which are constructed on the Social Web" by exploring how these "mirror their real-world equivalent". In constructing his research, Rowe (2010) provides some pointers towards how 'digital identity' may be viewed. One way of regarding 'digital identity' is to see it as the "persona" which is "handcrafted" by the individual using the available profiling tool within a given application (Rowe 2010, p.35). However, this is a very specific rather than encompassing view and Rowe (2010, p.36) continues by elaborating on a three tiered model relating to digital identity derived from Windley[70] and given in diagram form below:

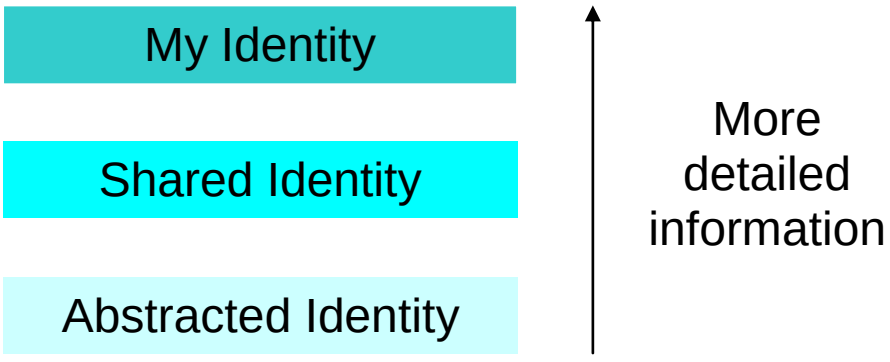


Figure 13 Three tiered model of digital identity (Windley 2005)

[69] Light gives the citation as: Goffman E. The presentation of self in everyday life. Penguin Books; 1959. (1990)
[70] Rowe gives the citation as: P Windley. *Digital Identity*. O'Reilly Media, Inc., August 2005.

These three elements of digital identity are described as follows (Rowe 2010, p.36):

- **My Identity** – "contains persistent identity information such as a person's name, date of birth and genealogical relations, essentially information that is constant and is unlikely to change".
- **Shared Identity** – "attributes assigned to an individual by other people such as the social network of a person", and this is susceptible to change. This suggests that people can be identified partly by the company they keep.
- **Abstracted Identity** – "identity information derived from groupings and demographics" and includes the communities that people are involved in which may change over time.

The arrow in the diagram denotes that "as the tiers move up, the information describing the digital identity of an individual becomes increasingly detailed and therefore deterministic" so that it comes to "uniquely identify the person" (Rowe 2010, p.36).

4.4.6 Identity Shift in the Creation of an Ideal Online Self

Gonzales and Hancock's (2008, p.167) research examines how computer-mediated self-presentations can alter identities. They point to a tradition in social science research that suggests that "there is a link between the act of self-presentation and creating one's self-concept" (Gonzales and Hancock 2008, p.167). In fact, according to Gonzales and Hancock, citing Baumeister,[71] ""self-construction" is a primary motivation of self-presentation". People can enact "self-presentation behavior" in order to ""create, maintain, or modify" an image that reflects one's ideal self". Awareness of an audience "augments the effect of self-presentation on identity" such that people become more "committed to self-presentations they make publicly" (Gonzales and Hancock 2008, p.168). Gonzales and Hancock (2008, p.168) "refer to this outcome as "identity shift"". Their research looks at whether the same holds true for self-presentations online, questioning whether "acting a certain way online alter[s] concepts of the self" (Gonzales and Hancock 2008, p.168). Gonzales and Hancock (2008, p.168) note that online self-presentations "are more easily modified", can "express previously unexpressed aspects of identity", and also enable the "act[ing] out of new identities".

[71] Gonzales and Hancock give the citation as: Baumeister, R.F. (1982). A self-presentational view of social phenomena. *Psychological Bulletin,* 91, 3-26.

Self-presentation research has a long lineage. The early twentieth century work of the symbolic interactionists (notably Cooley and Mead)[72] had addressed the idea that identity "is shaped through a lifetime of social behavior as individuals continuously evaluate the self from the imagined perspective of others" (Gonzales and Hancock 2008, p.169). Subsequently, Goffman "brought self-presentation behavior to the forefront of social science research in his book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life"* (Gonzales and Hancock 2008, p.169).

Public self-presentation can "obligate" individuals to a particular identity through "a social need to maintain consistent internal and external states" (Gonzales and Hancock 2008, p.170). The required audience need not "be established through physical presence, but can be imagined", which is obviously relevant to "investigations of mediated self-presentation" (Gonzales and Hancock 2008, p.170). Gonzales and Hancock (2008, pp.170-1) demonstrate that research in this regard has highlighted that "the Internet provides opportunities to present one's self using multiple strategies", appealing to "creativity, expressiveness, and sharing of personal information" in addition to "strategies of ingratiation and competence". They also highlight some contradictions in the research with respect to the sense of audience experienced by people online, with some commentators suggesting that the decreased cues available leads to a forgetting of the audience, whilst theories such as Social Identification/Deindividuation (SIDE) suggest that the cues which do remain are overinterpreted and thus the sense of audience is actually exaggerated (Gonzales and Hancock 2008, p.171). Gonzales and Hancock (2008, p.182) conclude that mediated self-presentation may lead to "subtle shifts in self-perceptions of identity that may in turn influence future social interaction".

[72] Gonzales and Hancock give the citations as: Cooley, C.H. (1902). *Human nature and the social order.* New York: Scribner. Mead, G.H. (1934). *Mind, self and society.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

4.4.7 Identity and Virtual (Learning) Spaces

Hughes and Oliver's (2010, p.1) editorial draws attention to the changing sociological research perspectives in studies of education and learner identity. They note that structural accounts involving "the effects of social class, ethnicity and gender are well documented", but that the structural approach has given way to "work that focuses on learners as agents in their learning" (Hughes and Oliver 2010, p.1). The latter draws on work by Wenger[73] in treating learning as "'being' or as situated in learning communities" (Hughes and Oliver 2010, p.1). Learning is noted as involving "disruption, challenge and identity transformation" and educational interest has therefore developed around "opportunities for new identity experiences" in online spaces (Hughes and Oliver 2010, p.2). In a sense many online spaces can be viewed in this way, such that they provide possibilities for, as Savin-Baden[74] notes (Hughes and Oliver 2010, p.3):

- **Identity extension** – enhancing aspects of identity through avatar creation
- **Identity multiplication** – interaction between many selves such as embodied self and avatars
- **Identity tourism** – becoming changelings and shape shifters, where new identities are experienced in an immersive world

4.4.8 Identity Schema developed with respect to Virtual Identities

Gee (2003, pp.54-55) has developed a three part schema for thinking about identity with respect to online gaming[75]:

[73] Hughes and Oliver (2010) give the citation as: Wenger, E. 1998. *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
[74] See article in the same issue of the journal.
[75] However, the diagram is taken from a student blog: Stephanie S, 2009. *The Born E-dentity: online identity in our cyber world*. <http://thebornedentity.blogspot.com/2009/02/game-on-rpgs-and-types-of-identity.html>, [accessed 11.08.11].

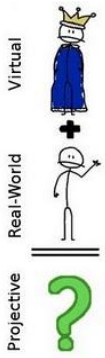


Figure 14 Three part identity schema for online gaming (Gee 2003)

The three parts of the schema can be described in the following way (Gee 2003, pp.54-5):

- **Virtual identity** – this is understood to be one's identity as a virtual character in a virtual world
- **Real**-**World identity** – the nonvirtual person playing the computer game
- **Projective identity** – plays on the two senses of the word 'project', this lies somewhere on the interface between the real world person and the virtual character

4.5 Summary

The above chapter highlights the complexities at work in a consideration of both personal and digital identity. The former is a conflicted arena in sociological terms. In the case of the latter, there are not only technological and personal factors at work, but also competing notions of what digital identity could mean and whether the concept of identity has any ontological certainty at all. These views are presented to highlight the complexity of the picture surrounding digital identity and the ideas of personal identity that must be 'thought through' to ensure that the overall picture is complete and encompassing.

The following chapter discusses in overview form the study-generated System Map of factors impinging on the concept of (digital) identity as discerned from the opinions and experiences of the study participants. These participants may have engaged, wittingly or otherwise, with the available discourses outlined within the introductory and literature review chapters above.

Chapter Five: Towards a 'System Map' of (Digital) Identity and Identity-Related Issues

This chapter provides more detail on the study participants, particularly in terms of their (digital) identities. It also introduces the 'System Map' of (digital) identity and identity-related issues which forms the framework of discussion for the ensuing data chapters.

5.1 The Study Participants

A total of 30 participants took part in the study, of whom 16 were male and 14 were female, with their year of birth ranging from 1926 to 1960.

Two of the females who took part in the study (Elizabeth and Shirley) had husbands who were very ICT literate (Francis and Billy respectively) and they persuaded them to be interviewed as part of the study, hence two couples are represented in the data.

A table of participant vignettes is given below (in order of year of birth), representing the study population in more depth, which details:

- assigned name (pseudonym)
- year of birth
- how they took part in the study (I= Interview, F = Focus Group, Q = Questions via email, W = Writing. Some of the participants took part in the study in more than one way. In the quotations which occur throughout the thesis the participation method can be taken as the interview – unless otherwise stated using one of the abbreviations given here, which will occur after their name and before the quote under consideration: F, Q or W)
- how they have been classified according to a schema induced from their transcripts and other written materials (Subject Positions as discussed in Chapter 6)
- their ICT behaviour (evidenced from what they say about themselves)
- and their ICT enabled identity (evidenced from what they say about themselves)

Table 17 Study participants in more detail

Older Person	Year of Birth	I F Q or W?	Schema of Subject Positions	Web/ICT Behaviour	ICT enabled Identity - specific to individual
Geoff	1926	Q	"I am me", pragmatic moralist	Email. Keeping in touch. Has a lady penfriend in Vancouver which he is very pleased about.	The computer is one of the top 5 Cs of his personal identity - Children, Cat, Car, Computer, Church.
Tom	1928	F and I	"I can be who I want to be" malleable moralist	Internet is currently an information resource and a way of staying in touch with people. Internet could be used to set up a web presence as a Guru to develop a new ideology for the operation of society.	Internet-enabled Intellectual and Ideas Man.
Robert	1940	I	"I am me", pragmatic moralist	Keen on technology. Was in the Royal Signals in the Army. Attended computing courses when he retired. Uses technology to run various societies. Enjoys taking and manipulating Digital Photographs.	Computer fan who enjoys keeping web connected with the world, friends, family. ICT-competent societies organiser.
Shirley	1942	I	"I am me", pragmatic moralist	Keen user of computers, uses them to follow up family history. Following death of husband used it to make new contacts. Football supporters association. Saga Zone. Creative Writing online.	Internet-enabled information acquirer, socialiser, and creative writer.
Billy	1944	I	"I am me", pragmatic moralist	Uses computers avidly to follow many creative hobbies, such as dancing, writing, music, playwright.	Internet addict, internet-enabled self-promoter.

Rosie	1944	W	"I'm not built for computers", Resistant/Reluctant Realist/Naturalist	Uses computers but finds them a struggle. Word Processing and email.	Self-confessed ICT 'dinosaur'.
Howard	1945	F and I	"I am me" pragmatic moralist	Uses the internet/ICT to help run various societies - U3A, Meetup Group Society. Started a PhD in computing many years ago but was overtaken by rapid movement of technology.	ICT-competent societies organiser.
Douglas	1946	F	"I am me" pragmatic moralist	Practical usage of ICT. Not interested in the social networking tools. Aware of lack of relevant ICT skills.	ICT is highlighting my technology weaknesses.
Kathleen	1946	Q	"I am me", pragmatic moralist	Preparing teaching materials. Looking up information. Using Skype to talk to her daughter. Dedicated Facebooker.	Internet-enabled information acquirer and disseminator. Facebook addict.
Noreen	1947	Q	"I am me", pragmatic moralist	Accessing information. Using email to keep in touch.	Internet-enabled information acquirer. Personal world has expanded through use of computer.
Gavin	1948	F	"I am me" pragmatic moralist	For maintaining large network of contacts across the country.	Internet-enabled Local and National Networker for social and work purposes.
Clara	1949	I	"I am me", pragmatic moralist	Email, and non-identity games such as Minesweeper. Not interested in all the latest technology. Just interested in computers on a pragmatic level.	ICT conservative

Jonathan	1950	F and I	"I am me" pragmatic **amoralist (not to be confused with the pragmatic moralists)**	Using internet to research communities of (minority) interest and the events they put on, Pagan, Fetish, Gothic. Would like to use the internet to indulge sexual fetishes. Emailing to keep in touch. Uses the internet to keep up with real world interests. Uses ICT to produce teaching materials.	Internet-enabled Pagan. ICT enables the management of my offline identity.
Eddie	1950	I	"I'm not built for computers", Resistant/Reluctant Realist/Naturalist	Has used email. Prefers to use the computer for keeping in touch with family.	ICT-enabled father and grandfather.
Penny	1950	I and W	"I am me", pragmatic moralist	Keen user of ICT. Family history research. Has a Facebook presence and plays Farmville and Scrabble on there. Uses the computer for Word Processing and Email. Writing assignments - has done a BA in English Literature and an MA in Creative Writing. Skype-ing family who live abroad.	ICT is a guilty pleasure. ICT critic. ICT-enabled family and ancestral identity.
Michael	1951	F	"I am me" pragmatic moralist	Not a great participator. Thinks the mobile phone is very useful for keeping in touch with family in his home country.	Feels his work identity might be replaced by technology. Being shocked by the advent of various new technologies.
Iris	1952	F	"I am me" pragmatic moralist	International academic researcher using tools to find out what's happening all over the world. Using the tools to keep in touch with family members.	ICT-enabled International academic researcher, Mother and Daughter-in-law.
Julia	1952	I	"I am me", pragmatic moralist	Works from home. Computer is vital to work. Uses many networking functions	Internet-enabled self-employed market

				such as Facebook and LinkedIn for business and friendship.	researcher and business networker.
Sanjay	1953	F	"I am me" pragmatic moralist	Work and practical purposes.	Early adopter of ICT high technology, wants to turn late-adoper of low technology.
Graham	1953	I	"I am a created/curated version of a basic me", pragmatic **amoralist**	Uses the computer to meet people in the real world. Keen organiser of events on a social networking site. Uses Facebook.	Uses the internet to enable his offline social identity.
Marie	1954	I	"I am me", pragmatic moralist	Enjoys using the computer. But uses it for useful, practical reasons. Uses it for OU study purposes. Enjoys Facebook. Keen photographer and uploads photographs to the internet.	Wants to use ICT for happy and fun reasons.
Anna-Maria	1954	I	"I am me", pragmatic moralist	Uses computers for research and academic purposes. Also for maintaining links with national identity and family.	Internet-enabled researcher, mother, ex-pat.
Sadie	1954	I	"I am me", pragmatic moralist	Keen user of World of Warcraft. Uses computers for research and academic purposes. Also for social purposes.	World of Warcraft 'healer', 'mentor' and 'mentored'. The character represents me rather than being an identity experiment.
Francis	1955	I	"I am me", pragmatic moralist	Got into computers very early - early adopter. Keen programmer. Total immersion. Currently a keen wikipedian. Former engineer. Currently teaches IT.	Internet-enabled 'Renaissance Man'.

Elizabeth	1955	I and W	"I am me", pragmatic moralist	Blogs - broadcasting the self, personal ideas, expertise. Facebook - maintaining the family identity. Online games - to understand how pupils were using them. But reflected true age on them. Extremely keen."internet-y"	Internet-enabled 'Bluestocking'.
Charles	1956	I	"I am me", pragmatic moralist	Uses computers for research and academic purposes.	Internet-enabled researcher and ICT critic.
Vanessa	1957	F and I	"I'm not built for computers", Resistant/Reluctant Realist/Naturalist	Internet is an information source for intellectual interests. Used once a week, then put back in its place in a bag behind the sofa!	"I am not a Luddite but..."
Pierre	1958	I	"I can play creatively with different versions of me" tricksterish amoralist	Has explored the potentials for playing with sexual identities offered by the internet and its new affordances. Also interested in creating own website for green politics - a resource portal. This person has invented new technologies and played with combinations of new technologies.	Playful and pragmatic ICT-enabled identities. Early adopter of ICT. Technology entrepreneur.
Harriet	1958	I	"I'm not built for computers", Resistant/Reluctant Realist/Naturalist	Does not own a computer. Uses them at work.	ICT sceptic and critic.
Ernest	1960	W	"I am protecting me", pragmatic moralist	Pseudonym user. Not keen on things like Twitter or Facebook - but has a presence even though sceptical. IT Manager! Gadget man - Kindle, Archos, Epad. Enjoys Digital Photography. Geocaching website - and uses a SatNav to find the geocaches.	Internet masquerader - hides true identity behind a pseudonym.

5.2 Overview of Categories and Associated Codes leading to the System Map

5.2.1 Overview of Categories

Grounded theory is intended to lead to the creation of categories which basically summarise the data into major themes. These themes were created through linking the individual data coding phrases into higher, more generalised sets of associated codes. The induced categories, created early on in the cyclical data collection and analysis process, and which therefore acted as a starting point for summarising the data for purposes of convenience, are shown in the diagram below. The central category in this diagram is the theme of (digital) identity. The surrounding categories indicate early thoughts about the impacting factors on (digital) identity, which lend shape and form to the (digital) identity in question.

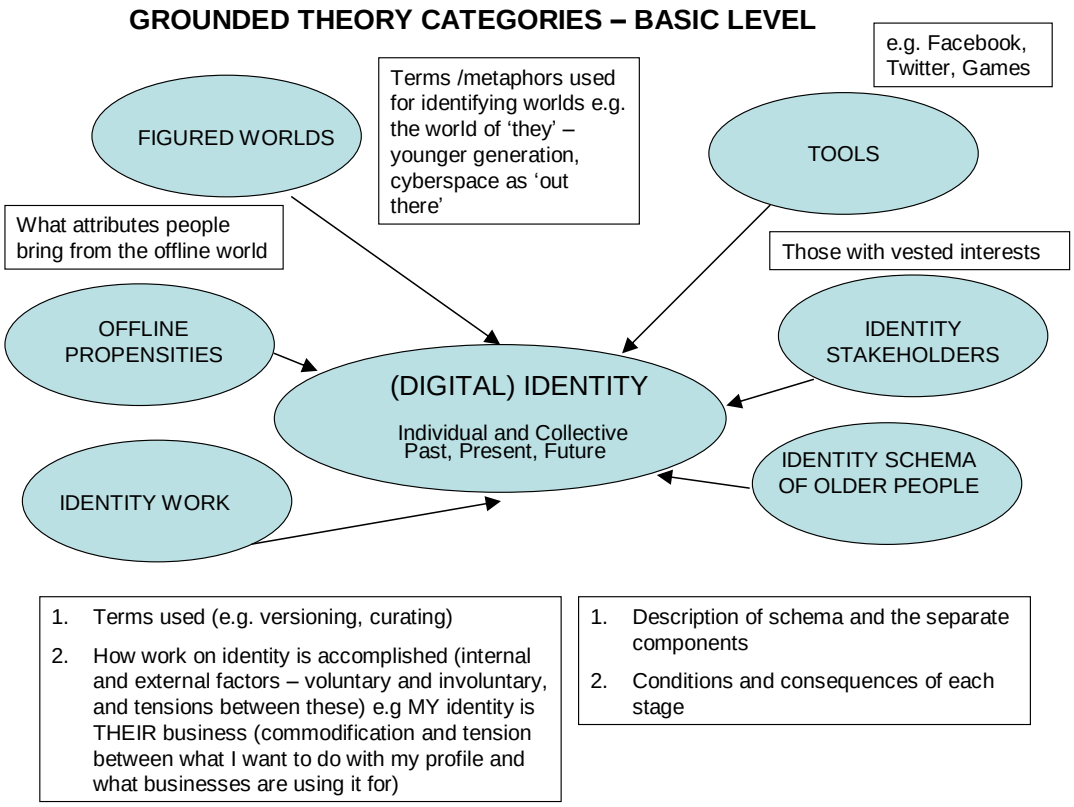


Figure 15 Initial Grounded Theory categories obtained from the study

- **(Digital) Identity** – Digital is here placed in brackets to denote a situation which is more complex than merely thinking about the identity of participants that is expressed digitally. The compound term also denotes the idea that online identity can mimic, better, or diverge from, an offline identity – indicating a type of relationship between the two. **Offline propensities** therefore need to be considered as part of the data analysis and theorising processes. The term also encompasses the idea of a collective or social identity, where people frame themselves as part of a group by virtue of the identities they wish to portray or reject. Offline identities can also be shaped by the adoption of online identities – so there is a reciprocity at work here.
- **Offline Propensities** – as highlighted above, the participant's offline propensities need to be considered when thinking about their online identity. This thought led to a comparative analysis of the data being undertaken, through which the induced **'identity schema of older people'** was created.
- **Figured Worlds** – these are deemed to be worlds of the constructed imagination which are then expressed figuratively through the use of language. They can represent for example, how cyberspace as an entity in itself is viewed, and how the younger generation is constructed and 'othered'. Both the imagination and the use of language to represent it are here seen as important impacting factors on the processes of (digital) identity creation.
- **Tools** – these are the software products through which identities can be expressed, however there are questions here about how the identity of the tool enables or curtails the processes of (digital) identity formation.
- **Identity Stakeholders** – these are deemed to be those people and institutions that have a vested interest in a person's digital identity. Tools are created according to the ethos of the person or institutions concerned and therefore this ethos will have an impact on digital identity.
- **Identity Work** – this refers to the type of identity processes that occur as a result of using ICT.

5.2.2 Overview of initial coding

The following table shows how the initial categories were generated from a consideration of the 'starter codes' arising from various transcripts. The lists of codes are not intended to be all encompassing, but are provided to give a feel for the type of information assigned to the category and which helped to build it. Also, the iterative approach to data analysis means that although the initial coding starts as 'bottom up' (very detailed line-by-line approach), in subsequent transcripts it is possible to see the data at the category rather than the code level (as suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and therefore subsequent coding does not need to be quite so detailed.

Table 18 Initial categories and associated codes (indicative)

SURROUNDING CATEGORIES - impacting on central theme of [digital] identity	**ASSOCIATED CODES** - indicative, not exhaustive
Identity Work DESCRIPTION • new technologies are objects to think with about human identity • new technologies enable purposeful identity work to be performed • for various reasons they can also cause unpredicted identity re-assessments • the offline identity affects the online identity and vice versa • online identity work can be performed to maintain an existing identity (online or offline) or create a new one	INITIAL CODES • Digital exclusion seen as leading to non-identity • Versioning reality, versioning the self (defining yourself by the social group you belong to) • Exhibiting the private is devaluing the personal side of our identity • Technology is stealing a fundamental part of our identity • Technology is challenging my identity • Penetrating the identity of others (when usual social cues are missing) • Technology being used for identity theft
Tools DESCRIPTION • different online tools allow for different kinds of identity work • some tools are more appropriate to identity maintenance whereas some tools can facilitate the production of new identities • many tools have a profiling capacity leading to various ways in which your identity can be defined • Phenomenological discussion of some of these tools will be undertaken	INITIAL CODES • Using Facebook • Using Twitter • Using LinkedIn • Using Texting • Using Plaxo • Using World of Warcraft • Using Blogging • Using Second Life • Using Geocaching website • Using Email • Wikipedia writing • Phoning on mobile
Identity Stakeholders DESCRIPTION • Those with a vested interest in your identity	INITIAL CODES • Profiling can be used for commercial purposes (MY identity is THEIR business) • Technology being used for identity theft (this code can be seen to fit more than one category)

	• Technology being used for grooming • Business modelling of social networking tools (some sites charge for the events you attend)
Figured Worlds DESCRIPTION • These are imagined worlds or communities which are then expressed in language. • Particularly refers to those metaphors that are used to understand the idea of 'cyberspace' and younger people. • These have an affect on the way we see ourselves	INITIAL CODES • The world of 'They' (the younger generation for whom older people consider that technology was originally intended). • 'Out there' • 'Up there' • The world of I • The world that is always On • Dividing us into techie tribes (our identity being governed by the technology we ascribe to 'I am an Apple. I am a PC') • Internet being 'the sum of us' (web as a cybernetic creature containing all our individual identities)
Identity Schema of Older People (combined with Offline Propensities here) DESCRIPTION • From a consideration of project participants a schema was created of older people and (digital) identity • Their online identities could be either a mirroring or masking of their offline propensities • These propensities can be seen in terms of a type of (im)(a)moral stance towards online identity • They can also be seen in terms of the pragmatic or playful nature of the participants with respect to their online identity	IDENTITY SCHEMA CODES • "I'm not built for computers", Resistant/Reluctant Realist/Naturalist • "I am me" pragmatic moralist • "I am me" pragmatic **amoralist** (not to be confused with the pragmatic moralists) • "I am a created/curated version of a basic me", pragmatic amoralist • "I can play creatively with different versions of me" tricksterish amoralist • "I can be who I want to be" malleable moralist (no sense of an offline self to be mirrored or masked) • "I am protecting me", pragmatic moralist • "I am not me" nefarious immoralist (inferred category from reading newspapers etc)

These initial codes and categories, along with their associated diagram (above) marked the output of the initial phases of the data analysis. After the full dataset had been analysed, the initial categories were subsequently re-engineered into a 'System Map' for expressing what was happening in the overall dataset. This is discussed in more detail in the next section.

5.3 'Identity and Technology System Map'

The 'System Map' marks a more processual account of the data, as the initial categories seemed somewhat static. It also removes the idea of online or digital identity as being centre stage, and sets it within a tripartite scheme of identities denoted by the blue oval shapes in the diagram; offline (personal), online (ICT or digital), projective identity (in the third space).

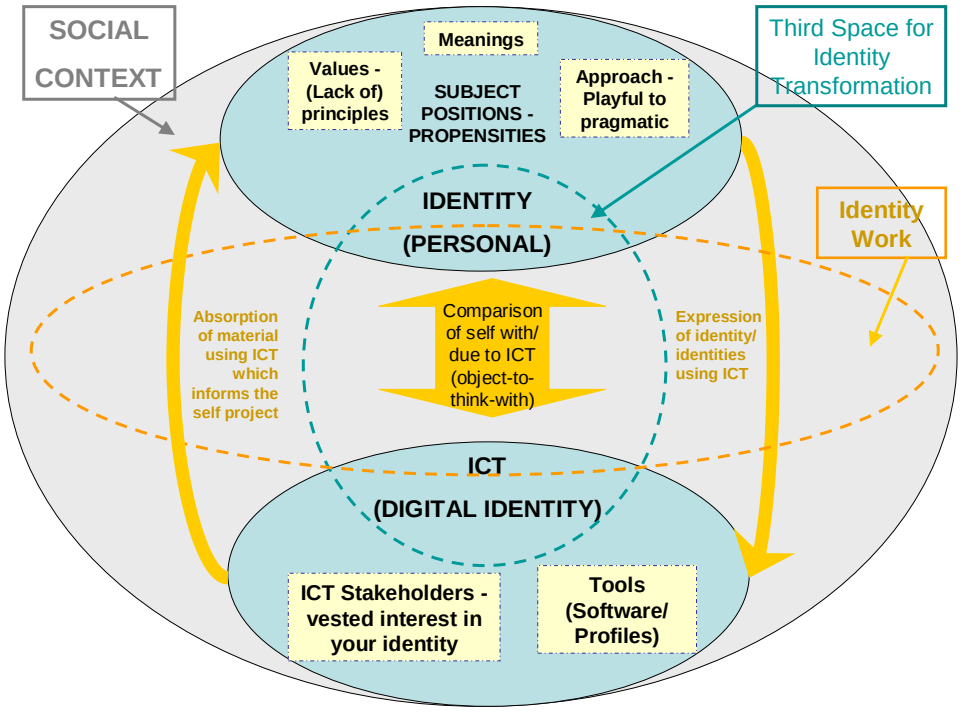


Figure 16 System Map for thinking about (digital) identity - from the present study

The 'system map' highlights how several different factors are involved in the processes related to identity matters as they arise in the context of the use of information and communication technologies.

SYSTEM MAP – GROUNDED THEORY STATEMENT
The map itself is a seven part system involving: a tripartite identity schema comprised of 1) the individual in society with their own propensities, 2) their manifested digital identity and their 3) third space imagined identity, which is impacted by 4) stakeholders and their 5) ICT tools, the whole being situated in 6) a social context, throughout which 7) various identity 'work' processes are occurring (the latter can have their impact both on the individual and also potentially on wider society).

1), 2), and 3) appear in blue, 4) and 5) are the yellow areas in the oval of the ICT (digital identity) section, 6) is in grey and 7) relates to the areas denoted by orange.

5.3.1 Tripartite Identity Schema

The tripartite identity schema is constructed of the personal identity, the manifested digital identity, and a third space which is a mentally constructed version of the self lying between the personal and the digital identities (these are the areas represented in blue on the diagram):

- **the individual in society (personal identity)** - who approaches technology, and the identity mapping and manipulation opportunities available through this, with a set of meanings, (lack of) principles, and a preferred approach to usage ranging from the pragmatic to the playful.
- **the opportunities and constraints afforded by the available technology to construct digital identities (ICT or Digital Identity)** – digital identities are maintained, expressed and manufactured using technology **tools** which have been created to obey certain programming rules through the agency of a set of diverse **stakeholders** (more or less exploitative) who have their own values, purposes and requirements. The stakeholders have their own views on identity processes and the ways in which they want to use the data that is provided by the individual in the process of their identity management.
- **the third space for identity transformations** – a space for "projective identity" in line with Gee (2003) and denoting a complex arena where new identities are projected, experimented with, discarded, adapted or adopted. This space is neither the individual in their own self-hood, nor merely their technological manifestation, but a 'liminoid' (Turner 1986; Wessels 2010), betwixt-and-between projection of the result of imagining the two in combination. This third space is hence an enabler of identity "reflexivity". Likewise cyberspace is in itself an imagined space created out of the individual and collective mind enabling a set of networked computers to be envisioned as a kind of 'habitable' place. In this third space of the tripartite identity schema there also lies room for imagining the cybernetic 'hybrid' creature which is developing as the data shadows of people and things merge (Barnatt 2011). It is also an arena for thinking about the merging of people with technology where this could be either assistive or bodily embedded.

5.3.2 Social Context

The social arena in which this processual system of (digital) identity formulation is embedded fulfils a number of functions (denoted in the diagram by the space in grey in which the entire system is nested):

- **Source of narratives** – society is the source of available narratives with which to construct a self project. It also provides a set of discourses and values with which to judge the self projects of others.
- **Audience for identities** – In this way, Society becomes an audience for individual and collective identity 'performances', and possesses the power to authenticate or judge these performances. There is an element of identity negotiation which comes into play here.
- **Provider of structures** – society contains corporations and individuals which create the forms of technology, and also governments which can legislate the ways in which the technology can be used.
- **Provider of peers (*with* whom I construct group identities)** – society provides the peer groups for various identity-related political factions. These are increasingly enabled via the use of new technologies, which enable peer-groups to be found and then mobilised more easily (witness the city riots). Society creates opportunities for group identities.
- **Provider of 'others' (*against* whom I construct my identities)** – society provides groups or individuals against whom I compare myself, and hence define myself in opposition. These 'others' are what I *am not*.
- **Recipient of outcomes** – society is a recipient of the outcomes of identity related practices. This can have negative outcomes as in the case of the technology-enabled riots. However, more positive outcomes could be accrued from the identity experiments of individuals and groups in terms of improved narratives of the self, or better ways of operating society or viewing elements within it.

5.3.3 Identity Work

Technology can provide several methods for enabling identity work to be carried out in the 'third space' (the areas in orange in the diagram). The process is cyclical, with material being both gained and expressed using technology. The iterative process involved here leads to the self becoming what Giddens (1991) would term "a reflexive project" which is "sustained through a revisable narrative of self-identity".[76] Identity 'work' can have either self-affirming or self-challenging outcomes and can be summarised as follows:

- **Object to think with** - Turkle's (1984, 1995) work demonstrates that technology can be used as an 'object to think with' about human identity. People can identify themselves with different technologies or different aspects of technology (for example, disparate parts of an individual's identity can be thought of in terms of a series of multiple Windows, or people can identify themselves with their penchant for Mac or PC environments). Some people can feel that their identity is being challenged by the technology (for example, the ease with which technology can accomplish something may make personal human skills redundant).
- **Expression of self** – technology can be used to express and manipulate different forms of identity. Individuals can express themselves in writing, pictorially, in sound etc.
- **Source of material** – technology can be the provider of identity-related material, narratives, visuals, etc which can inform the self-project positively or negatively.

These three 'identity-work' processes are all implicated in Giddens (1991, p.32) "psychic reorganisation" of the self which occurs in conjunction with the mediating impact of ICT. ICT becomes a facilitating factor in a reflexive project which "generates programmes of actualisation and mastery" (Giddens 1991, p.9).

The 'identity-work' possibilities given here also take place against a backdrop of "local-global interrelations", which can be sharply highlighted by the use of the internet and ICT, so that lifestyle choices "raise moral issues which simply cannot be pushed to one side" (Giddens 1991, p.9). This idea of moral issues and the values of

[76] On the back cover of Gidden's (1991) work.

older people will become more explicit as the thesis progresses, and one of the values that Giddens (1991, p.9) highlights is the idea of personal "authenticity" which can become one possible "framework for self-actualisation" in the reflexive project.

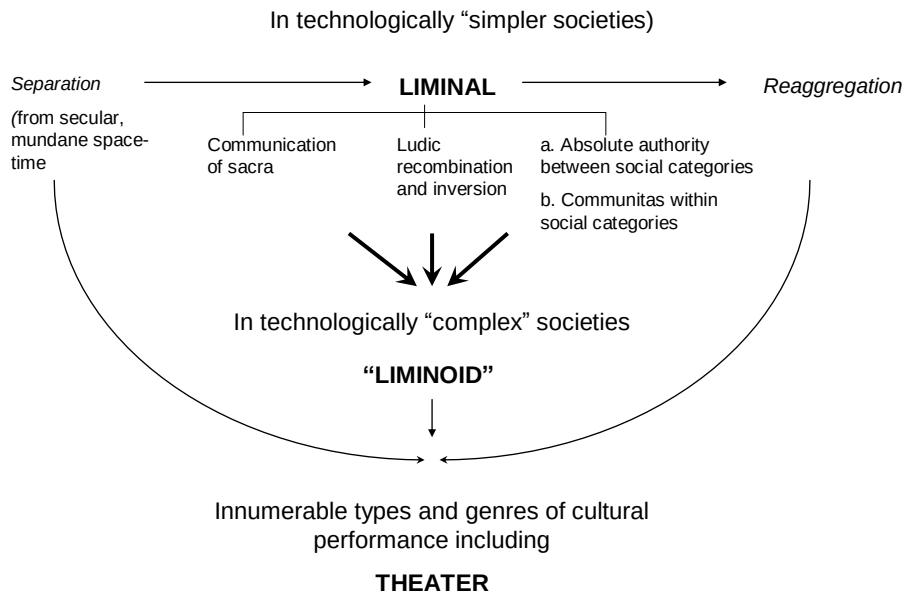
5.3.4 Contexts For The System Map – Three Part Identity Systems

There are some useful contexts within which to view this 'identity and technology System Map'. The idea of three part identity transition systems incorporating the idea of liminality has its roots in the work of van Gennep (1960). Van Gennep's (1960, p.11) early twentieth century work in anthropology led to a monograph on the *Rites of passage,* in which he stipulated that life's key identity transitions or crises could be distinguished in terms of three major phases:

- Preliminal rites (rites of separation)
- Liminal rites (rites of transition)
- Postliminal rites (rites of incorporation)

In passing from one state to the other one "wavers between two worlds" and enters a liminal state (third space), where liminal is derived from the idea of the threshold, denoting a boundary between two types of world (van Gennep's 1960, p.11). Turner (1986) subsequently developed van Gennep's (1960) ideas on liminality and then attempted to integrate them within a theory of the evolution of performance, drama and theatre, encompassing the traditional, modern and postmodern performative genres. This resonates with some theoretical viewpoints on identity production as a dramaturgical process (Goffman 1982, 1990a, 1990b).

'Liminal' in the context of genres of cultural performance was applied to technologically simpler societies, and the idea of the 'liminoid' was developed for technologically complex societies (Turner 1986, p.8). Turner's (1986) work on the liminal/liminoid can be summarised in the diagram below:



Adapted from Turner (1986, p.9) – The evolution of cultural genres of performance from "Liminal" to "Liminoid"

Figure 17 The evolution of cultural genres of performance (Turner 1986)

Turner's (1986, p.29) thesis is that the 'liminal' relates to the more tribal "collective and obligatory ritual performances", but that in modern society these practices have been largely supplanted by "individuality and optation".

Latterly, Wessels (2010b) has applied the idea of the 'liminoid' (p.42) to a theory of "The internet's theatre of innovation" (p.12). It can be seen that another dramaturgical metaphor is in evidence here. "The Internet's theatre of innovation" "addresses the interaction of the production of the technology, the policy framework and the way users participate in e-services" (Wessels 2010a, p.2). The computer industry can be understood as "located in the backstage area" and forms the "relations of production", the policy-making community are "positioned on the stage area", and users are "located in the audiences area" (Wessels 2010a, p.3). This can be summarised in the following diagram:

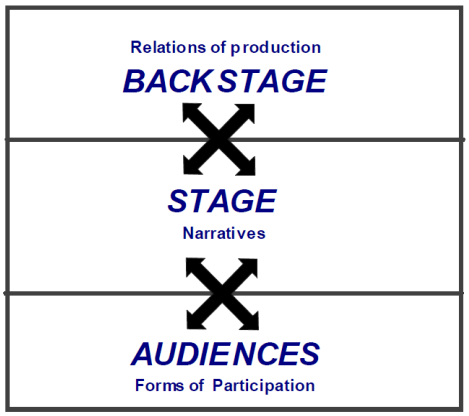


Figure 18 The internet's theatre of innovation (Wessels 2010a)

Wessel's (2010b, p.13) diagram explains that technological change can be understood as deriving from:

> The ways in which these three dimensions become interdependent in particular developments that are informed by, and in turn inform, an overall trajectory of socio-technical change as part of broader social change.

Wessels (2010b, p.41) understands socio-technical change within the context of Turner's performative genre, since the innovation process, like performance, can be thought of as "an art, which is open, unfinished, de-centred, liminal and, for Turner, is a paradigm for process". Wessels (2010b, p.42) notes that "a key aspect in the performance of innovative dramas involving technology is 'transformational spaces'", which are liminoid in being "betwixt and between" "existing communication systems, conventions, guidelines and possible future forms of communication". In these spaces transformations can occur because technology is no longer "constrained by established conventions" and therefore "actors can interpret and 'play with' narratives and artefacts of a nascent ICT form".[77]

If we look at the 'System Map' being presented here in terms of Wessel's (2010a, 2010b) three part 'theatre' we can see that the backstage (computer industry) and stage (government policy) are represented within the 'ICT' area as providing both the tools for, and the constraints on, expressions and constructs of individual and

[77] One example of this would be the Sus-IT project's technology sandpits, where new ideas for technology are played with and re-designed.

collective identities within a technological environment. They are thus implicated in the types of identity transformation that can occur within the third space. Wessels is here mapping a process of socio-technical change however, whereas the 'System Map' charts a process of individual and collective identity transformations, which can in turn have a reciprocal impact on the overall system. As Wessels (2010b, p.41) notes, performative genres such as socio-technical change, and to which could be added the notion of identity transformation, are "secreted from the social drama, and in turn surround it and feed their performed meanings back into it" in a cyclical manner.

Wessels (2010b, pp.143-161) work on the 'Theatre of innovation' does deliberately encompass themes of "virtuality, identity and community" in its discussion of 'Cyber Cultures and the Internet'. In this respect, she forwards the idea that (Wessels 2010b, p.154):

> the fabric of identity is woven and rewoven through culture and communication – it is partly ascribed but it is also achieved and negotiated through interaction. The late modern individual constructs self-identity from imagined selves in relation to socio-cultural categories of gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality and age. The move from essentialist theories of identity to the deconstructed reflexive self is part of the discourse of modernity and late modernity.

Hence, as Wessels (2010b, p.154) notes, the "performance of identity in cyberspace" is "a social activity in which scripts of author and audience, integrity and deception, fluidity and authenticity are rehearsed and played out".

5.4 Summary

This chapter has provided the basis for the grounded theory model generated by the study. It encompasses the main categories in a diagrammatic form with their linking relationships. The elements of the 'System Map' provided in this chapter in embryonic form will be elaborated and illustrated in the ensuing data chapters with reference to the transcripts of the focus group, interviews and other pieces of text provided by older people in the course of the research. The four data chapters to be discussed are given here:

- Chapter Six: Offline Propensities compared to Online Propensities (incorporating meanings, (lack of) values, identity comparison, and identity approach into a schema of 'Subject Positions'. The chapter also contains a subsection on moral panics which is associated with an individual's personal values.
- Chapter Seven: Identity Work (processes involved in the formation of online and offline identities)
- Chapter Eight: ICT Identity Stakeholders (those with a vested interest in your online/offline identities)
- Chapter Nine: Tools (Phenomenological approach to using Tools demonstrating the lived experience of them for identity purposes)

Whilst the titles of the four chapters definitely represent four key elements of the 'System Map', the same is not true in reverse, since some of the other elements of the 'System Map' appear dispersed throughout these chapters as appropriate rather than having a chapter to themselves. This means that the social context and the third space are implicit rather than explicit in the overall structure of the data chapters. The data chapters provide the evidence base for the Grounded Theory model and statement.

Chapter Six: System Map Part One – Offline Propensities compared to Online Propensities (offline/online identities)

6.1 Introduction to the Schema of Subject Positions

A schema of identities has been induced as part of this study from a consideration of all the participants and how their various statements could be classed into 'Subject Positions'. This has been developed from both specific utterances and also from a holistic consideration of each individual's total transcript. Vasconcelos (2007, p.133) notes that such a classification of identities as produced here should not be viewed as "typifying behaviours", since "most individuals engage in a type of behaviour without being typed by it; they engage in other behaviours as well". This means that individual people should not be accorded to these positions specifically, but they can be deemed as sometimes exhibiting some of the traits highlighted in the associated descriptions. It would therefore be possible for some people to exhibit traits which accord with two or more positions that would seem to be at times quite contrary.

A spreadsheet was created of the 30 participants who took part in the project specifically to aid with this process, and this can be seen in the Appendices (referred to in the section above). From this spreadsheet, the following (incomplete) schema of (digital) identity emerged.

1. "I'm not built for computers", Resistant/Reluctant Realist/Naturalist
2. "I am me" pragmatic moralist
3. "I am me" pragmatic **amoralist** (not to be confused with the pragmatic moralists)
4. "I am a created/curated version of a basic me", pragmatic amoralist
5. "I can play creatively with different versions of me" tricksterish amoralist
6. "I can be who I want to be" malleable moralist (no sense of an offline self to be mirrored or masked)
7. "I am protecting me", pragmatic moralist
8. "I am not me" nefarious immoralist (inferred category from participant's reading of newspapers, listening to the news, etc)

The schema is necessarily incomplete because other categories can be inferred to exist for which the study does not have actual participants. For example, item 4 would probably have a moralist counterpart. Such participants would be difficult to find for interview purposes because they would not necessarily recognise themselves as belonging to the category if you were to try and advertise for them.

There appear to be three axes along which participants' identities can be registered with respect to digital technologies:

- **Identity comparison** - this is concerned with the perceived similarities or differences between their offline and online selves.
- **Values** – this relates to the moral stance (if any) that they take concerning the comparison that has been made between these two selves, or in some instances the stance imputed to them by the researcher from a holistic investigation of their total transcript.
- **Approach** - The nature of their personal usage of technology for identity management purposes (from pragmatic to playful), and how this relates to the development of their online and offline selves.

The table below assigns all the study participants to their individual induced 'Subject Position'. This is the key position which that individual holds, however some participants can portray traits of other 'Subject Positions' as already noted.

Table 19 Subject Positions generated by the study and associated study participants

Subject Position	Participants
1. "I'm not built for computers", Resistant/Reluctant Realist/Naturalist	Rosie (1944) Eddie (1950) Vanessa (1957) Harriet (1958)
2. "I am me" pragmatic moralist	Geoff (1926) Robert (1940) Shirley (1942) Billy (1944) Howard (1945) Douglas (1946) Kathleen (1946) Noreen (1947) Gavin (1948) Clara (1949) Penny (1950) Michael (1951) Iris (1952) Julia (1952) Sanjay (1953) Marie (1954) Anna-Maria (1954) Sadie (1954) Francis (1955) Elizabeth (1955) Charles (1956)
3. "I am me" pragmatic **amoralist** (not to be confused with the pragmatic moralists)	Jonathan (1950)
4. "I am a created/curated version of a basic me", pragmatic amoralist	Graham (1953)
5. "I can play creatively with different versions of me" tricksterish amoralist	Pierre (1958)
6. "I can be who I want to be" malleable moralist (no sense of an offline self to be mirrored or masked)	Tom (1928)
7. "I am protecting me", pragmatic moralist	Ernest (1960)
8. "I am not me" nefarious immoralist (inferred category from reading newspapers etc)	Referred to as a 'constructed' category by several people – the 'other' against which people set themselves morally.

Although this is not a quantitative study, it is interesting to note that the majority of those who took part were "I am me" – pragmatic moralists. These participants were not interested in the affordances of ICT for identity experimentation; their usage of ICT was for pragmatic identity maintenance. This was the case even though advertisements were used to find people who did use the affordances for the purposes of experimentation. Two people were interviewed as 'gamers' – Elizabeth and Sadie – but on examination their game characters were mainly versions of themselves rather than experiments or deceptions. Elizabeth even maintained to other game players that she was 'old' to prevent any form of misconception occurring. Sadie, on the other hand, tried not to reveal her age in order to prevent disturbance to the flow of the game, a pragmatic rather than deliberately deceptive approach.

Of the other participants, only four people were really reluctant ICT users, but even they used technology for pragmatic purposes such as work, study, or communicating with family and acknowledged its utility and benefits in this respect.

The remainder of the participants (Jonathan, Graham, Pierre, Tom, Ernest) each merited a 'Subject Position' of their own. Jonathan was unusual for his self-confessed experimental approach to his offline identity, but not his online identity. Graham, Pierre and Tom had each given careful thought to both the theories and the practice of how identity is performed and achieved, and had thus examined positions that go beyond the belief in a 'kernel of identity'. Ernest did not want to experiment with his identity but had felt the need to create pseudonyms (pragmatic deception) to protect himself from the manipulations of others. These participants had all spent time assessing identity matters to the point where they were deliberately prepared to take this into account with respect to ICT usage, and in some cases they acted accordingly.

Due to the great emphasis on the idea of a 'moral' usage of ICT for identity purposes, a working definition of 'moral' is required. The following two definitions are useful in this context:[78]

[78] *Moral.* <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/moral>, [2011], [accessed 10.02.11].

- "pertaining to, or concerned with the principles or rules of right conduct or the distinction between right and wrong"
- "virtuous in sexual matters; chaste."

Although these definitions will be examined further in an explanation of the various items of the identity schema, a moral stance towards internet behaviour was clearly discerned from various transcripts, and this stance was sometimes taken with respect to stories in the media regarding, for example, the grooming of children by older people or identity theft. The internet, in the opinion of some, is therefore an arena where identity masquerades are performed in order to undertake immoral/illegal (sexual) pursuits. However, there are those people who see new technologies in an amoral light, appreciating the affordances that they can bring to experiment with their sexuality and other aspects of self in ways that are not perceived as harmful to anyone. In the latter case presenting an alternative online self which is different to an online self would not then be perceived by them as a moral issue.

The Subject Positions developed here illustrate the various ways in which ICT has become implicated with what Giddens (1991, p.9) terms the 'reflexive project' of the self. For some people, "authenticity" is a key component of their identity and lifestyle choices, but this represents just one of a number of potential frameworks for ICT impacted self-actualisation (Giddens 1991, p.9). There are also other (lack of) value sets at work here (Giddens 1991, p.9). Encounters with ICT both highlight possibilities for an emancipatory "life-political programme", and yet demonstrate a world which is full of varying "forms of oppression" (Giddens 1991, p.9). ICT thus highlights "specific moral dilemmas" and "existential issues" with which some of the older people in this study may choose to engage (Giddens 1991, p.9). They may also choose to enlist ICT in their morally crusading "life-political agenda" (Giddens 1991, p.9)

The sections which follow describe the individual components of the schema in more depth. This is then followed by a section on moral panics in order to highlight the concerns which technology raises in the minds of some of the study participants.

6.2 Individual Components of the Schema

6.2.1 "I'm not built for computers", Resistant/Reluctant Realist/Naturalist

This position concerns those study participants who took a resistant or reluctant stance to engaging with computers, and thus a resistant or reluctant stance to having any form of online identity. It is associated with preferring 'real' reality rather than their conception of 'virtual' reality, hence the term 'realist' has been applied. Such participants believed that their outlook was the 'natural' one to adopt; people are natural and machines are not. Their arguments become couched in real or natural terminology. "I'm not built for computers" is an example of a naturalist approach to computers taken from the transcript of Harriet. For Harriet her basic biology or her mental processes, indeed all of the things which constitute her as human, do not lend themselves naturally to computer usage. As she goes on to say "until I can speak to a computer, I'm not really interested in computers", which implies that until she can relate to them on a more human level then they are of no consequence to her. Harriet's realist approach can be seen quite clearly in the following exchange:[79]

Harriet: […] Umm, I think people go a bit mad, and maybe the computer's a bit similar. It's like, I don't know, you're sitting, you're not experiencing real life. It's like you might be playing computer games for two hours, but you're not actually, as far as I'm concerned, living.
Melanie: Mmm.
Harriet: You're not actually experiencing the real thing.
Melanie: But that's, but that's…
Harriet: But I'm not interested in virtual reality or…
Melanie: Yeah, I was going to say, that's because…
Harriet: going onto other subjects
Melanie: … our age group has had this real…
Harriet: Mmm.
Melanie: …not virtual life…
Harriet: Mmm.
Melanie: …for most of our lives…
Harriet: Yes, precisely. For a good reason, I'd like to think.

Harriet has made a value judgment here. For her, virtual reality can be no substitute for the 'real' thing, which is living in actual reality.

[79] All underlinings in the quotations which follow are given by the researcher for emphasis, in order to draw attention to the relevant part of the text.

Rosie (W) is another participant who has a 'reluctant realist' approach to technology usage, and again her terminology is based on natural phenomena, saying of herself "I am a dinosaur" (the title of her writing). Here she implies that she existed long before these modern and confusing communications technologies came on the scene and that her attitude is firmly fixed in a less complex world. As she goes on to relate "older people like me were bought [sic] up to be self reliant. Machines were just starting to come on the scene". Her childhood was full of scenes of her "mother on washing day pounching [sic]", "boiling whites in a copper" and "putting them through the mangle". One facet of the realist approach is based on having been brought up without the more complex tools and therefore they are able to carry on coping without them; as Rosie goes on to state, "we are the self reliant brigade and if technology was switched off tomorrow we would survive. Would the present generation?" In terms of the Sus-IT project, sustaining ICT usage may therefore be more of an issue in the future for the current younger generation as they age due to their higher dependency on the technology in many aspects of their present social life.

Reluctant realists also enlist the aid of the terms in the 'benchmarking what constitutes fulfilling human interaction' debate, coming down on the side of face-to-face communication as the more valuable standard by which all other communication should be judged, as the following extract from Eddie bears witness:

> **Eddie:** You know it's so easy to be, it's easy to be dishonest on the internet because you can say things and there is no way of really telling, not looking in the person's eyes to know whether they are telling the truth. You can't see any body language to tell you one way and another whether a person is, sort of, being honest with you. And I do rely a lot on non-verbal communication in my social relationships with people. Building trust is a very important thing, and I know it takes a very long time to build up trust with a person. It's a very, very precious thing. So I know how sensitive it is, how delicate it is. And so when you feel that someone maybe saying something, you're not sure why they're saying it, or you're wondering whether this person is trustworthy or not, those are things which are hard enough anyway to judge in real life when you've got all that evidence in front of you. And yet on the internet most of that input, most of those signs, if you wanted to call it, are missing.

The best medium for human communication for Eddie is thus direct and natural social contact in real reality rather than virtual reality. In fact, ICTs can be seen as unnatural according to Eddie in that they are "a sign of depersonalisation" because they lead people to "become more separate from each other"; in other words people are depersonalised because they are desocialised. As part of his discussion, Eddie

also refers to cultures which feel that aspects of the human self can in fact be removed by technology:

> **Eddie :** It's something there, even having their photograph taken, that's just a normal photograph… they thought it would do something to them, take something from them. Well, maybe they're right. Maybe they WERE right.
> **Melanie:** Yeah !
> **Eddie :** You know, we laugh at that, we laugh at that – we go how silly, that's a technophobia! You might call it a technophobia, but it might be something more profound for that human being to feel that they've let someone see…You know because, you think about child development and finding a case for things like that. You know, shame, healthy shame and unhealthy shame, and I know things like that to do with my old professional life. Those are very interesting subjects about whether we let ourselves be seen, and things like that. They are very profound to human behaviour and human development as well, because things to do with trust and safety and all these things are very, very, subtle processes when you look into them.

For Eddie, modern technologies can have unforeseen outcomes in the very delicate identity processes of the development of both the individual self and human identity in general.

If Eddie has drawn attention to the psychological side of what it means to be naturally human, then Vanessa (F) evidences the view from biology, as she emphasises:

> **Vanessa:** I mean human beings, if you get down to biology, human beings rely on pheromones and lots of other things. Well, you can't get those over the internet.
> **Melanie:** Haha. No!
> **Vanessa:** You might meet somebody who seems entirely suitable, but then when you meet them your body, your chemistry is just…

The social, psychological and biological theorising which arises from thinking about technology has great implications for what it means to be human, and this is at the heart of the resistant/reluctant realist/naturalist's cautious attitude. This attitude is in itself a type of highly 'principled' approach that features as a facet in the totality of the 'moral/amoral/immoral' landscape that is being developed here.

This Subject Position resonates with Lawler's (2008, p.47-8) argument that the idea of 'nature' is usually invoked to imply an unchangeable given, or indeed something which 'ought' not to be changed; in this manner the discourse of 'natural' has been turned into an "immensely powerful legitimating mechanism". For the Resistant/Reluctant Realist/Naturalists, technology is obviously a matter of 'culture'

and hence not 'natural', therefore some people do not see themselves as properly equipped by nature to be able to use it. This may be a form of self defence mechanism behind which people can hide their sense of inadequacy in the face of supposed technological complexity, and also their fear of failure to grasp it.

6.2.2 "I am me" pragmatic moralist

The "I am me" pragmatic moralist ICT users draw no distinction between their online and offline selves. This is the case even when operating in more than one environment, e.g. having a business self on LinkedIn and a political self on Twitter. The separate elements are just deemed to reflect aspects of different roles that are adopted in their 'real' life. Also, the "I am me" users tend not to complicate matters of identity by debating the nature of the offline self or whether the virtual self that is presented to the world can ever truly reflect 'me-ness'. The "I am me" types who are also pragmatic moralists tend to see ICT usage as a practical matter, in that the tools they use are just that, tools designed to carry out certain useful jobs. Their position is backed up in a moral manner by reference to those people who use ICT not as a practical tool but as an immoral method of being 'not me' so that identity crimes can be carried out such as grooming and so forth. The "I am me" position in this case assumes a moral status with respect to the nature of identity 'authenticity'; contrarily being 'not me', or being 'inauthentic', is therefore immoral. An example of an "I am me" pragmatic moralist can be found in the case of Marie:

Marie: I mean all my activities are things I'm either quite proud to be doing or pleased I'm doing. There's certainly no harm in them. A lot of them are things that other people, who are friends, already know the sorts of things I'm involved in so. So but I, yeah,
Melanie: So you appear on the internet as you? Because there are things that you can use on the internet. Like you can go as far as, the basic thing is having a pseudonym for yourself.
Marie: Yeah.
Melanie: But then you can go the whole hog and end up on Second Life with avatars that are completely kind of not you.
Marie: Yeah. I'm me.
Melanie: Haha.
Marie: I'm me, definitely me. And I keep thinking I should add something in, because I said I like music and I've not said what kind of music I like. But I just haven't got round to it. And I think that's, I mean there's loads of photos I want to put on, but I haven't got round to it.

Marie deliberately draws attention to the fact that she is not engaging in anything which she feels the need to conceal, since she is proud of who she is and what she does. Therefore she can be herself on the internet without the need for pretence. A principled approach to identity on the internet can be seen to be in operation here. Marie's desire to be simply herself verges almost on the encyclopaedic, since she feels pulled towards providing more details about herself to validate and enlarge upon some of the sketchy comments she has already made about her own actual identity. Her stance is contrasted with some of the media stories which surround children and the internet. In the extract given below she draws attention to the pragmatic, tool-like nature of new technology whilst at the same time highlighting the criminal pitfalls of such usage:

Marie: Umm, it's a wonderful tool. If it's not abused.
Melanie: Hahaha.
Marie: Yeah, umm, I am trying to think what else. Umm, I suppose because I don't have kids myself, I'm not so worried about the, sort of, children getting groomed and things but then when I do hear about it I think…
Melanie: Mmm.
Marie: … that's awful. And I really don't know what parents can do about that, short of telling them they can't have a computer because… But kids have to have them these days don't they?
Melanie: Mmm.
Marie: I mean, when I say, have to have them, they actually, it's part of the school curriculum, even at primary school, you've got to be able to use one. And you're not going to be much use in the workplace in the future if you can't. So they have to get used to using them. And they can be wonderful for learning things and finding things out. So, but, yeah, I mean there are a lot of scare stories around that kind of thing which… Having said that the police seem to do quite well at getting hold of these people.

The "I am me" pragmatic moralists appear to have internalised an unwritten "netiquette"[80] of internet usage, or in other words a guide to the good behaviour expected in connection with these new technologies. Whilst there are written guides available on the internet, project participants seem to have developed their own personal versions which operate as a moral mindset. Robert is quite clear that there are forms of behaviour indulged in by both the younger and older generations which are contrary to his own "netiquette":

[80] *Netiquette guide.* <http://www.internet-guide.co.uk/netiquette-guide.html>, [2002], [accessed 28.02.11].

Robert: Yeah. But I don't… The downside of it is, er, I know who I am talking to, because I only talk to people I know…
Melanie: Mmm
Robert: …but you get young people, they talk to, they make friends with anyone who comes up and says 'I want to be your friend'. And I think that, that's wrong. Err in the sense that, if I wanted to be that way, I could put my grandson's photo up and say that's me.
Melanie: Mmm
Robert: And start talking to 15 and 16 year olds. And they wouldn't know any different.
Melanie: No!
Robert: And I think. I think a lot of grooming does go off on Facebook. And the other networks.

In this example, Robert highlights that according to his own "netiquette" communicating with persons unknown on the internet is "wrong". His personal "netiquette" is bound up with the concept of "stranger danger" or "stranger wariness", a concept which was highlighted in the past by various public information films and has become a preoccupation for adults with children.[81] The concept was criticised heavily in the light of research which produced figures to indicate that many children are more frequently abducted or harmed by people they actually know.[82] Nonetheless 'stranger danger' is one of those discourses that has agitated and engaged the public psyche and thus features strongly in the moralist mindset. Participants in this category see the pitfalls of using the internet but also acknowledge the benefits to be wrought in everyday life from the pragmatic uses of technology, which encompass running societies, communicating with family members, assisting with business contacts, and so on. Their online identity mainly mirrors and assists with their offline world. They resist using the affordances provided by new technologies to play creatively with aspects of their identity, as such usage would constitute a break with their personal "netiquette".

Of relevance to the Subject Position developed in this section is Lawler's (2008, p.5) recognition that the Western world has developed the commonsense notion that there is a "true" or "deep" self, or in other words a "unique kernel of identity" such that people think to themselves "I am who I am". Lawler (2008, p.6) notes, however, following Elias, that to think in this way is not an "inevitable feature of the human condition", but is instead part of the "civilising process" in the West:

[81] *Does stranger danger go too far?* <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/8331335/>, [23.06.05], [accessed 28.02.11].
[82] *Does stranger danger go too far?* <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/8331335/>, [23.06.05], [accessed 28.02.11].

> This process – from about the time of the Renaissance – involved increasing emphases on notions of self control. Manners must be observed; people ought not to act on sensory or other bodily impulses. In important senses, for Elias, manners make the person; that is Western persons *became* self-controlled beings as a result of the injunctions to self-control. This notion of the need to manage 'internal' states has led to the perception of 'true identity' being contained 'inside', while the social world is firmly 'outside'.

The idea of being 'I am who I am' with its corresponding notions of "a unique kernel of identity" (Lawler 2008, p.5) can be seen quite clearly in those participants who suggest that 'I am me' when using ICT. The language pertaining to this discourse is therefore one which is being drawn on by various participants in discussions concerning the self and the use of ICT. They clearly feel that there is a 'real me' that can be adequately reflected in various usages of the internet. This discourse is however, not pursued in the language of all participants in this study, as there are others who have engaged with alternative theories and ideas concerning identity matters which are more pluralistic and less essentialist. These will be discussed in the subsequent Subject Positions developed in this section.

According to Lawler, (2008, p.8) the social world frequently produces "identity talk" which is about the "'ought' rather than 'is' of identities"; correspondingly identities can be seen or felt "to go wrong" with consequent social fears for the ongoing "maintenance of the moral order". This "concern with authenticity" (Lawler 2008, p.8) has obvious resonance here. There are certain Western notions of what 'ought' to be concerning identity, which constitute a feeling that there is a moral prerogative to 'be' a certain way. This is extrapolated by some to include the use of the internet and how one 'ought' to behave given the new opportunities to be other than what one is. There are clear references in the data to examples of how one 'ought not' to behave which have arisen from news-stories of identity theft and grooming. Many of the participants are therefore concerned to manifest their own 'authenticity' in contradistinction to this supposed group of identity miscreants.

Lawler (2008, p.115) goes on to explain that an aspect of recognising one's individual subjectivity comes into play through the act of "interpellation". Lawler (2008, p.116) suggests that politicians make attempts at "interpellation" when they make statements such as "as every decent person believes". This is an 'othering process' whereby "lines are drawn between 'us' and 'them' such that 'they' occupy an

untenable position" (Lawler 2008, p.116). 'Us' can then be taken to mean the set defined as 'right thinking people'. In this section, 'right thinking people' are authentic on the internet and assume the moral high ground with respect to identity matters.

6.2.3 "I am me" pragmatic amoralist

Only one of the participants interviewed could be said to fall into this category. Jonathan is actively interested in pursuing alternative sexualities including cross-dressing and fetishism. His approach to 'real life' could in itself be deemed to be a creative experiment with matters of personal identity. His online activities merely reflect the offline world in that they assist him to realise his potential in 'real' reality. So for example he would seek more specific information on the internet concerning the latest events to be held which enable his chosen identities:

> **Jonathan**: Haha. And also I suppose, finding out where things are on like, umm, I think the first time I went to Birmingham Bizarre Bazaar [fetish market], I probably, I'd heard about it but to check when it was on I, so yeah. And also Ghoul Garden [gothic dark alternative community] I think I haven't been to that for a while and I will have to check their website to see when they are on again.

Jonathan does not use the internet's affordances to play with his identity in a virtual way, preferring instead to meet like-minded people in reality. The pragmatic amoralist approach is therefore still one of everyday practicality, as Jonathan says[83]:

[83] Regarding the quote which follows: Informed Consent is the leading UK BDSM website. According to Wikipedia **BDSM** is a consensual lifestyle choice, or type of adult roleplay between two or more individuals. The compound acronym, BDSM, is derived from the terms bondage and discipline (B&D), dominance and submission (D&s), sadism and masochism (S&M). *BDSM.* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BDSM>, [22.02.11], [accessed 28.02.11].

Jonathan: But I don't sort of sit at the computer and use that for my social contact. I'm still very keen on seeing people face-to-face and getting out.
Melanie: Ok. Umm, are there any computer-related social activities you take part in?
Jonathan: I have deliberately avoided social networking sites.
Melanie: Ok.
Jonathan: I'm not on Facebook or Twitter or any of the others, umm, even though I've had invitations to join them from various people. The one I do like, […] is the Meetup because the purpose of that is to set up physical meetings.
Melanie: Yeah. It is. That's precisely it, isn't it? It's to get you into face-to-face interaction with people.
Jonathan: Mmm.
Melanie: So yeah.
Jonathan: But other than, umm, occasionally posting comments on websites or email, that is the use of the computer, I use.
Melanie: Mmm. What kind of websites, or shouldn't I ask? Haha!
Jonathan: Haha!
Melanie: Haha.
Jonathan: Umm, not, it's umm, I do very little interaction with websites.
Melanie: Mmm.
Jonathan: I've been told about websites like, uhh, Informed Consent, and the Leicester, Derby and Nottingham BDSM group, but I haven't signed up to either of those yet, even though I could have done. Umm, I have explored websites and ended up with something called PornDialler on my, which is one of these things that dials out at exorbitant rates, but because I'm on broadband it didn't affect me.

Jonathan finds little to interest him concerning websites enabling online social interaction; his energy and commitment are preserved for improving his offline social world. For Jonathan the computer is mainly just an implement which enables his teaching and social life:

Jonathan: My computer is an indispensable tool these days. I use it for both work and social uses. Umm, I would not be able to work the way I do without a computer, umm, because I do a lot of the work at home. And without a computer I wouldn't even be able to access the college website. But I do a lot of planning and resource preparation at home because I can do it on the computer.

However, Jonathan's stance, whilst being pragmatic, it yet lacks the conventional morality of the moralists; his opinion on where to draw the line in 'moral' issues is self confessedly unconventional, as he states, "I mean my threshold between appropriate and inappropriate is perhaps a bit different from most people. Haha". The internet is deemed praiseworthy in its liberating prospects, particularly its sexual ones, as Jonathan comments:

Jonathan: Liberated certainly, I've got a far more active social life than I ever had before. Liberated in terms of access to information. Liberated in, if I ever could be bothered to find the time, in access to porn I suppose, one of the highest applications of the internet, and that sort of thing.

6.2.4 "I am a created/curated version of a basic me", pragmatic amoralist

As in the previous category, this term only applied to one person, Graham. Like the other pragmatists, he was only interested in using the internet to assist with his offline pursuits in the real world. He had no interest in online identity experimentation:

> **Melanie:** Have you got any like pseudonyms or avatars that you've used?
> **Graham:** No, nope.
> **Melanie:** Okay.
> **Graham:** I think that's basically, going back to the Facebook thing, it's, 'if it ain't real I ain't doing it'.
> **Melanie:** Okay.
> **Graham:** I can certainly see the advantage of having an avatar, you know there is a certain self creativity about it, with an avatar. But at the end of the day, I need, if I am having a relationship with somebody, who doesn't know me, but why I should, then at some stage they're going to meet me. And unless you're going to have a permanent relationship between your avatars, and that is satisfying enough, then that's absolutely fine. But that's not what I need. I need love. I need connect. I need to look people in the whites of the eyes. Umm, it's quite interesting when I did some Internet dating, I did...
> **Melanie:** Well you'd have to have a pseudonym on there, presumably?
> **Graham:** Yeah, well I don't have a problem. I don't use my name. I might use a pseudonym in terms of anonymity for the thing, and in everything else I try to be as reasonably honest as I can. No I try to be as honest as I can. I'm not pretending I'm too handsome and rich and pleasant. You know I'm an awkward squad. Nobody really believes me, you know, and then you go out with someone, and she says 'you're a bit of an awkward squad aren't you?' 'Yeah, I fucking told you this, what is it about this you didn't believe?'

Graham's reasons for not indulging in identity experiments were not based on any moral foundation. He did not want to use avatars on the purely practical basis of wanting people in the real world to know exactly who he is so he can get to know them properly. The interview itself was heavily laden with terms relating to sex and pornography, also indicating an amoralist approach similar to Jonathan's. However, his interview did cover thoughtful, theoretical topics on the nature of identity and whether it was ever really possible to present an 'I am me' face to the world, in spite of one's best attempts to be honest and straightforward. As Graham relates:

Melanie: So you are you on the Internet?
Graham: Well no, I think in any particular social situation, any particular interaction, we're always a version of ourselves, whether it's with a partner, whether it's with Meetup, whether it's… You put forward what you think works, and probably most of the time you do subconsciously.
Melanie: Mmm.
Graham: You create something of your self out there, there is a curated bit out here, but it's kind of bitty, because you know, I don't, I don't need to. I suppose people could look at it and derive more from you than you'd anticipate because it's there on record and go back and think 'oh that's interesting, oh that's a contradiction'. Which would put the conversation, it isn't that accessible to confirmation, cos you think that's not what I said. Haha.
Melanie: I'm interested in why the word curated popped into your head.
Graham: Curated?
Melanie: Yes, because I've come across...
Graham: What was the context? Did I say curated?
Melanie: Yeah.
Graham: Created!
Melanie: Created?
Graham: I thought I said created.
Melanie: Oh you might have done. It's my ear.
Graham: Oh, okay.
Melanie: I just wanted to check what you'd said
Graham: Okay and. Could it have been curated? Well in a sense that a curator puts a whole bunch of stuff together and kind of says well here it is.
Melanie: Yeah.
Graham: You could argue that it's the same thing!

For Graham, identity - whether online or offline - is a matter of curating various bits of one's existence, and putting such artefacts on show to the public. Lawler (2008, p.11) argues that one of the methods through which identities are created is the process of story-telling or narrative, which resembles this creative cobbling together of self "through various raw materials available", a phenomenon otherwise known as "bricolage" (Lawler 2008, p.34). Lawler (2008, p.20) argues that this is a social phenomenon, since there is already a pre-existing "repertoire of available social, public and cultural narratives" from which to fabricate the self. They are not necessarily deliberate fabrications however, rather they are versions of self, used for different purposes, different audiences. One can never present the ultimate 'I am me' only a created/curated version of a basic me; one can never be oneself or even totally consistent with oneself. In a sense, the attempt at mirroring only serves to produce a form of masking. This is not a moral stance, as no value judgement is intended, it is just a statement of the world of self-presentation as Graham understands it.

6.2.5 "I can play creatively with different versions of me" tricksterish amoralist

This is one of the first positions in the schema to recognise and incorporate the affordances of new technologies for a more experimental, playful approach to matters of identity. The term tricksterish is not used here in any pejorative sense as in the idea of a swindler or con artist. It is intended to be understood in a more playful manner as indicated by various world mythologies where it is an adjective derived from the idea of the trickster figure. The trickster can be described – in very liminal/liminoid threshold blurring terms - as follows:

> the trickster crosses both physical and social boundaries-- the trickster is often a traveller, and he often breaks societal rules. Tricksters cross lines, breaking or blurring connections and distinctions between "right and wrong, sacred and profane, clean and dirty, male and female, young and old, living and dead" […] The trickster often changes shape (turning into an animal, for example) to cross between worlds.[84]

The blurring of right and wrong, the by-passing of society's more conventional codes of conduct and the shape shifting affordances of new technologies (which can be age defeating) are all indicated here. These potentialities for identity experimentation are evidenced in the infamous cartoon strapline by Peter Steiner published by *The New Yorker* on July 5, 1993, "On the internet, nobody knows you're a dog".[85] In this way, potentially spoiled, unwanted or minority identities can be minimised or overcome, preferred identities can be maximised, and more personally liberatory identities can be invented and expressed. Since this is seen as beneficial to the individual, the potential deception of others is not a moral matter. In fact, for some people and in some applications, an element of deception may be expected as a normal part of the affordances of the new technologies. It is perhaps a new form of amoral "netiquette", accepted by some, yet still to be frowned on by the "I am me" pragmatic moralists. Pierre is an example of the type under examination in this section, who has used technology in a more playful, tricksterish yet harmless manner:

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[84] *Tricksters*. <http://faculty.gvsu.edu/websterm/Tricksters.htm>, [ND], [accessed 02.03.11].
[85] *On the internet, nobody knows you're a dog*. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/On_the_Internet,_nobody_knows_you're_a_dog>, [21.12.10], [accessed 02.03.11].

Melanie: And, have you ever used your computer to behave differently towards people, or you know, any form of technology to behave differently…
Pierre: from how I might do normally?
Melanie: …from how you might do normally, and how you see yourself normally.
Pierre: Yes.
Melanie: You have?
Pierre: Yes.
Melanie: Oh?
Pierre: Purely in an, with an experimental, umm, you know online dating sort of type of situation. I have, I have definitely in those contexts made full use of new, of that new context to present myself in a different way, or to present aspects of myself which I haven't presented otherwise, umm, because I find it liberating. And even with texting, I've done that. Been in a very long term, actually something I alluded to earlier when we were talking about dating sites, I had a, you know, a contact that arose out of a dating site that progressed to a texting relationship. I refused to, slightly similar to the way that I, me and my girlfriend refusing to email each other. Well, with this particular relationship, I refused to enter into any kind of phone conversations, although we both had the mobile numbers. We just, for a year we just texted each other. There I presented a…
Melanie: Why didn't you meet?
Pierre: We did meet.
Melanie: Oh you did meet.
Pierre: We did meet. Yeah, it was great. It was very interesting. It was really, really good. I was actually very pleasantly surprised, yeah. Yeah, for various, various complicated reasons it didn't really progress. But I mean it could well have done and I actually slightly regret that I didn't take it further. But I think I was still a little bit bruised from my relationship with my previous partner. So even after a, you know. But, but no it was fantastic. I presented a very different side of, you know, myself in this texting relationship, which, it was very, very raunchy to be honest, you know, really, completely no-holds barred. Umm, very blue, yep, you know. So, so there is, yeah, umm, umm. But yeah, yeah, that really kind of, to be quite honest with you, that's… So yeah, I find… and I'm sure that's the experience of ever so many people, that these new ways of communicating are quite liberating and allow people to role play. In this sense, I wasn't role playing, I was just exploring different sides of… But there are all sorts of things it allows you to do. It allows you to role play, it allows you to be a different person, to magnify, to, to sort of ventilate another side of your personality.

Here, Pierre can be seen to admire rather than denigrate experimental and alternative ways of presenting the self. They are primarily a form of identity play and not a matter for moralising about deception. The resulting behaviour does seem, however, to be linked back to an offline self, in that it can be compared and contrasted with a pre-existing idea of individual personhood. Whether the online behaviour is perceived as slightly different or radically different, there is still a sense of self to which these perceptions can be compared. For people such as Pierre, new technologies are thus less about pragmatic everyday reality, and more about the opportunity to role play different sides of previously unexpressed aspects of character. As such, these ICT products are more likely to be viewed as amusing identity toys than practical life tools.

6.2.6 "I can be who I want to be" malleable moralist (no sense of an offline self to be mirrored or masked)

This category is induced from the interview transcript of Tom. In this category the affordances of new technology are acknowledged for the creation of interesting online selves, but the idea of a recognisable offline self is not adopted. When questioned about his own idea of self, Tom gave the following comments:

> **Tom:** I am not quite sure what my identity is, or what my personality is, because the main thing I am aware of is that it keeps changing and that it's different in different circumstances and with different people. And that will fit with what you are asking about the computer I'm sure. I'm sure I behave differently in relation to the computer, email and so on.
> **Melanie:** I think, yeah,
> **Tom:** My lack of understanding of my own personality is not something I worry about. I just find it quite interesting. I don't lack self confidence, you may have noticed.
> **Melanie:** Haha. […] What is that you don't understand about your own personality would you say? Do you know what it is that you don't understand about it?
> **Tom:** No, well yes and no. What I don't understand is what I really am. And that's because I don't think I really have a 'really am'.
> **Melanie:** Is that a result of picking up on current kind of critical theories, like, um, because in a post-structural world people would say there's no such thing as personality anyway, and these things are just socially constructed.
> **Tom:** I'm not conscious of that, I'm not a post-structuralist I'm afraid.

When questioned further about his ideas on personality Tom elaborated:

> **Tom:** I've always hated theories of personality.
> **Melanie:** Ok, can you explain why?
> **Tom:** Yes, because they all seem to me to be largely fashionable and not sufficiently questioned, they don't ladder themselves. This is what people think. Oh yeah, I wonder why, they do.
> **Melanie:** Is this because you don't understand your own personality?
> **Tom:** No, there are many theories of this kind that are nothing to do with personality that I still feel impatient with. A lot of psychology.
> **Melanie:** But you're a psychologist.
> **Tom:** I know. I know an awful lot about what's wrong with psychology. There's some very good stuff. The trouble is, it's not what the students expect when they come to read it.

Tom is able to criticise most theories of personality and psychology from his own years of study. He is therefore impatient with the deficits of most of the models he has examined. From this point of view he is unable to examine his own personality. In a sense this gives him the online malleability to produce any virtual identity he can imagine for himself, which in this case is that of 'guru' who can cure the ills of society; as he relates:

Tom: I think I want to become a guru. I don't think I am able to do it. I'd love to do it. I'm too bloody old. But I would like to lead a movement.
Melanie: Yeah.
Tom: I'd like to do a Karl Marx or whatever…
Melanie: OK.
Tom: …but even better.
Melanie: Ah I remember, it's because you were saying that the younger generation didn't have an ideology.
Tom: That's right.
[…]
Melanie: So can we push things more in the internet world to be more conducive…
Tom: creative and co-operative. Well I hope so. And I have every intention since last night of asking for help in this. And several people, of whom you would be one of the first people I thought of.
Melanie: Oh, right, OK. Haha.
Tom: Haha.
Melanie: Very good.
Tom: Go on Mel, just turn me into an internet guru.
Melanie: OK I'll try.
Tom: Please.
Melanie: Haha. I like benign dictators. I am interested in benign dictators.
Tom: I think benign dictators are a very good idea. So long as they are easy to overthrow…
Melanie: Yes.
Tom: …when they go too far.
Melanie: Exactly.

Tom wishes to create an online identity for societal benefit; it is therefore in itself a moralist position. He feels that society currently lacks a strongly principled ideology for propagating itself and feels in a position to provide this by malleably adopting an online role for himself. This is a performative version of identity.

6.2.7 "I am protecting me", pragmatic moralist

This category also had one participant assigned to it – Ernest (W) – who was not interested in using digital tools for anything other than pragmatic purposes, yet felt the need to create an online pseudonym to protect himself from more unscrupulous people who could steal his identity. His pseudonym is hence a form of identity protection. However, his creation of a false name is his only instance of identity manipulation; he is not interested in using the internet for any other form of identity experimentation, which hints at a moralistic and authentic approach to his online (digital) identity. More on Ernest's pseudonym usage will be given in Chapter Nine which discusses the phenomenology of lived experience (see 9.11.1 'Masquerading as me' – Using Geocaching Software, p.295). In the later section, the secrecy of geocaching is related to the secrecy underlying pseudonym creation. In Ernest's case it is interesting to note that the pseudonym itself becomes a form of identity

authenticity, since he re-creates himself in the act of the concealment. Ernest ultimately masquerades as himself.

6.2.8 "I am not me" nefarious immoralist (inferred category)

This is a category which had no study participants ascribed to it. However, it was inferred by many of the people in the "I am me" pragmatic moralist category who set themselves in contrast to it through a process of moralistic 'othering'. In the section on "netiquette" (Section 6.2.2 above) both Robert and Marie refer to people who may use the internet to pretend that they are younger than their real age for purposes of grooming. The nefarious immoralists are thus a figured, constructed world, pieced together by the study participants from sundry media sources which have reported on such crimes. The 'nefarious immoralists' become, for people like Robert and Marie, elements of society from which all 'right thinking people' need to be protected.

It would have been difficult to find people to interview in this category, as it is not something that people would either want to confess to or to discuss. As such it is beyond the scope of this project, and therefore the lived experience of it cannot be shared here.

6.2.9 Summary

Lawler (2008, p.62) draws attention to the work of Foucault and his utilisation of the term "subjectivation (*assujetissement*)", which he enlists to explain the relation that the self has with itself. "Subjectivation" means that a person is "tied to his own identity by a conscience" (Lawler 2008, p.62). They become a 'subject' by being "*subject-ed*" to "the rules and norms engendered by a set of knowledges about these identities" and correspondingly "take up subject-positions – specific ways of being – available within discourse" (Lawler 2008, p.62). In accordance with this Foucauldian view of personhood, this study has produced a set of 'Subject Positions', to determine how the participants are aligning themselves with respect to various available discourses around the idea of technology usage. There are a high number of participants in this study who can be very clearly ascribed to 'Subject Positions'

which mean that it is 'normal', 'healthy', and ethically correct to present oneself as one really is (whatever that may be taken to mean when identity can be understood as a de-centred phenomenon according to some of these sociological perspectives).

However, in the case of a few participants, the internet is an experimental playground where existing 'Subject Positions' can be revised or contested according to the new affordances of technology. There is therefore a sense in which power (agency) can be regained for the self, enabling people to work against some of the existing moralising discourses. Is it really 'wrong', for example, to present what in other circumstances could be seen as a morally 'inauthentic' identity, especially if that new identity harms no-one else and is beneficial to the person's self esteem? Second Life and Gaming software such as World of Warcraft give ample opportunity for such experimentation with alternative 'Subject Positions' in the 'third space'.

The whole arena of ICT usage has become 'an object to think with', provoking thought and debate around its new social and personal affordances in connection with the 'is' and 'ought' of human 'identity' capabilities. Some people remain enmeshed in persistent normalising narratives about identity which see it as a "kernel" which 'ought not' to be changed, whilst others are prepared to embrace alternative narratives and accept the possibilities of ICT for identity experimentation which can be seen as liberatory and enabling.

It should be noted that these Subject Positions are general 'types' induced from studying a series of particular instances. These positions are also not mutually exclusive. It is possible, for example, to profess simultaneously an amoralist position on some usages of new technologies for say sexual purposes, and yet use other technologies for very moralist positions on matters of green politics (Pierre for example is discussed here as an amoralist, but his very moral political stance will be discussed in a later chapter). This would perhaps demonstrate amorality with regards to the actions and identity of the individual self, especially when that behaviour is not intended to be harmful to others, but strong moral conscience with regards to the behaviour of society as a whole and the potential impact on large numbers of people of certain sorts of action. This means that there are potential dichotomies within the schema between the individual and society, with some people advocating a moral individual stance to identity (with positively associated societal impact) throughout,

and some people enjoying an amoral position on a personal level but not on a societal level.

6.3 Moral Panics

6.3.1. Introduction

The production of the identity schema of Subject Positions highlighted moral issues about which some older people have registered a highly principled stance. These take two forms: firstly, they feel principled about what, for them, are some of the more suspect activities regarding the use of the internet, including strengthening minority positions, grooming, and criminal forms of identity fraud; and secondly they feel principled about world issues which they feel could be exposed and possibly remedied by using the internet as a crusading tool. Hence the internet becomes a double edged sword in being both a source and purgative of societal ills. Such publicly recognised societal ills could be deemed as 'moral panics'.

According to Thompson (1998, p.7) the term 'moral panic' was first introduced by Stanley Cohen to "characterize the reactions of the media, the public and agents of social control" concerning the rivalries between Mods and Rockers in the 1960s. Thompson (1998, p.7) cites Cohen as follows:

> Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the subject of panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic passes over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way society conceives itself. (S. Cohen 1972: 9)[86]

[86] Thompson (1998) gives the citation as: Cohen, S. (1972/1980) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers* London: MacGibbon & Kee; new edition with Introduction, Oxford: Martin Robertson, 19080. This is given as it appears.

Studying older people's relationship to ICT, and more specifically the internet, highlights that some of them are thus conceiving their moral and social identity over and against that which they deem is any one of a number of societal 'ought nots'. It is interesting that new technologies should have this effect on stirring up opinion, as it implies that the technologies themselves are seen as instrumental in producing the very transformations which may lead to Cohen's suggested alterations in society's self-perception. The internet has become a social irritant, or 'an object to think with' about potential threats to society's values and the prevailing or perceived status quo.

The 'moral panics' that are highlighted by the present study will be discussed in the sections that follow. Some of them are as occasioned by the internet's affordances for behaving incorrectly according to the 'oughts' and 'ought nots' of 'right thinking people'. Whilst some of them are raised because the latter believe the internet is the most appropriate tool for affecting and rallying public opinion to overcome or quell the 'moral panic' concerned.

6.3.2 'Moral Panics' about the consequences of the internet

6.3.2.1. Believing the internet will be responsible for the strengthening of 'wrong-thinking' minorities

This type of 'moral panic' position would appeal to those people who, as Thompson (1998, p.3) expresses it, are "alarmed by an apparent fragmentation or breakdown of the social order, which leaves them at risk in some way". The internet is such a democratic communication phenomenon that it paves the way for groups of like-minded people to band together in a way that was previously almost impossible beforehand. This has created alternative avenues for a "growing social pluralism" (Thompson 1998, p.11) and hence an increase in possible "value conflicts and lifestyle clashes" (Thompson 1998, p.11). In other words, it has facilitated virtual communities which some people feel go beyond their generally accepted norm. Charles is one study participant who expresses this position clearly:

Charles: What is new is the ability for those people to link across nations and to share material, which from a personal point of view is abhorrent. Let's step aside from that and look at blogs. Your political persuasion, sexual persuasion whatever, you can suddenly find your constituency, you don't have to move to a particular area. You don't have to be, like in the old days, probably before your time, but it happened to be hippy to move to Hebden Bridge. Or it may be feminist, it may be radical gays, you don't have to live in the gay part of Manchester, London, whatever, nowadays. Yes, you might well do. Or it certainly, with the internet and everything, is easier to find where those communities are, or move to, but it's easier to form a virtual community.
Melanie: Mmm.
Charles: So suddenly the internet allows you to communicate to people you believe, think and act and believe as you do. And that can be, perversion's a strong word, it can also mean distasteful, but a perversion can be an over-emphasis, over dalliance on one particular trait. So perhaps not the best word but. Why shouldn't somebody…?
[…]
Charles: …it's an over-emphasis, or at least to my mind, an over-emphasis on a particular trait. So if you've got a hobby, or you're interested in a band, a music band, or a particular type of yoga or healing, or anything, you can get a blog and get a group of people who believe the same thing as you. So it's a blessing and a curse. It's great that you can communicate and you can find people that want to communicate with you in the same sort of language. But you can also indulge people in their perversions, again not purely sexual, in those traits, which might be an unhealthy thing. So even something harmless, something non-sexual, could be unhelpful for that person in their development within society.

Here, though, Charles can be seen, quite clearly, to struggle with two opposing views. He sees there are beneficial outcomes to some minorities being able to communicate more easily, but nonetheless he is still worried about the spread of material that is abhorrent to his personal viewpoint. However, even this is not necessarily a totally self-orientated position as implicit in his pronouncements is that most 'right-thinking people' will accept his position on 'harmful' minorities as the normalised one. He uses the word 'perversion' to express the idea that there is a tendency for some people to over-emphasise parts of their identity in a manner which, for him, is perceived to be unhealthy to 'normal development'. The implication is that abnormal personal development will lead to abnormalities in society; society should cluster round 'norms' and consensus rather than 'minorities' otherwise it will fracture to everyone's detriment. Charles returns to this theme of societal splintering later in the transcript:

Charles: So we're allowing people to link up in their individual groups, so instead of joining society together, we're allowing, it's rather like the Tower of Babel, we're actually going to split them into smaller groups.
Melanie: That's really interesting.
Charles: That's quite frightening. And to put a slightly different perspective on it, those are minority groups, but the point is, it's rather like, my wife had a case she was chairing in Social Services, or whatever they're called now, Education whatever, Social Services, where she had a conversation, she got engaged in conversation at the end of the Conference when everybody else was gone. For a change somebody actually wanted to fill in the feedback form, and this Islamic guy, he was having a discussion about Intelligent Design and taking that angle, and various other things, which to myself and [my wife] etc was like wow this is complete rubbish, and then she said what was frightening was that he had all his arguments lined up. And she said there began to be a certain amount of plausibility in some of them, and she couldn't really argue against them. And I said 'well, look, it's the biggest problem, if you are a middle of the road liberal lefty or liberal righty or whatever'. The point is we in our own arrogant way are the same as them, we presume we are right, we feel we are in the majority and think who would be stupid enough to believe them? We don't practise our arguments, I said, and by the time we wake up we'll find that the lunatics have got hold of the asylum. We have got to practise and stand up for what we believe to be moderate liberal ideas. Because if we don't we'll find that the minorities are actually controlling things. And just as I think we get this bigger communication, we're allowing minorities to grow, to have a, because they feel so formed in their cause or whatever, their idea, they promote it. They can find other people across the globe etc. They can build up. They can suck in more people who are less inclined, but are on the fringe. And they will grow in power.

In this discussion, Charles' argument turns from minorities in general to consider the specific case of those people who uphold particularly threatening ideas such as the principle of 'Intelligent Design'.[87] Such 'implausible ideas' are growing in strength, he feels, with the aid of better communication technologies. Charles draws a distinction between their thinking and that of the perceived norm, in that they more fully rehearse and armour-plate their ideas. Right thinkers here are 'moderate liberal', but moderate liberalism does not defend itself, believing in its own unquestionable infallibility. The 'moral panic' here is caused by the notion of rapidly increasing world 'risks' to 'moderate liberal' ways across the globe, and against which there is no adequate defence mechanism in place.

Charles' viewpoint is evidence of an increasing acknowledgment of the 'risk society', which Thompson (1998, p.22) argues is a product of "modernization". In the 'risk society', risks become global rather than local phenomena, creating "supranational and non-class-specific global hazards" (Thompson 1998, p.22).[88] Thompson (1998, p.22) suggests that "modernization increases risks and makes people more rather

[87] Intelligent Design is the idea that "certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection". *Center for Science and Culture,* 2011*.* <http://www.discovery.org/csc/topQuestions.php#questionsAboutIntelligentDesign>, [accessed 16.06.11].
[88] Here Thompson is citing - Beck 1992:12-13. The citation is given as it appears: Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society,* trans. M. Ritter, London: Sage. The citation is given as it appears.

than less conscious of being at risk". In Thompson's (1998, p.23) opinion "a sociology of 'risk society'" is needed to "replace the centrality of concepts such as 'industrial' or 'class society'". Thompson (1998, p.23) points out that in Durkheimian and Marxist schools of thought, public indignation about "deviance is functionally beneficial for creating social unity". However, there are other schools of thought that move away from the functionalist paradigm of 'consensus', notably Foucauldian thought which emphasises instead the idea that "power circulates at all levels of society in a sort of 'capillary' movement" and is actuated by discursive formations (Thompson 1998, p.25).

What is at stake in Charles' 'moral panic' concerning the internet is that it enables the overturning of moral consensus by producing the very capillaries along which a multitude of 'threatening' discourses can travel with ease. Charles adds to the discussion further:

Charles: In the 50s, you could, it would be fairly easy to spread a rumour around by word of mouth. It may take a bit longer time but you could do that. Now you can do it on the internet you can do it globally. But it's the same thing.
Melanie: Viral.
Charles: Yeah.
Melanie: If it's on YouTube.
Charles: Yes same thing. So in the 1950s you spread rumours via the paper etc. You drop strategic people in strategic cities round the country to actually go round the pubs etc. Groups of them to inject a bit of info, or get a conversation going and inject stuff, which is how you used to control, I'm thinking of science fiction, and how you do it practically, propaganda etc. Err, slower process to do, much slower to rectify, and to change those opinions. So on the internet, the viral thing, much wider spread. Much easier to spread counter information. I suppose what you can do with the internet, you can identify more easily grouped together people who actually think 'well I believe A. I'm going down A. I'll shut up. I'm not listening to anything else'.

Although the internet provides channels for the free-flow of information, Charles suggests that people only hear what they want to hear, and they will thus select the information that reinforces their chosen view rather than allow themselves to be challenged. He is arguing here that the internet can reify identities, especially those he considers to be harmful to mainstream society. This for him is a terrifying possibility, since he states quite clearly "I am horrified by what I see as a lack of morals, ethics in society any more". The moral position is one that is very dear to him.

A counterpoint to Charles' argument can be found in the discussion with Tom. Charles's argument on the harmful effect of the proliferation of minority thought was deliberately posed to Tom, but his view on the matter was completely contrary[89]:

Melanie: Cos one of my interviewees said that all that is going to happen with the internet is you're going to get the minorities coming together more easily, and then you will get more minority views that aren't necessarily going to further society.
Tom: Absolutely right, that's a good thing. The idea that they're not going to further society is what's wrong. That's like not realising what are the virtues of biodiversity. Not realising what having the virtues of good new theories are coming up in science and so on.
Melanie: I think he saw it has strengthening perversities which shouldn't be allowed to…
Tom: Of course. That means they should be tested.
Melanie: Yeah.
Tom: We want new ideas, we want to test them rather quickly. And also to work out the further implications and test the further implications.
[…]
Tom: We ought to work on techniques for using the internet to bring people together and under circumstances in which they generate ideas which are testable and which they are willing to test. Now one of the difficulties about this in all ideologies, people bloody believe 'em! "Gosh you're not going to question that? That's fundamental to my belief!" And that's why I called everybody… [fundamentalists]
Melanie: Well, it's a problem isn't it. I think, yeah, ideology, that's great, if it enables you to move forward but I don't see it as something you should believe in to the exclusion of all else.
Tom: No it's crazy.

Tom's argument for the necessity of minority thought makes its appeal to the natural sciences, in that the proliferation of ideas should be viewed in the same positive light that biological diversity is viewed in the field of biology. In his opinion new ideas are an essential driving force to move humanity forward, whereas for Charles they could serve as dangerous 'mutations'. Tom feels that these mutations of thought should be encouraged through better usage of the internet, though they should remain transparent to testing, which would prevent their solidification into unquestioned ideology. For Tom ideology is only to be utilised so long as it actually remains useful, it should not attain the status of a faith or belief system for people to adhere to long after its actual benefits have been extracted. There is an element of the legitimising power of the 'natural' discourse at work in Tom's theory; mutations are 'natural' biological mechanisms and therefore to be lauded as societal drivers.

[89] In the passage one of Tom's half expressed sentences has been completed in square brackets. It is half expressed because he knows that the researcher knows what he was going to say. It was expressed previously in the transcript with reference to an organisation we both attend where he considers many of the attendees to be fundamentalist thinkers. In this discussion the interviewer deliberately takes the anti-fundamentalist position to provoke the argument.

6.3.3. 'Moral Panics' solvable by appropriate use of the internet

6.3.3.1. Believing society lacks an appropriate ideology for its own advancement

In a sense this is more of a personal crusade than a stereotypical 'moral panic' that would receive widespread coverage by the media. However, this view of the failures of society is perhaps symptomatic of a more general feeling that there are various societal ills which are not being combated. Study participant Tom is interested in the holism of Jan Smuts which is based on the idea that the whole is always greater than the sum of the individual parts. It is hence an anti-reductionist position. Smuts (1927, p.ix) articulates his position as follows:

> Evolution is nothing but the gradual development and stratification of progressive series of wholes, stretching from the inorganic beginnings to the highest levels of spiritual creation.

For Tom, Smuts' holism is key to the understanding that everything is holistic and should not be broken down into component parts. Tom begins his discussion as below:

Tom: No this fits in very well with my interest in Jan Smuts.
Melanie: Oh right, OK.
Tom: He thinks that personality is the highest level of holism. He starts from the physical, the biological, the social and so on and ends up with the personality.
Melanie: So he's got a kind of hierarchy?
Tom: Yep.
[…]
Tom: In terms of fundamental concepts, that's rather philosophical, and then space and time, matter, the organism, then evolution, then mind, personality and yet more about personality, and then the holistic universe. He goes through all this lot and that's the highest level. I disagree with him because I don't think personality is the highest level. I think the highest level is social.

For Tom, in contradistinction to Smuts, the pinnacle of holism and hence evolution is the social realm. Tom is therefore concerned with how to further society's advancement, especially since be believes that 'thinking' has gone astray since the 1960s and there is no longer a coherent ideological position to act as an enabler. As Tom continues:[90]

[90] Note, that there is also an element of 'othering' at work here. It is the new younger generation who do not have an ideology, not the older generation. 'Us' and 'Them' is very much in operation here. The 1960s student (younger generation then) was involved in the 1968 worldwide student protests and was confident of its ground.

Tom: But recently, and perhaps to a very large extent from last night, influenced first of all by Alan Simpson, and then by reading in the middle of the night last night John Snow's autobiography. John Snow is a very interesting man. I started thinking what's missing in the present generation, as far as I can tell is an ideology. In the Sixties, students knew what should be done.
Melanie: Yes.
Tom: And in the Thirties they did too, where's it all gone? My impression is that students don't have an ideology, don't know what needs to be done. And what *they* are really interested in is shopping. I think this is terribly sad. Now I may be wrong. There may be some very exciting new ideas coming up from the young, but they've not impinged on me yet. And they haven't impinged on me through Café Scientifique, which is one of the things I was hoping to have. Now I think there should be a driving ideology.
Melanie: Yeah.
Tom: You can't be sure it's correct, but we want to have a good one to push us into investigating new ways of life, improved ways of life and so on. Because Christianity and Marx and various others in the past have actually done that for us. But they're not going to do it for us now. They're actually holding us back. And my best guess as to what would be an ideology which would be worth pushing is holism. In one respect it's a terribly written book and that's why it's been neglected.

Tom is concerned that all the previous 'master narratives' are no longer effective in advancing society, and he feels that holism could fill the void left by these retreating ideological positions. He feels that people like Alan Simpson[91] - who are advancing the position that in the political arena it is nonsensical to concentrate on just one part of society when everything is, in fact, influenced by everything else – are in sympathy with this potentially holistic view. New thinking along holistic lines is required because things are demonstrably malfunctioning due to ever increasing individualistic tendencies, as Tom relates:

Tom: I think we go through periods where things work. Our society in the last 10 or 15 years, everybody thought everything was going absolutely smoothly and wonderful. Everything is working. We've solved all the problems. I think that was because we still had some of the ideas, ideologies, whatever, from a previous age of class structure, obedience, and so on.
Melanie: Yeah.
Tom: We rebelled against that, and got a new individualistic ideology. We all want to be self-actualised and realise our potential.
Melanie: Yeah.
Tom: What the bloody hell's that?
Melanie: Ok, I'm seeing this tension in my mind now between these two kinds of poles that you're talking about.
Tom: Things work because we'd picked out the best system for both of them. If we go on using them we think they must be related but they're not. They're just bits that we made use of for different purposes. And what's happening now is we are realising using them that way without resolving the conflict between them is leading us into terrible trouble - global warming, and the Chinese are going to out perform us, all that stuff, is because we're… and the Chinese will get into terrible trouble if they adopt our kind of democracy and individualism.

[91] Alan Simpson gave a talk at Nottingham Café Scientifique on green issues just previous to this conversation taking place.

For Tom, society is atomising due to individualistic tendencies. This position is slightly different from that of Charles who thinks society is splintering due to erroneous minority thinking. As in the previous section, Tom does not denigrate minority thinking since it may contain the seed of a better ideology.

Tom would like to use the internet to set himself up as a guru and advance his holistic position, as he relates:

> **Tom:** I think I want to become a guru. I don't think I am able to do it. I'd love to do it. I'm too bloody old. But I would like to lead a movement.
> **Melanie:** Yeah.
> **Tom:** I'd like to do a Karl Marx or whatever.
> **Melanie:** OK.
> **Tom:** but even better.
> […]
> **Tom:** Go on Mel, just turn me into an internet guru.
> **Melanie:** OK I'll try.
> **Tom:** Please.

The internet can be seen here as implicated in the socio-political identity that Tom would like to adopt. For him, it is an assistive force for the communication required to propagate ideologies with socially beneficial outcomes.

6.3.3.2 Wanting to use the internet to further green societal practices

Pierre also sees the internet as a valuable resource in his crusading armoury. This time though, the 'moral panic' concerns the problems to both society and the planet of non-adoption of greener lifestyles, politics, and business practices. Being a champion of the internet, Pierre wishes to create a portal dedicated to more sustainable habits and processes in order to stave off impending global warming. Like Tom, his influence is drawn from an interest in 1960s ideology, but this time in the form of the Whole Earth Catalogue[92]. These people, of very different generations (Tom born in 1928 and Pierre born in 1958 are thirty years apart), value the contribution of the 1960s to society's ideological, discursive pool. This is not always the case with older people, as the researcher is aware of some who value the 1950s and feel that society afterwards 'went wrong' due to the overly-liberal, permissive

[92] Pierre's inspiration – The Whole Earth Catalogue – was in regular publication from 1968-1972. See Whole Earth Catalog, 2011. *Exploring Whole Earth.* <http://www.wholeearth.com/history-whole-earth-catalog.php>, [accessed 05.01.12].

attitudes of the 1960s. According to the cohort schema of 'baby boomers' and 'pre boomers' given in the literature review, Pierre's year of birth (1958) would explain his interest in 'baby boomer' counter-cultural, unconventional, tendencies. Interestingly the same should not be true of 'pre boomer' Tom (1928) who, it is suggested, should have a more conservative and deferential pre-60s attitude, but is yet interested in 1960s student machinations. Here Tom does not totally conform to the 'pre boomer' stereotype.

In the excerpt below, Pierre presents his green philosophy, its origin in 1960s counter-culture and his desire to re-invent this for the 21st century of internet users:

Pierre: You know. A resource, I've been promoting this website to be as an aggregator, as a resource, as a portal. But definitely with entry points for all sorts of helpful links, yeah, to assist people in becoming, umm, more self sufficient and sustainable and greener and plugged into what's available out there.
Melanie: Umm
Pierre: Umm, and my inspiration has been the Whole Earth Catalogue, which I saw when I was a very young teenager in the States, when I was visiting the States with my mum and somebody had the Whole Earth catalogue out on their coffee table, it was about the size of this table. It was a paper thing with all sorts of, it was basically a catalogue, a manual for living the good life for hippies. It's a very famous publication. It's a seminal work. Very, very disappointed to hear the founder of it, called Stewart Brand, who was on the World Service recently, who, umm, they'd interviewed as a convert, albeit he did express himself slightly reluctantly, as a convert to nuclear power. And I absolutely, you know, he did it with reservations, but I'm afraid, for me, that was a big turn-off. It really blotted his Whole Earth Catalogue book as far as I'm concerned. But nonetheless that was, that publication, the sense of its compendiousness, its, umm, its slightly, its un-conventionalness, its off-gridness aspect of being self-sufficient way before all these things. Well he set the trend, you know , people in California set the trend for all that kind of being off-grid, of being self-sufficient, being low impact, being low, you know growth and what have you…. It really has embedded itself into my psyche. That's the sort of thing, a paradigm that I'm reproducing on this website, when it comes out.

Pierre's green identity is bound up with a previous counter-cultural approach to matters of sustainability which he hopes to turn into a current mainstream methodology. He is very wary, however, of people whom he considers to be turn-coats, expressing 'right-on' principles one minute and then supporting nuclear power the next. His fear is that nuclear power may become the consensus choice, promoted through 'respectable' channels and hence seeming to be the only sensible and generally supported option:

Pierre: In the end when I heard this programme, it was disgracefully pro-nuclear, and it had only the tiniest microscopic fig-leaf of objectivity.
Melanie: Mmm.
Pierre: And the worst that they could say, this Chris Ledyard I think he's called, who was the presenter, the most that he could say that was bad or got somebody else to say, some, some local Somersettian to say was 'Ooh, the shrimps might become a little bit warmer, because they will be going through the intakes of this power station and out again. They come out of it warmed.'
Melanie: Eek!
Pierre: I was absolutely livid. I said if this is, you know, the BBC's idea of objectivity, you know, the worst that could be said for the new build nuclear power station, the shrimps are going to be a little bit warmer. You know, that is just completely out of order. This is you see, I'm afraid the BBC has been nobbled, both probably at some conscious level and at an unconscious level there is this culture of consensus. It's a very big danger with the BBC, cos in a sense its success is its greatest risk, its greatest handicap. Too over-mighty really, but if it, it goes down a particular line, down a particular philosophical path for one reason or another, then it can be very dangerous because it is perceived to be the fount of all reasonable wisdom, and good sense, in not only this country, but even the BBC promotes itself as being some sort of source of wisdom for the whole world, you know, on the World Service.

He wishes, it would seem, to use one form of media (the internet) to combat the potentially misleading power of another (the BBC), with its propagation of what he views as incorrect but powerful 'discursive' narratives. Pierre fears the ability of the BBC to assume the mantle of 'right thinking majority' and then by a process of 'interpellation' turn vast numbers of people into 'subjects' in its own image. Pierre's fears assume almost Messianic proportions in his determination to "start spreading the gospel" against the "terrible, terrible danger" of believing in energy forms such as nuclear power. In contrast to Charles, who fears 'wrong-thinking' minorities, Pierre fears the 'wrong-thinking' majorities that a culture of consensus could breed across the globe.

6.3.4. 'Moral Panics' about over-zealous regulation of technology

6.3.4.1. Fearing the 'nanny-state' and its interference

Pierre's relationship with technology is one that embraces a high degree of personal freedom, which means that he resents the powers of the state to interfere with the new affordances that technology can bring for playing with behaviours and identities. He is completely averse to what he sees as the nanny-state's interventions to legislate against aspects of technology which he has found novel and exciting. The first of his grievances against the government concerns the regulation of Bluetooth technology which has seen the demise of a phenomenon known as 'Bluejacking':

Pierre: Interestingly there was a time when, when, and very sadly, this was something, again a layer of technology I forgot about, there was a time when these phones came out, well not when they came out, but when they'd developed to a certain extent and they first got Bluetooth on them, one was able to go around Bluejacking. And that was basically you turn your Bluetooth connectivity on, you find who else was, got a Bluetooth enabled phone within range. You'd be able to see, because if they were tech savvy at all, and this is really a bit of an awkward case, because although the technology had advanced a lot of people weren't aware they had Bluetooth, but some had, they'd have like little names on their Bluetooth identity, some times quite suggestive, quite often you could tell what sex they were, you know. And then, you had this ability, in the early days, to just basically send a little message, or sometimes even a picture, to somebody at random, as long as they were within range. The flipping powers that be, the state, then decided that this wasn't, this was undesirable, and they insisted that the phone companies introduce flipping ID codes so you couldn't actually… The whole, the most useful thing about a Bluetooth enabled handset is that you could get in touch with somebody across a crowded room, right.
Melanie: Is this the thing that you showed me a while ago?
Pierre: Yes. Yeah.
Melanie: And now you're saying you can't do that?
Pierre: You can't do that! Again it's completely useless because now you need to enter a 4 digit code !! So if you don't know what the code of the person is because they're on the other end of a tube train, well, you can't do it can you? Because you don't know what the code is.

Having used Bluetooth technology to explore new avenues for flirting, Pierre resents the interference to his personal life that new regulations have caused. Pierre feels that he should be in charge of his own social interventions and not have them decided by the state. In this context, he feels that the latest Digital Economy Bill was a step too far in the wrong direction, as he relates:

Pierre: This is what drives me nuts about this government and probably about…
Melanie: I didn't realise they'd umm…
Pierre: Yep. This flipping, nannying, controlling, centralising, nosy, you know, digital crushing government, right, and they really need to be kicked into touch, really. I mean the Digital Economy Bill was the last thing to go through Parliament.

What is at stake for Pierre in his 'moral panic' is the loss of the anarchistic nature of technology, its uncontrolled non-hierarchical nature. State intervention to control the technology and its usage is the total antithesis of what makes it so alluring for him. In this we can discern that Pierre views the internet as a type of "frontier" in line with Turner's (1893) 'Frontier Thesis' as expounded in his work *The frontier in American history*:[93]

[93] Pierre is from the North American continent so this seems appropriate. Compare the opening lines of Star Trek here (used at the beginning of this thesis): "Space: the final frontier". This is also a direct reference to the ideas contained within Turner's (1893) 'Frontier Thesis'.

> Thus American development has exhibited not merely advance along a single line, but a return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line, and a new development for that area. American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character. The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West.

Cyberspace is the new 'final frontier' for Pierre, in that its new, fluid spaces promote numerous opportunities to play with the novel and yet remain in touch with primitive (sexual) forces. Civilising forces must not be allowed to intervene in this new version of the Wild West. The frontier in American history was an arena which allowed people to re-make themselves, to throw off their unwanted European pasts and identities, and be who they dreamed of being, without regulations catching up with them. The internet can provide such an arena for Pierre, but not if the 'nanny-state' over-regulates it. Over-regulation will lead it to suffer the same fate as the frontier in American history which was finally squashed out of existence by "the familiar phenomenon of the evolution of institutions in a limited area, such as the rise of representative government" leading on to ultimate civilisation (Turner 1893).

6.3.5 Summary of the ideas within 'Moral Panics'

Several key points can be noted from the above discussion of moral panics and the internet:

- 'Moral Panics' around the usage of new technology reflect personal and political identity.
- People define themselves through or against their definition of the perceived threat.
- Counter-culturalists prefer the anarchistic affordances of the web and its possibilities for novel ways of thinking and being.
- Consensus thinkers fear the internet's capability to bring individuals and minorities together in new and threatening combinations.
- These 'identity' tendencies can be, but are not necessarily, cohort related. Not everyone conforms to their cohort stereotype.

6.4 Overall Summary of Chapter Six

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate how an individual's offline propensities (personal identities) affect their usage of ICT and hence their online propensities (digital identities). The schema of 'Subject Positions' demonstrates how people view the expression of identity and whether they are prepared to contemplate experimenting with new forms. The majority of the older people involved in this study had developed a value set which meant they were keen to portray what they considered to be their 'authentic' identity, rather than experimenting with new versions of the self. In part this may be because they experienced their identity as a 'monolith' which was incapable of change or of being multifaceted, or perhaps at this stage in their lives they felt comfortable within themselves and so did not feel the need to experiment with identity change. The situation may have been different for people dealing with 'spoiled identities' but these were not discovered to any great degree within the lifetime of the active research. Even the 'Gamers' involved in the study did not take advantage of the new affordances of technology for experiment, maintaining instead a pragmatic (identity) approach to their game-play.

The present study bears in mind this idea of 'problematised' 'real' offline identities, but accepts that many of the older people presented here do indeed think in this commonsense way whereby a 'real' identity is the taken-for-granted norm. This is however, not true of all participants as there are a few who have embraced theories about what is their 'real' identity anyway, as demonstrated by those who conform to the higher numbered 'Subject Positions' in the schema.

The 'Subject Positions' developed here can be seen as examples of what Giddens (1991 p.9) terms "framework[s] of self-actualisation" and so in turn they highlight the varying ways that ICT can become involved in the on-going reflexive projects of the older people in this study.

The 'moral panics' surrounding ICT, as identified from the study of the overall dataset, also help to refine and develop what is meant by the 'value sets' (Giddens 1991, p.9) of older people, and this in turn adds further nuances to a discussion of their personal and digital 'reflexive' identities.

Having examined the (digital) identities adopted by older people, the next chapter will examine the data set to determine what type of identity processes are at work in older people's usage of ICT, and what effect these have on the ongoing reflexive self-project.

Chapter Seven: System Map Part Two – Identity Work (processes involved)

7.1 Identity Work (Processes) – Introduction

This chapter charts the various identity processes related to the usage of ICT as discernible from the transcripts of all the older people in this study. These processes can be seen at a glance in the table below (Section 7.2). The three columns indicate the positive or negative effect on the identity of the individual concerned, and also the 'third space' hybridities which involve, for example, the work of the imagination or a third place created from the conjunction of the self and third parties. This table is further divided into activities which involve being similar to the perceived self (for better or worse), and being other than the self (experimental activities). The remainder of the chapter will provide the evidence for these separate processes.

As highlighted in the previous chapter, there were very few people in the study who were genuinely experimental with their identity, and this was in spite of an advertising campaign aimed at deliberately finding such participants. Thus the section on experimenting with the self is of necessity fairly short. There was however, some anecdotal evidence in the transcripts that people had acquaintances who were indeed experimenting with their identity in a positive manner, although these were not necessarily older people. For example, Francis has an acquaintance who is actively using Second Life for activities he is not able to do in reality:

Francis: [He] is mentally handicapped. He's not, umm, I'm not so sure what's wrong with him. I guess he's just, he's a 14 year old, 30, but inside his head he's not fully developed.
Melanie: Mmm.
Francis: But he's a pole dancer.
Melanie: Wow.
Francis: On, on Second Life.
Melanie: Really?
Francis: Yeah.
Melanie: That's amazing.
Francis: And my daughter says, 'That's great'.
Melanie: Mmm.
Francis: If you or I were pole dancers on Second Life, you might get worried about it.
Melanie: Mmm.
Francis: But that's what he does. He's got. He hasn't got a first life, but he has got second life.
Melanie: Yeah.
Francis: And maybe that's a big consolation to him.

There is some evidence here that Francis still prefers people to maintain an 'authentic' identity, however in the case where people's offline identity is somehow 'spoiled' (in this case through mental handicap) this moral requirement is waived in favour of the acceptance of these methods for self-expression and personal fulfilment.

Referring back to the 'System Map' developed in this thesis, this chapter also represents the following three main themes related to identity processes:

- **ICT as 'Object to think with' about the self -** about the personal self or humanity in more general terms
- **ICT as enabling the expression of self -** actively constructing the self-project through the use of ICT
- **ICT as source of identity related material -** exposure to narratives and other materials with which to furnish the self-project.

The idea of 'identity work' – as explored in this chapter - is intended to incorporate notions of purposive activity which leads to transformations, even if by transformation that means becoming more fully oneself. Grounded theory is intended to explore process rather than stasis so this is particularly apt.

Giddens' (1984, p.3) theory of reflexivity is also concerned with a notion of purposive activity which leads to psychic transformation, since his notion of the "human being" is one of "purposive agent". Giddens (1984, p.3) therefore suggests that "it is useful to speak of reflexivity as grounded in the continuous monitoring of action which human beings display and expect others to display". This monitoring is a "process rather than a state" (Giddens 1984, p.3). How ICT becomes implicated in these purposive activities, and corresponding psychic processes is the work of this chapter.

7.2 Codings for Identity Work

Table 20 Codings for identity work

NEGATIVE EFFECT ON SELF PROJECT	POSITIVE EFFECT ON SELF PROJECT	THIRD PARTIES, THIRD SPACES, THIRD VOICES, HYBRIDITIES
BEING ME (SIMILAR - FOR BETTER OR WORSE)		
	Informing Myself – (choosing)	
Comparing Myself Negatively Comparing myself due to the technology I own (negative)	Comparing Myself Positively Comparing myself due to the technology I own (positive)	
	Affirming Positive Identity	
	Uplifting Myself	
Challenging Me Negatively	Challenging Me Positively	
Assisting Lack of Capabilities (Where It Reminds People Of Reduced Capabilities) - Compensation process?	Assisting Me to do more - Optimisation process?	Hybridising Self /Selves With Tech
	Expressing the Self (not necessarily to be viewed by other people)	Expressing the Self (needing an audience)
		Publicising the Self (generating interest in things that can be acquired, or events that can be attended related to the self project)
		Imagining a future self using ICT
		Finding Like Minded Communities (Re-enforcing me)
BEING OTHER THAN ME (EXPERIMENTING)		
	Developing new personal skills	

7.3 Identity Work (Processes) – Codings Explained

7.3.1 Being Me (Similar - for Better or Worse)

7.3.1.1 Informing myself

Material in the form of narratives, discourses, images, news of world happenings etc., can be gleaned via the intermediation of digital technologies, and this raw product can be digested in the third space to assist in the ongoing reflexive project of the self. Shirley has been impressed by the impact of the internet as a comprehensive information source, as she relates:

Shirley: The internet of course, that's marvellous.
Melanie: Haha.
Shirley: It's like having the world's biggest library isn't it.
Melanie: Yes.
Shirley: On your desktop. It's fantastic!
[…]
Shirley: It's just useful for settling any queries. I'm always looking on Google for all sorts of queries. I use Google a lot.

Shirley appreciates the internet as a huge repository of the world's information, and the instant availability of answers to her queries. In particular, it greatly assists in her passion for uncovering family history:

Shirley: Because when I started my family history research, it was about 25 years ago, of course there was none of that. So it was just hard slog around record offices and graveyards and that sort of thing. Whereas now most of that is on the internet. So it's wonderful to be able to get at such a lot of information on the internet.

Family history information, enables her to recuperate a sense of self through being part of the onward flow of her genealogical line. This also incorporates, therefore, another identity process concerned with 'affirming self'.

Tom (F) has discovered an online lecture series known as TED, which presents the latest research and practice on scientific and cultural topics in video form. For Tom these lectures present an ideal way of keeping up with world knowledge since retiring from University life. He experiences the information contained within them as a process of enrichment, both of his personal knowledge and of his contact with like minded people who are similarly fascinated by the latest research:

Tom: Just now I've been telling you about TED which is a wonderful thing on, umm, on the Internet. And it's talking to people face to face about TED that I've actually enriched my experience of TED which is a wonderful source of information. You telling me I've finished?
Melanie: What is TED?
Douglas: What is TED? We need to know…
Gavin: I know just what you mean.
Iris: So what is TED?
Melanie: What is TED?
Tom: TED is, I only found out today, stands for technology, entertainment and design. I wanted to say education, but it's not. It's technology, entertainment and design. It's a whole series of lectures.
[…]
Tom: It's enriched my life enormously for the same reason. It's enriched my face to face contacts as well.

Sanjay (F) appreciates the power of new technologies to provide a window on the world beyond the self, so that the problems of humanity in other parts of the globe can be brought within one's personal sphere:

Sanjay: We've got, through ICT now, our television programmes from all over the world like Algeciras, which we'd never thought of watching 15 years ago, an Arabic station trying to compete with CNN. Sometimes we even can watch Chinese stations on the few channels we've got. So I think they are big social changes which are happening. If you look at where our social conscience was…umm peace movements, Amnesty International, all of these are much more powerful now because of technology and ICT where news, big massacres, cannot be hidden from the public eye for every long and people are aware of issues much more than they were let's say in the eighties when they had to struggle on the anti-apartheid cause. By the same token like, for example, energy consumption, we are more aware and can take more action. Very soon most people will be able to log on and say, 'oh yes, my local authority, this building they haven't switched off the lights, this building they are keeping the lights on as necessary'. They might even be able to tell which offices are not switching off their computers and thereby causing a big carbon footprint. So those things are things which are going to be effective and are affecting our social thinking.

Sanjay recognises that people are now privy to world events that are completely beyond their usual experience of the world. By such means, people have their more comfortable outlooks re-formed by access to information on powerful, and sometimes horrific, social happenings. This new information perpetually confronts personal morality and social conscience. People cannot plead ignorance of these events but are invited to engage with them on some level, whether that is mentally or in finding some way to assist with global issues in actuality. Similarly, Thompson (1995, p.232-3) argues that "living in a mediated world" brings with it "new burdens" on the self which go beyond the purely local, as he explains:

> We are released from the locales of our daily lives only to find ourselves thrown into a world of baffling complexity. We are called on to form a view about, to take a stand on, even to assume some responsibility for, issues and events which take place in distant parts of an increasingly connected world.

For Thompson (1995, p.234) mediated experience of tragic world events gives rise to a new "moral circumstance" which "can bear down on the project of the self". Several of the older people in this study have been affected by this 'moral' thinking about world events, as can be seen from the section on 'Moral Panics' (6.3 above). These mediated events become key identity drivers, even though they are only experienced in a second-hand, vicarious way.

7.3.1.2 Affirming myself (Affirming positive identity)

Technology can allow for activities which continually affirm the self in existing identities and roles. This can be particularly true in a familial situation where one's status in the family is viewed in a positive light. Iris (F), for example, finds that everyone's part in the family, from the young to the old, is affirmed through the communication mechanisms afforded by various technologies:

> **Iris:** I mean I have two sons and an elderly mother-in-law and it's been fantastic the way my boys and their granny keep in touch. It's kind of they don't have to go and visit her, though they do, but they just kind of get on the Internet and say 'how're you doing granny?' and she gets on the mobile phone at 88 and says 'I'm fine boys'.
> […]
> The thing I find quite interesting is that there is a rapidity, how quickly people kind of interconnect, very, very quickly. And um… to such an extent that… I lived in a little cottage up in Durham and I fell and broke my foot and I actually had to crawl into my cottage to phone my sons and say 'Your mother's broken her foot'. Now, I'd have the old mobile there saying 'Come and get me quickly' and so I think it's made things a lot easier and it helps the family to connect with each other.

Technologies facilitate the interpersonal familial connections in numerous ways, so that grandparents can feel incorporated in the lives of their grandchildren no matter what the distance, or parents can feel that help is on hand in the case of an emergency. These connections enable an ongoing feeling of trust and emotional wellbeing, promoting a feeling of self worth.

Michael (F) correspondingly feels that family identity can also be affirmed by the use of cameras to make persisting memories:

> **Michael:** Also, I think memories, the use of a camera for memories, you know, when your children were small, your mother was getting on, and so on, pictures of grandson… that's the technology isn't it? It's a good thing.

Family moments, precious times in an individual family member's personal history, and so on, can be recorded for posterity, for the whole family to look back on and retell in affirmative ways.

Jonathan (F) uses the information facilities offered by the internet to affirm his Pagan identity. Events which would be difficult to get to without an adequate knowledge of public transport local to the area he wishes to visit now come within his social sphere. Here he relates an example of using online timetables

to put together a travel itinerary for himself and a friend to get to a Lammas Camp:

> **Jonathan:** Not being able to get hold of paper timetables and put things together. About two or three years ago I managed to use the Internet to put together an itinerary so that I could… a friend of mine got on the train in Nottingham, I joined it at, in Beeston, and through train and bus and the local sort of social bus we got up to a tiny village called Gawthorpe in the middle of Yorkshire to go to the Oakleaf Pagan Lammas camp and dance round the burning Wicca man on a Sunday night. And then get up on the Monday morning and catch the little bus back and down through the… on trains and then another bus at the end to take us to witch camp and then by a similar route to get home again. And in fact when I did the journey a year later, it was the Post Office bus that I caught which I didn't know existed. A Post Office van which doubled as a bus. And so by accessing the internet it actually gave me access to a lot more public transport options than I would have even known about let alone been able to plan round. That's my anecdote.

The internet thus facilitates the ability to attend events in person which would otherwise be impossible without the use of a car. This affirms Jonathan's offline image of himself by enabling him to continue meeting with like-minded people, and share common experiences.

7.3.1.3 Uplifting myself (expanding myself into new horizons)

Iris and Gavin both feel that technology has enabled them to set their working life on a broader stage. Gavin's working life has gone from being community based to national, and Iris feels that her research now operates at an international level. Here, Gavin (F) relates how his working life has changed over the years:

> **Gavin:** Oh yeah, I worked then as a social worker on an estate, large estate in the North West of Nottingham, and the chief part of my time was devoted to a population of 200,000 souls. I worked there for 10 years which is a very long time for a social worker. So in 15 years I have moved from being very densely involved with my family, knowing very few people on my street, and work that had me almost trapped in a cocoon, and I now have work which covers large parts of the country because it's possible through electronic technology to work on a much, much broader scale. So in terms of my own life, I think I have kind of ricocheted between the two extremes of what your life and sense of community could be. Probably a more stark contrast in 15 years than is typical of the population as a whole. But that's my story.

Gavin relishes the fact that the networking capabilities of technology now allow him the scope to take his work from local to national, enabling the impact of his expertise to reach a broader audience. Iris (F) responds similarly, but for her the stage is now set at the global level, as she relates:

Iris: Generally, I think, this isn't a personal thing, but from an academic point of view it's been fantastic because if you are a researcher as I am, you can kind of have the world at your fingers. You can just sit at your desk and find out what's happening here, there and everywhere. And so it's been really good for an academic community not just for research, but also to connect with people right around the world. So, I mean, I think it's been positive from that point of view.

Iris now experiences her academic life in the context of a global research situation. Her ability to network and discover what is happening in her field across the world have been greatly expanded by technology. Life has been made easier for academics by online journals and research, academic blogs and websites and other electronic tools which allow people to connect together globally.

Some study participants began to do some blue-sky (third space) thinking about the possibilities of expanding human horizons generally. On a personal level, Sanjay (F) feels that new opportunities could be gleaned from the use of technology which could expand his sense of self and enjoyment of life:

Sanjay: I think it's a brave new world. I mean, although earlier I said I was going to go with the 'low' thing, I think I was being provocative when I said that, because I'm always going to be pushing for new things to happen. I think it's going to get everywhere. Umm... the net, the use of the webs, use of computers will get everywhere. What I am really looking forward to is translation and interpreting. Languages, I mean, at the moment, I guess, I'm not very good at languages but I know a bit of French, a bit of Spanish. But I know there's a wealth of information there. I know also… I haven't even tried Mandarin but just to be able to communicate with one fifth of the world and what they're thinking and the young population.
Michael: Yeah one of these…
Sanjay: But that's not enough, that's not enough. What I would like and my view of IT is something which is in your glasses, so that when I am wearing my glasses, if I have to wear this, that's the script keeps circulating. Pressing that… so that here in Spain all the things will come up there, and so when someone's speaking it can come up there. That will be my use of ICT in adapting.

Current interests in foreign languages could be pursued to maximum advantage with the assistance of translation and interpretation technologies which could be obtained from the internet or housed within new, smaller hardware enabling it to fit within his glasses and used on the move. Communication with nationals in their own country would therefore be facilitated, and Sanjay's sense of the country he was visiting improved through personal contact. If Sanjay (F) found that for reasons of practicality it was no longer possible to visit these countries directly then he would appreciate the ability to visit them vicariously:

Sanjay: Just one more quickly. The other thing which think I mentioned about video, is I would like to meet and go to places. Now, just the other day we came back from a holiday, and I suddenly realised that even if I wanted to, just by the very fact that the carbon footprint… that I can't go and visit everything. What I would like to do is have other people visit all sorts of places and for us to view those pictures. Also, in some ways, hopefully technology will give us holographic ways of experiencing let's say going to the Amazon, so that whilst you are seeing it on screen, but also being able to have surround spaces, so that when you're there, you are almost surrounded by being either in the Antarctic or in the Amazon or under the sea. That would be technology and ICT for me.

Future technology could herald all types of possibilities for expanding human horizons without stepping foot outside of one's own home.

7.3.1.4 Comparing myself

Thinking about technology usage leads to people comparing the way they themselves use it with the manner in which they perceive other people to do so. Comparisons are frequently made with a group of people known as 'they', in a process known as 'othering'. Most often this group known as 'they' refers to younger people who have grown up with the technology and who are adjudged to be either making use of the new affordances in a manner which does not accord with their own preferred lifestyles, or are somehow being more irresponsible compared to their own technology conservatism. But this group of 'they' can also mean the criminal element, or even just 'persons unknown'.

People also judge themselves and others based on the type of technology they engage with (branding the self through product branding) and also they compare themselves directly with technology's capabilities (object to think with). These ICT-related comparisons lead to a form of ranking of self against other people, against technology, and sometimes because of technology.

COMPARING MYSELF POSITIVELY

When asked to talk about the changes to social life that new technologies have wrought, Jonathan (F) came up with ideas that involved a number of pejorative sounding statements about 'persons unknown', against whom he ranks his own activities, as highlighted in the transcript below.

Jonathan: Well, I mean. Last 15 to 20 years. Well, I mean it's obviously things like the internet. More recently social networking sites. Umm texting. Email. Umm mobile phones. And… you can pretend to have a social life and never leave your bedroom is one of the changes I guess. Umm… other things. Gaming…these multi-user interactive gaming things where you take part with everyone and anyone that you've never met. Also, I guess. I don't know whether this is quite relevant to information and communication technologies, but bee in the bonnet, the social life, social discussion is increasingly obsessed with reality TV and talentless competitions... umm which I guess does have an impact on social life.

For him, some of these new technologies involve an element of pretence, in that the social life they offer you is not actually deemed to be real, and therefore lacks worth. The people with whom technology users interact in online situations are not people that are actually known to these users in 'real' life. The implication from Jonathan's statements is that he himself would not engage in these lesser activities, and that he prefers his social contact to be face-to-face, which is his benchmark for authentic relationships. He therefore compares himself positively with respect to these 'other' users of technology. Jonathan prefers to use technology for more noteworthy and pragmatic purposes such as preparing teaching materials and communicating with people to make arrangements to meet in the real world.

Michael (F) responds similarly to Jonathan when posed the same question, as can be seen in the focus group transcript below. Michael is one of a number of study participants who refer to a mysterious 'they' directly; people (unknown technology addicts) who don't quite do things the way he himself would:

Michael: Yeah, well, my observation, I mean, they still have a social life but their social life relates to people in the distance. Well, when I say that they go on their mobile phone, computer, listening to other people's music not their own. They seem to have adjusted to that but I'm not one for that kind of thing because… Of course you embrace modern technology but you don't isolate people. They tend to do that I think. They isolate people by embracing the technology and forgetting that they have a neighbour next door, instead of somebody a hundred mile away. It might not be a hundred mile away. It might be somebody on the next street but when you see people on the bus and they emailing (?) on Facebook and all that sort of thing and they deal with the whole world like that and forget about people next door, I think it's good but it's bad you know. That's my view of it. I don't participate in that kind of thing myself.

Again, Michael's statements have a pejorative edge; the social life on offer is at a "distance" for the people he invokes, and it leaves their near neighbours isolated, leading to a feeling of lost local community. Whereas it can be *inferred* that Richard would not behave in this way, Michael is quite definite in his pronouncements that this way of life is not for him. Technology may have its place in communication, but

it is not one with which he is comfortable, or finds wholly praiseworthy. Michael and Richard can thus be seen to adopt a 'moralistic' stance with respect to the type of social life afforded by new technology.

Sanjay (F) gives a positive view of himself in comparison to other users of technology, but does not denigrate the way technology is used by others:

> **Sanjay:** I used to think that I was one of those early adopters. Anything new I had to be the first to try it. So when the internet came, I was one of the first to have a website. I think I was one of the first in the [place I work] to insist that everyone in our office should have a website, uh should have access to the internet.
> […]
> So as far as being an early adopter, seeing things happen, I've taken pleasure in that.

Sanjay thinks of himself in terms of the language of the 'Diffusion of Innovations', preferring to see himself as an 'early adopter', rather than say a 'laggard' (Rogers, 1962). Sanjay (F) wishes to project an identity of technological understanding and capability in advance of his peers, a leader rather than a follower. He even wishes to lead, paradoxically, in his new desire to go low tech:

> **Sanjay:** What's happened now, 15 years later, I've lost, suddenly started going on to like low technology. Like, only today, I went and bought a mobile phone because in the last three months I've lost two mobile phones. So they are getting lost and it seems it's a big commodity out there to some people, and they don't return it. So I've just now today went and bought a nineteen quid, I tried to get a ten quid mobile phone.
> […]
> **Sanjay:** So with that, I am thinking of looking at where I can be an early adopter with LOW technology!
> […]
> **Sanjay:** I think it's a brave new world. I mean, although earlier I said I was going to go with the 'low' thing, I think I was being provocative when I said that, cos I'm always going to be pushing for new things to happen.

Sanjay takes a new perverse pride in being able to spot the hazards of being 'high-tech' orientated, and provocatively suggests that being 'low-tech' is now the way forward. He is therefore, ironically going to be an 'early adopter' of technology which has less social status so that, somewhat cannily, he does not fall victim to loss or theft of expensive items. He is therefore going to maintain his one-step-ahead status by making a definite life-choice to be one-step-behind.

COMPARING MYSELF NEGATIVELY

The supposed complexity of technology leads some people to re-assess their personal capabilities. In this way, technology becomes a type of standard or benchmark against which to measure the self, in some cases negatively. Douglas (F) falls to prey to this in his remarks about ICT, in which he cannot help emphasising an area in which he feels unskilled:

> **Douglas:** Certainly the internet is, I find, I'm not sure it's very sociable. I certainly don't use Facebook. My typing skills aren't up to that level.
> […]
> **Douglas:** I find the process of typing so slow and cumbersome, it just has no spontaneity, and so consequently I don't use, for all kinds of other reasons anyway… Facebook and all that sort of social interactive obsession on the computer.

Technology impacts on the self project here because it recalls to Douglas that he feels unskilled at typing and this affects his willingness to engage with the technology in certain ways. Yet Facebook does not really need proficient typing skills as most of it does not occur in real time. The technology thus points up sensitive personal weaknesses and sometimes for erroneous reasons. If people feel challenged in their personal efficacy then perhaps they are attributing to technology a sense of the unattainable perfection of robotic skill.

COMPARING MYSELF DUE TO OWNING TECHNOLOGY

Comparing oneself due to the presence of technology in one's life can have positive or negative outcomes as Michael (F) found when his family acquired mobile phones. He notes that the acquisition of certain brands of technology became a family competition, as he explains:

> **Michael:** And as time went on everybody got mobile phones. My brother and sister. They even wanted to compete with me as to the name of the mobile phone. 'What sort do you have?' you know.

The make and model of phone, cost, functionality etc., lead to a status hierarchy with respect to ownership of technology. People can compare where they are in this hierarchy of 'identity markers'. The technology you own 'marks' you out as someone who either forges ahead in keeping up with brand trends, or who lurks in the backwaters of outdated and less popular technologies; comparisons which have

positive or negative outcomes for the self. This tendency is discussed further in the section on 'identity stakeholders'.

THE 'OTHERING' PROCESS – THE WORLD OF 'THEY' (YOUNGER PEOPLE)

This section expands on comments made about 'they', where 'they' definitively refers to younger people, rather than just persons unknown who are NOT the self. Many of the participants refer to 'younger people' in a comparative manner; younger people are seen as a distinctive group with whom older people engage in a process of 'othering'.

A) What are older people better at with regards to technology (in their opinion)?

Francis highlights the idea that younger people are reaping the technology benefits sown years ago by older people when they were themselves younger, as he relates:

> **Francis:** Something like playing a game, you're not aware there's a programming language behind that at all. In fact I teach ICT, you ask the kids how the computers work, 'Magic'.
> **Melanie:** Yeah.
> **Francis:** 'Just magic sir'.
> […]
> **Francis:** That's how it works, just magic. And I said, 'Well, do you want to know how this game operates?'. 'No!'

It should not be forgotten that people such as Francis were in at the start of the technology, pioneering it, playing with it, trying to get it to work (participant Pierre is also a technology entrepreneur). In Francis' opinion the older people have done the hard technical work and the younger people do not feel the need to know about this. To them 'ICT' is a 'black box' whose operation is mysterious. Francis is clearly alluding to the idea that technology is a ubiquitous given for younger people, therefore they do not want to know how it works. In fact, as far as the ICT syllabus in schools is concerned, the government has now recognised "the argument that ICT had become little more than training in office skills and something far more rigorous was required", such as knowledge about coding, so that younger people would have better skills for the ICT workplace (BBC News Technology 2012). Here Francis is making the point that some older people actually have better ICT **skills** than younger people.

The remarks of other older people in the study suggest, in addition that they feel older people also have a better **attitude** and **value set** with regards to the usage of ICT. Older people feel that the way younger people use ICT could consequently be having a detrimental effect on certain aspects of their everyday lives. The main points concerning this, as obtained from the overall dataset, are summarised in the following table:

Table 21 Older people's view of younger people and their negative usage of ICT

Younger people and their negative usage of ICT – attitudes, values, and effect		
Robert	**'They' are → inviting trouble by communicating with strangers** Robert feels that younger people are too gullible in their communication with strangers on the internet. In his opinion, older people are more conservative and less open to such dangers. Robert is here applauding the wisdom of experience over the trusting nature of innocence.	**Robert:** The downside of it is, err, I know who I am talking to, cos I only talk to people I know [on the internet]. **Melanie:** Mmm **Robert:** But you get young people, they talk to, they make friends with anyone who comes up and says 'I want to be your friend'. And I think that, that's wrong. […] **Robert:** Um, because young, young lads and young girls, can get taken in by it, by somebody talking nice to them.
Robert	**'They' are → messing about with inappropriate material** Robert feels he is a custodian of the family values with regards to internet usage. Using online gambling software is a breach of his personal 'netiquette', especially if there are serious financial consequences. Again, Robert feels that the younger generation are 'inviting trouble' but in a different way to the item above.	**Melanie:** So do you ever advise your grandson? **Robert:** Oh yes. **Melanie :** or your grand-daughter on what they should and shouldn't do on the Internet? **Robert:** Every now and then we get a thing on gambling, one of the gambling lines, and it's obviously [my grandson] who has put the address in or something. And I will say that's not on, because you're not going to gamble, I'm not going to gamble, so what you messing around with it for?
Shirley	**Feeling the younger generation prefer more mundane material** Here the older generation are depicted as possessing 'gravitas', whereas the interests of younger people are deemed to operate at a much more mundane level. This reflects Tom's point that all the younger generation appear to be interested in is activities like shopping; they do not appear to have more complex interests or ideologies.	**Shirley:** I know it's taking over people, Facebook has taken over from email hasn't it? In a lot of cases. People just put, I don't see the point in saying 'oh, I've just got up and had my breakfast' and all this sort of stuff, you know. I don't see the point. Youngsters like it.
Michael (F)	**'They' are → only respecting technology and not people** Michael feels that the modern way of younger people is not to respect	**Michael:** No. One of the things that's supposed to come with old age is respect, right. Because of the wisdom and all this, you know, the wisdom you have acquired

	other people any more. Here there is nothing to be gained through the supposed wisdom of age. All the benefits of experience can be obtained through the informational use of technology in any case.	over the years. In the Modern Society, the only thing which they respect is the computer, the telephone and all the kind of thing which come with it.
Pierre	**'They' are → exhibiting compulsive behaviour with regards to ICT** For Pierre, this compulsive texting behaviour of younger people is extraordinary and not something in which he feels that his generation would engage. He feels there is something slightly distasteful about this level of compulsive obsession.	**Pierre:** I think it's younger people, and umm, certainly it's got to be people who are a lot younger than us, who like texting. You see, you know, my girlfriend's daughter went through this phase where it was just… And my previous partner's children, you know, X and Y. They were slap in the middle of the teenage years. X was about, I knew him from 12 to about 17, and Y 14 to 20. Like just texting all the time. They sort of had a kind of texter's twitch. Their thumbs, you know, it's extraordinary. Umm. it just wouldn't cross our minds to enter into that kind of behaviour you know.
Pierre	**'They' → are 'slacking' their way through life using technology** Pierre admits to being aggravated here by the customs of the younger generation. The outburst was quite vehement, leading the researcher to suspect that there was some deeper process at work, hence the question about jealousy of the younger generation cropping up here. The researcher though was actually thinking of the Freudian theory of 'projection' at the time (a psychological defence mechanism whereby unwanted aspects of personal identity are projected onto other people).	**Pierre:** Again, it's that extraordinary thing, you find yourself being aggravated by the umm, by the ways and customs of the younger generation. You know, I don't know whether it's, what it's due to. I find myself being vaguely contemptuous of the, you know, the lackadaisical laziness, the listless, and you know the lack of discipline of the younger generation and all these tools that they've got just allowing them to just sort of slack their way through, more idiotic and lazy way, through life. **Melanie:** There's not an element of jealousy in there, is there? **Pierre:** I'm sure there is. I can't actually put my finger on it.
Graham	**'They' are → losing the physicality of experience by doing things virtually** The physicality of things in the offline world is a pleasurable experience that the younger generation are losing. There is a certain serendipity and excitement to the physical activity of browsing in a store which is lost in using search terms in online environments.	**Graham:** And there is still something about, and I don't know if the new generation will have this, I am concerned that there is something about going into a bookshop, that is an experience in itself that I will want to keep having, even when I don't buy a book. Wandering, you know it really is wandering around, and catching things by surprise, and feeling the book. And a lot of people feel that way.

B) What are younger people better at with regards to ICT (in the opinion of older people)

Older people did not always adopt the moral high ground with respect to younger people's usage of ICT, as they sometimes acknowledged that there may indeed be things that younger people are better at with regards to ICT. The main points

concerning this, as obtained from the overall dataset, are summarised in the following table:

Table 22 Older people's views of what younger people are better at doing

What are younger people better at in the opinion of older people?		
Anna-Maria	**Believing technology mastery comes 'naturally' to the younger generation** Interestingly, this belief in younger people's 'natural' mastery of ICT can become a 'get out clause' for older people. It excuses them in advance in case they fail at something technology related. At the risk of stating a truism, technology is not, however, 'natural'. It is cultural.	**AM:** And I think it's much easier for young people to get used to new technology. **Melanie:** Mmm. **AM:** Rather than us who didn't grow up with them, whereas kids, my kids have been fiddling with games, first they had these little tiny games they used to fiddle with. So they're with technology all the time. They're brought up with it. It comes naturally to them.
Elizabeth	**'They' are → multitasking with ICT** Elizabeth feels that the younger generation have assimilated ICT into their daily lives so that it becomes an adjunct to everything else they are doing. They are adept multitaskers.	**Elizabeth** [The youngest] is constantly chatting via MS with her friends, you know, she might be doing her homework but she's got the MSN box open several times talking to lots of children. **Melanie:** This is this multitasking thing. **Elizabeth:** Multitasking!
Charles	**'They' are → behaving more dynamically** Charles is perhaps referring back to an age where it was assumed you could have a job for life. The dynamic behaviour of younger people could be seen as a reflection of the times which are rapidly changing. Or it could also be seen as better coping behaviour.	**Charles:** That's the only thing that does wind me is that people say that 'oh young people they haven't got staying power nowadays. They've got no interests. They flit in'. Well I think there's a lot to be said, perhaps another way of looking at it is that young people are more dynamic. They're not tied down. They're not looking for something which they're going to do for their whole life.
Charles	**They are → keeping up with technology trends** Older people are possibly more conservative about spending their money and will think carefully about what they buy and whether something really does need replacing. However, younger people are prepared to pay for the latest technology, just because it's novel and are then enabled to keep up with the technology.	**Charles:** I think some of these firms could look at their marketing. You see a lot of the marketing's for trendiness, a lot of it is style. If you are trying to get people to replace things every year. My nephews and their friends seem to change their phone every year or whatever.
Gavin (F)	**'They' are → leading the way in challenging our assumptions about an enriching social life** Gavin's view stands in opposition to Michael's above. Gavin feels that	**Gavin:** Well, I don't think the world has got worse. And I don't think the creation of the internet has reduced people's social life. I think it has been almost entirely positive, because the decimation of social life had happened in the previous 20 years. The, the possibilities through things like

	the affordances of technology should not be rejected and may serve to enrich our social world rather than impoverishing it. Gavin feels that younger people are leading the way in determining what new patterns of social life could be, and he is prepared to be open-minded about this.	Facebook of youngsters having a relationship in this silicon world I think is probably, certainly from their point of view, is infinitely more enriching than what was around 20 years previous. Umm… it may challenge many of our assumptions as to what a rich social life is like, but who said that our assumptions were to be unchallenged.

C) Younger people's attitudes are not better or worse, just different by comparison

Older people are definitely interested in what they feel is the different value set of younger people, but there are occasions where this is not necessarily to be viewed as better or worse, merely different. People such as Julia have attempted to understand this phenomenon; in her case the necessity is driven by her occupation as a social media marketing analyst:

Julia: What I'm really interested in, from a business point of view is what is happening with the younger generation as consumers now, because… […]
…because they are going to be completely different from the generation that's gone before, and companies just aren't geared up for that at all at the moment.
[…]
Well, certainly increasingly brands are going onto social media, going onto Facebook in particular, having brand pages, having what were called fans, and has now mysteriously changed into Like or something. And wading in with hob-nailed boots using the old marketing approach, the push approach, you know, and bleating about their brand rather than understanding that it's very much a permission marketing forum, and you have to sort of earn your place there really by behaving in an appropriate way. So we've seen brands go in and make a hash of it. So there's a real appetite to understand, umm, how to connect with customers through a medium like that…
Melanie: Mmm.
Julia: …and how that's different from the old traditional ways of marketing. So by understanding how people are interacting on this new medium, puts me in a better position to help them. And I'm just very interested in it anyway, the whole social, you know the value set of the kids that are on it, and the way that they communicate is very different.

The different value set requires marketing responses appropriate to these different expectations; brand identities must keep pace with newer personal identities and the affordances of technology for 'permission' marketing. When pressed further on this topic, Julia responded that she felt that younger people were now peer influenced and not authority influenced; they valued the thoughts of their peers and did not accept authority from above. They would therefore not be told how to think either by 'push' marketers, or indeed by 'pushy' politicians:

Julia: And it's completely my own thoughts, is that actually it might be more to do with a lack of respect for figures of authority…
Melanie: OK.
Julia: Umm, because the election was very interesting, just recently. There was a real interest in how the country was going to be run and a real feeling of despair about the guys who were up there that they had the choice of, and feeling very out of touch with them, in both directions really. Just picking up on comments really, like an 18 year old being asked if they were going to vote being quoted something that one of the candidates had said, and saying something like 'Well, I can't understand why politicians would be interested in me or what I'm going to do'. So there's this sort of sense that they are not being taken an interest in, and they don't really connect with these politicians because they are in a different world. And maybe, peer influence and getting together as a group, and what their friends say, what their friends think, is more important to them…
Melanie: Mmm.
Julia: … than what figures of authority say now. There's that sort of irreverence really, around figures of authority because they don't respect them, they don't trust them.

It can be seen from the above section that for older people, younger people become a key segment of society, operating as a point of comparison for their identities and behaviours. This seems to be true of each new generation of older people, although the points of comparison are likely to change with successive cohorts. Perhaps older people 'forget', in a sense, what it was like to be young and reconstruct this period of life in their own minds against their current attitudes and behaviours.

7.3.1.5 Challenging my identity

CHALLENGING MY IDENTITY POSITIVELY

Mastering the usage of ICT has been seen by some older people as a challenge to which they are capable of rising. It is seen as a task which is only slightly beyond their capabilities and will lead to self-satisfaction when the milestones are achieved. Vanessa relates how her doctor recommended purchasing a laptop in order to give her new aspirations beyond the self:

Vanessa: He thought it would be good for me.
Melanie: Mmm.
Vanessa: He thought I'd enjoy it, well, certain aspects of it, and I suppose he does encourage me to try new things.
[…]
Vanessa: He thought I'd like the knowledge side of it because of my interest in philosophy, well it's not just philosophy I'm interested in. I'm interested in a whole cross-section of things, psychology, you know. He knows I read a lot. And he, I suppose it was mainly that sort of thing. He wanted me to do something new.
Melanie: Oh right.
Vanessa: I don't think I would have got it if he hadn't persuaded me.
Melanie: He was sort of challenging you then?
Vanessa: He was challenging me
Melanie: To go outside of yourself.
Vanessa: Yes, yes. To go outside my comfort zone.

Vanessa's doctor had noted certain inward traits and challenged her to go beyond these by breaking her usual patterns and habits. In so doing, he felt it would also facilitate her intellectual interests in philosophy and psychology, which would provide an additional spur to acquiring a computer and learning the appropriate skills. The mastery of ICT was perceived as something which would be enjoyable in itself and also because of the opportunities it would provide. This feeling of enjoyment of activity which is seen as a challenge to be mastered has a certain resonance with the work of Csikszentmihalyi (2002). Csikszentmihalyi (2002) advanced a theory of the 'phenomenology of the enjoyment of activity' which contains the following key components:

1. Experience occurs when we confront tasks we have a chance of completing
2. Must be able to concentrate
3. Task has clear goals
4. Provides immediate feedback
5. Deep but effortless involvement
6. Sense of control over actions
7. Concern for self disappears
8. Sense of time is altered

Vanessa's stated reasons for learning to use ICT incorporate some of the components suggested by Csikszentmihalyi (2002). It was possible for her to confront and master the tasks involved and it would lead her to a position where her concern for self disappeared. Goals were clearly laid down for her by her doctor involving discovering new knowledge, which she was able to make her own because of her intellectual interests. Csikszentmihalyi's (2002) phenomenology leads to a feeling of "flow" or "focused motivation" which is the antidote to feelings of negativity or depression. In recommending the purchase of a computer, Vanessa's doctor was trying to alleviate some of her more negative identity traits by enabling her to 'lose herself' in more positive pursuits.

CHALLENGING MY IDENTITY NEGATIVELY – 'FUTURE SHOCK' AND CHALLENGES TO POSITION AND STATUS

Coming face to face with certain new technologies for the first time can lead to startling realisations about the nature of the self. Some of the participants were shocked into acknowledging the throw-away, dispensable nature of human beings.

In part, this realisation had occurred due to the increasingly prevalent Zeitgeist of the 'disposable commodity', much of which now has an ICT element in any case. But there was also a recognition that some technologies had been designed to do tasks more efficiently and ultimately better than humans can do them, leading to a feeling of human obsolence.

Sanjay (F) picks up on the challenges to human identity due to technology in the following way:

> **Sanjay:** You look at any of our equipment, from a toaster to a microwave to cars, cos there's so much ICT in it you are almost committed to throw it away and not bother repairing it, so that has had a social aspect into how we treat not only equipment but I think also how we treat people. I mean, whether indirectly we have become disposable as employees and whether it has also moved into disposable as friends.

People, like things, have become commodities such that they are only useful for what can be gained from them, and when that function is no longer present then the person, or object, is ripe for disposal. Rushkoff (2005) explains that ""Commodification" is a somewhat Marxist idea, referring to the way that market values can replace other social values" and as such it becomes a "crime of the market against humanity". In the instance cited here, Sanjay feels that people have been trained by market forces to view each other as commodities, in a later section there will be a discussion of certain stakeholders and their involvement in processes related to the commodification of people.

Michael (F) relates the sense of shock he felt when his originally stable identity as a draughtsman was challenged by the affordances of a new machine, and he also highlights the continuing aftershocks of his collision with other technologies:

Michael: Umm… when I left school, I started training as a draughtsman and I trained in, er, it really was concrete and steel, you know putting it on paper for the civil engineers. Anyway, someone came to my church and said 'Why don't you go to England?' and that stuck in my head. So I went into the British Embassy and filled out the forms and I ended up in London. After a few months I came to Nottingham and umm…there was a gas board over there. Can you remember the gas board on Parliament Street?
General assent.
Michael: I went in there and there was a machine, strange-looking machine, the chap which was sat at the machine said, 'Come along, I show you'. Now when I was doing the drawings at home they'd take 3 or 4 weeks. This machine drew a kitchen in 2 or 3 minutes.
Lots of laughter.
Michael: My God, this will make the old draughtsmen redundant.
More laughter.
Michael: So I was a bit shocked
[…]
Michael: …Along the way I was doing photography on a kind of voluntary basis for a Caribbean newspaper in London and one of the chaps said to me could you FAX something… I said 'WHAT'S THAT?'
General Laughter
Iris: (Laughing) Yea. What IS that?
Michael: These things come back to shock as you go along.
[…]
Michael: But my evolution of coming from Trinidad to here I got a few knocks along the way. That is a valuable experience with regards to these things. Faxing? I was SHOCKED!

Michael is here explaining his journey of 'future shock' with regards to his technological experiences as part of a focus group of other people aged over 50. He experienced a feeling of realisation that his professional training had become instantly obsolete with the advent of computers. His knowledge had been programmed into a machine which could perform his painstaking draughtsman role quicker and better. But as he realised that he was no longer at the forefront of his profession, he also had to recognise that he was not at the forefront of technological advances either. He was matter-of-factly told to do something technical – in this instance faxing - for which he had no pre-existing concept. His stories elicit a knowing response of recognition from the other members of the group as they laugh along with him and also affirm his stories by the use of ironic questions. Although these stories belong to Michael, the experience is acknowledged within the assembled community. This audience of older people affirms the authenticity of the 'shock narrative' at a general level.

Iris (F) in particular acts in a confirmatory manner with respect to Michael's experiences of 'future shock' when she relates how challenges to her gender became entangled with new technology and a new academic role, eliciting the need to re-assert herself positively in front of her newfound male University colleagues:

Iris: I mean I remember in 1990 joining the University of [X] and going to my room and saying to someone… 'there's a computer on the desk'… and saying, 'I hope you don't think I'm going to use that? I'm not going to make the tea around here because I'm the only female in the room'. And they remind me of that now! 'I remember, you weren't going to make the tea for anyone or use the computer'.

Technology and tea-making did not conform to Iris's sense of an assertive and competent female self at the time she experienced them. Iris wanted to compete in her new academic environment from a position of gender equality, and endeavoured to ensure that this was publicly acknowledged amongst her male 'audience' of University peers. She thus attempted to reset the boundaries of what could be expected of a female in her department and pre-empt attempts to engage her in stereotypically 'gendered' activities.

The term 'Future Shock' was famously coined by Toffler (1970, p.4) in an article in *Horizon* in 1965 and subsequently became the title of one of his theoretical works. The term refers to "the shattering stress and disorientation that we induce in individuals by subjecting them to too much change in too short a time" (Toffler 1970, p.4). The term is not specifically about the impact of technology, although that is certainly a key factor, but encompasses aspects of "change, coping behaviour and the future" (Toffler 1970, p.4). Toffler's (1970) work is in six parts and covers: the death of permanence, transience, novelty, diversity, the limits of adaptability and strategies for survival. Toffler (1970, p.53) registers the idea of the "throw-away society" and in particular the "economics of impermanence" whereby "advancing technology" lowers "the costs of manufacture more rapidly than the costs of repair work" so that it "becomes cheaper to replace than to repair". Toffler (1970, p.53) suggests that the spread of the "throw-away" culture marks "further curtailment of man's relationship with things". However, it may also denote, in line with Sanjay's thinking, the curtailment of human beings' relationship with each other, and possibly even the relationship with aspects of the self which can now be sloughed off and replaced when no longer relevant.

Older people can remember how it felt to be faced with certain technologies for the first time, rather than growing up with them and so taking their presence for granted. For some it has been a journey of accommodating the ongoing 'future shock' of the challenges new technologies present to personal status and role.

7.3.1.6 Assisting Me

COMPENSATION OR OPTIMISATION?

Assistive technologies are now commonplace for people with varying disabilities. These can encompass Personal Emergency Response Systems (PERS), also known as Telecare, which can set off alarms in the event of an emergency to summon care providers. They can also involve computer accessibility options such as re-designed keyboards to aid data entry. This study acknowledges them here but has not examined the usage of them, since the study has been concerned with older people who would not be classed as vulnerable by any classification other than some of them being over the age of 65. Such technologies can be seen as 'compensation' tools for loss of physical or mental faculties and are therefore reminders of a negative, unwanted or 'spoiled' identity. As mentioned in the literature review, Hernández-Encuentra et al.'s (2009) study prefers the view that tools are not to be viewed as compensations but as optimisations, which instead emphasise the *best* identity that a person can have rather than reminding them of what is lost. This means that older people should gain access to technology as soon as possible, preferably before it becomes compensatory so that it is associated with positivity. Gavin (F) suggests that technology should therefore just be associated with what it means to be human in general; this is an inclusive view of the design of technologies which assist mankind in general and thus older people by default:

> **Gavin:** People can observe me without me actually having to go into hospital, without me having to go into some kind of special unit. In other words, the technology is now wrapping itself around our own individual lives and our own individual programmes. I think this is probably a good thing, probably, although I have some doubts. But it's clearly what's happened. Meanwhile, we are finding more and more people saying things like 'Look, a screen isn't quite what I want here'. If you could actually get the same text written into a book which I could then read, then this is what actually hands are designed for. This wraps itself around the human body, more effectively than staring at a screen ever was. And I know that Microsoft at the moment are working on some future technology where you won't really need a keyboard, you just project a light onto any space and then you can just umm… you can type by going bom bom bom […]
> **Tom:** You should able to project onto paper.
> **Gavin:** And the beauty of that is that you're no longer restricted to the size of keyboard you can have so as your eyesight is failing… Again there are so many ways in which the technology started out being quite uncomfortable for us to use but is increasingly wrapping itself ergonomically around the human, the physical human frame, but also the human psyche.

Gavin (F) feels that technology should assist the 'human identity' in an ergonomic fashion. If technology was intended for all of us in an inclusive manner, which mapped the human body and psyche, then it would not stigmatise the older person

who comes to use it in later life. The older person would not have their identity stigmatised as old, or frail, or incapable by virtue of their new technology 'marker'. It would not then be a 'badge of shame'.

Tom (F) follows up on this inclusive theme in the following way:

> **Tom:** I'm enormously interested in what it will mean to make it easier for me and for older people. I can't see that we're actually any, very different from anybody else. What will make it easier for us will make it even much more easy, much more easier, for younger people who will learn faster.

Tom suggests here that 'assistive' technology should be designed for all of us, since older people are just people. If technology is designed with the human identity in mind then it will suit everyone. In this view, older people should not be segregated with separate needs.

HYBRIDISATION

The technologies noted in the section above on compensation/optimisation are external to the body. However, some study participants were engaging with the idea that technology could be entwined with the body in a form of human/tech 'hybridisation' – a 'third space' idea where the two are not separate from each other. Jonathan (F) imagines – in itself a third space activity – technology being linked directly to the nervous system so that computer equipment could be operated by the human mind (optimisation activity). He also imagines how technology could be directly implicated in stimulating the optic nerve in case of lost eyesight (compensation activity):

> **Jonathan:** …in terms of increasing old age, and this sort of thing, would be more direct connection to the nervous system, whereby instead of having to move a mouse, if there's some way of connecting it to the motor nerves, so that umm… your brain could train to actually direct…
> **Tom:** by just thinking, just thinking, you could certainly move a mouse.
> **Jonathan:** And similarly sensory input, if you lose your sight is there some way you could wait for it to directly stimulate the optic nerve without going through the eyes? So those were the sorts of things I was thinking of in terms of.

Jonathan's blue-sky thinking leads to ideas that hybridise humans with the physicality of technology in useful ways. However, Tom (F) raises hybridisation ideas that are concerned with the output of the human mind as offline data combining with the data online to aid in the development of the semantic web:

Tom: And there are two developments, one's fairly close to appearing and that's the semantic web which will mean that what comes up when you go searching is something that really is relevant, semantically relevant, rather than just what all the other idiots have clicked on.
[…]
Tom: And if you could feed… into the internet, into the ICT systems some kind of skill of reading other people's minds then I think it would be enormously more useful to people like me and indeed to everybody else. And it will add to what the semantic net will do, it will be an additional power that could be added to the semantic web.

What Tom is referring to here when he mentions the 'semantic web' is a Web 3.0 idea of an artificially intelligent web (Barnatt 2011). However, Tom is taking the idea a stage further by combining the semantic web with the output of humans so that it has a learning capability; in essence it then becomes a Web Squared phenomenon (Barnatt 2011). Barnatt (2011) notes that:

> In this broader context, the Web Squared trend highlights how the world and the world-wide web are converging, with our conceptual focus shifting from the new forms of connection facilitated by Web 2.0, to the single entity created as all Internet users and computers become the interconnected cells of a global, cybernetic creature. Consideration of Web Squared therefore leads us to consider very big questions of identity and evolution.

In a sense the web develops one identity – a cybernetic creature – which is the exponential equivalent of all the internet users combined with the web's ability to shape information and learn from itself. Human identity will become hybridised with web identity in a way which Tom thinks may be beneficial to humans.
Vanessa is not as optimistic as Tom about the future of a human race 'enhanced' by technology. For Vanessa humans should remain human (carbon based life forms) and technology should remain technology (silicon based inert material), since the combination of carbon and silicon could have unfortunate outcomes for human identity in general:

Vanessa: In a sense, existentially, it's not part of my existence, you know it's not an essential part of my existence. If it was dis-invented tomorrow I wouldn't be unhappy. And umm, I feel a bit distressed about, I feel genuine distress about the thought that we could end up enhancing humankind with a machine and what that would mean. I think it's a point I brought up when we had that talk.
Melanie: Are we silicon or carbon?
Vanessa: Yes, I'm afraid I'm a carbon person. And also I think we will be become less tolerant of imperfections and that worries me a lot.
Melanie: Yeah.
Vanessa: Well we should be using the computer not the computer using us. It should stay in its place as a tool.

Vanessa feels that this pursuit of perfection means that our human identity as necessarily imperfect creatures will be undermined. Human culture may begin to feel that because imperfections *can* be eradicated, that they *should* be eradicated. Vanessa may here be rehearsing concerns similar to the ones that were raised about the Eugenics Movement and Social Darwinism in the early twentieth century which advocated purifying the human gene pool, leading ultimately to Hitler's 'racial' purification programmes. Such issues concerning the perfectibility of humans have undergone a resurgence with newer developments in genetic and reproductive technologies. Fromm was one of the researchers who began to study what is now known as 'the authoritarian personality' during the 1930s in recognition of the German reaction to Fascist ideology; material was collected at this time highlighting the "tendencies towards feelings of superiority and a contempt for human weakness" that this personality type entailed (Johanssen 2000, p.8). Such feelings were deemed to stem from "mechanisms of projection" which entailed the scapegoating of various groups of people (Johanssen 2000, p.10).[94] Vanessa feels that those deemed to be less perfect in our society could be scapegoated similarly in a new silicon orientated world.

7.3.1.7 Expressing the self

NOT NEEDING AN AUDIENCE

Francis sets up a debate about whether people want to express themselves if there is no audience present to engage with the actual output. A 'third voice' discussion of the issue led to the idea that expressing the contents of the mind in another format – in this case a Wikipedia article – enables the workings of the brain to structure the material in a way that it becomes something new. This is of importance to the selfhood of the individual and does not therefore need an audience necessarily. For Francis, the third space of Wikipedia writing has created an opportunity for novel personal expression; the combination of the digital tool and the human brain has created a third possibility:

[94] Compare Pierre's scapegoating of younger people raised in a previous section.

Francis: Would you write a book if you were the last person on the planet?
Melanie: Haha.
Francis: It's just that nobody would read it.
Melanie: Umm, tricky but I also just like getting something out of my brain that's in there.
[…]
Melanie: Definitely, in a way, because it does become something, and it's not you, and it gets, it does get that stuff out of your brain.
Francis: Yes. Mmm, that's interesting. And one of the reasons I write Wikipedia articles is not to actually publish them I guess, it's actually to get stuff structured inside your own head.
Melanie: Yeah.
Francis: Cos you write the Wikipedia article, and afterwards you get, 'oh, I've got that now, I really understand that'.
Melanie: Mmm.
Francis: Same as when you teach something you suddenly go 'oh, yeah, now I understand it'. Cos in order to teach it I really had to understand it.
Melanie: Mmm.
Francis: And that's quite a fun thing to do, sort things out inside your own head.
Melanie: Mmm. Yeah, I think so.
Francis: Mmm.
Melanie: So do you feel these things are changing who you are? Or are they just allowing you to express who you are?
Francis: Nothing inside me has changed at all. So I think it is just allowing me to express who I am.

Francis acknowledges that some forms of self expression are just for the joy of self discovery, becoming a 'flow' activity providing 'feedback' to oneself about oneself. They enable the self to discover fresh understanding about what it really means to be the self, in a form of mirror activity which reflects back constructed rather than diffuse knowledge. For Francis, the self that is expressed and reflected back using technology such as Wikipedia writing is knowledgeable and curious about the world, and is capable of using that knowledge in increasingly structured and complex ways. 'Expressing the self' here becomes a means to assemble a more coherent identity which is validated by the self and not others. The self, however, could be deemed to be its own audience in this instance of identity processes.

NEEDING AN AUDIENCE

Other participants also enjoyed expressing their creative side online; a form of creatively writing the self. However, part of the joy of this was being able to see and respond to the self expressions of others as part of the overall process, and vice versa to have others respond to the self. Shirley explains that SagaZone was particularly useful for providing various improvisational creative writing activities in which many people could participate at one time:

Shirley: And creative writing which I used to go on quite a lot, there's several different things. I mean there was one like a story thing, somebody put up a different story and left it and somebody else carried on.
Melanie: Oh right.
Shirley: And then somebody else puts a bit on, ever so good.
Melanie: So you enjoyed that.
Shirley: I enjoyed that. And then there's limericks. I think there's one where you can put a complete limerick on and then they went… I haven't done this for ages, so I don't know what they do now. Somebody puts up a first line and somebody carries on with that you know until there's a complete limerick. Rhyming couplets, that was quite good. You put two lines in of a rhyming couplet, but the first line begins with A and the second line begins with B, you see.
Melanie: Oh yeah.
Shirley: Then somebody puts another couplet on following up with C and D, you know, it's quite a challenge.
Melanie: So where do you get your interest in creative writing from then would you say? Because it sounds like if they've got it on the Saga site, obviously then it's appealing to people.
Shirley: I think it's the same few people that tend to go on it all the while. We did a pantomime once, one Christmas, yeah it were great.

The inventive responses of others seem to provide an additional motivation in the processes of creatively writing the self. Here one's identity is formed at the time of expression and then validated by others in a 'call and response' game. Identity here is performative though not necessarily occurring in real time as the responses can take a while to be added. However, the online improvised pantomime *was* performative in real time, a factor which acted as an extra positive ingredient in the interplay of identities. The pantomime enabled 'safe' experimentation with character, plot and dialogue, leaving Shirley with positive feelings of enjoyment and self-worth.

Although Francis had previously discussed self-expression as satisfying the self, he also confirms, along with Shirley, that there is another aspect of self-expression which does desire the confirmation of self by others, and this can be a required by-product of online activity. As Francis confirms in the following exchange:

Francis: But it tends to be just kind of either I want to devote myself to saying clever Stephen Fry things, and having people going 'wow, that's clever' […]
Melanie: Haha!
Francis: Haha.
Melanie: Some adulation needed here!
Francis: Well, yeah! You need some kind of feedback of what you actually say rather than just shouting into the ether.
Melanie: Mmm.
Francis: And hoping someone was listening to it.

Francis is implying here that he desires an audience to appreciate what he feels are expressions of his 'best self'; his humour and witticism deserve the adulation of

others, and are wasted if there is no-one to react to them. Francis is here seeking 'positive feedback' from others for his self-expression which will increase his own feelings of self-worth. The suggestion is that people will feel more positive about their own identity if it is positively emphasised by others.

7.3.1.8 Publicising the self

Publicising the self has the sense of producing identity output as a type of commodity that people can obtain in various forms such as books or plays, often with an associated cost. Billy is keen to publicise himself and his expert knowledge via 'vanity press' type publishing, as the following exchange highlights:

> **Billy:** So only if I want to publicise something that I'm writing. And I want a lot of people to see that. I can publish onto the internet. There's a program called Lulu, and you can do it on Amazon as well. And you can get paid for it. It might be peanuts but you get paid. You can put your book on it for 2 or 3 pound, a book of 30,000 words and charge 2 or 3 pound.
> **Shirey:** To view them?
> **Billy:** To view them or download them, or whatever, cos you can read it on the PC. And Amazon, you can have an agreement with Amazon where they keep 2 pound of it and you get a pound or just under.

He is willing to use publishing methods which do not incur great costs to the purchaser in order to ensure his output reaches the wider public. For Billy, it is about the value of the material itself and not its cost; he feels he has something of value to say and wishes to propagate that knowledge.

Billy has also used online methods for self publicity purposes in order to facilitate finding actors and venues so that he could stage his plays:

> **Shirley:** It was useful for you wasn't it, when you put your play on?
> **Billy:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.
> **Shirley:** Because you got in touch with the actors and people online didn't you?
> **Billy:** Mmm.
> **Shirley:** The actors for your play, and your director and everything, you found them through going through the agencies.
> **Billy:** There's a couple of agencies on there, so I advertised on there, yeah. I wish I could do that again now. But it costs money.
> **Shirley:** And you got in touch with the free Fringe through that, that we didn't know about. Got a free venue and everything.

Billy is keen to ensure his creative output reaches its audience, and he benefits from the online methods available to bring that to fruition. Billy places his personal endeavour 'out there' to enlist the engagement of others.

7.3.1.9 Imagining a future self using ICT

Books, films and other media with a high technology content have worked on the public imagination so that people can envisage a more complex and fulfilling technology future involving themselves and their personal development. Some aspects of this type of 'third space' activity (blue-sky thinking) have already been mentioned. Jonathan (F) can be seen to engage with ideas about the possible future usefulness of holograms/avatars in the following discussion concerning how technology could develop to help older people:

Jonathan: Right, well, sort of science-fiction-ish I suppose but if it's feasible. One is holograms but umm… thinking more in terms of live, projected holograms, so that when you do interact with people you can do the whole body language sort of thing. You can have a room of holograms and some sort of detection mechanism. Touchy feely would make it even nicer of course, but at least if you can see three dimensional images.
[…]
Jonathan: And also, you sniff at the hologram thing, but if you are genuinely housebound and can't move then it does get, give you, some way of interacting, especially if you can have an avatar that sheds a few, sheds a few years off you.
Vanessa: That's Second life?
Jonathan: No! What you do is you actually store, when you are at your prime, you store your holographic image and that's what's then used…
Tom: for second, third and fourth life?
Vanessa: Grow old graciously,
Iris: That's surrogacy…
Jonathan: Grow old disgracefully?

Jonathan's ideas also engage the minds of others and people enter into the conversation even though it is not their turn to speak. The inference is that this flight of fancy is nonetheless appealing enough to become a 'third voice', as well as a 'third space' phenomenon. Such technology may assist them to grow old 'disgracefully', thus appealing to the naughtier, more mischievous side of older people's ideas about their own future.

7.3.1.10 Finding Like Minded Communities (Re-enforcing me)

The facility of the internet to enable people to discover and engage with others who have identities in common has already been noted in the section on 'Moral Panics', however this would suggest that it is a purely negative phenomenon. Finding like minded communities can instead be a way of improving one's social circle, or enabling self-expression, or having a positive self-identity re-enforced by like-minded others. Shirley has a love of football, and has used the internet to forge links with fellow team supporters:

Melanie: So have you found anything else on the internet that's been any use to you, cos you obviously like your family history.
Shirley: My family history. Well, football! Haha!
Melanie: Football? Haha.
Shirley: Yes I'm a big Notts County fan.
Melanie: OK.
Shirley: I'm an active member of the mailing list.
Melanie: Oh right. Do they do things then or are they… is it an information and news kind of thing?
Shirley: Well there's the official Notts County site. But I'm on this mailing list that's been going for, ooh, I don't know, about 15 years I suppose.
Melanie: Yeah.
Shirley: But it's good because you can just exchange, again it's just messages, not a mailing list, if someone puts messages on you get a message back straightaway. But it's quite good because again you sort of get to know the people, and I've met up with quite a few before the games. That was a help when I was on my own. Some of them are quite, not good friends, but I'm friendly with quite a few people through that. And a couple of weeks ago one of the chaps on the list who lives in Australia, he came over…
Melanie: Really?
Shirley: Yes we get them from all over the world, Notts County fans, believe it or not. He was on like a world, he was on like a world tour, he wasn't just going to the game anyway. And a few of us met up with him before the match, you know, which was nice.
Melanie: Oh right.
Shirley: So that was a bit of social interaction there, wasn't there?

Shirley's identity as a football fan, combined with using team related mailing lists, has enabled her to discuss her interests with fellow supporters online, and at the same time expand her social circle in the offline world. This was of special importance to Shirley after her partner had died and she was left feeling very socially isolated.

Julia's use of technology re-enforces both her business identities and her social identities in a hybridised manner:

Julia: Facebook is a hybrid. It's umm, mainly social. I've set it up to be social, and I don't say anything about my business on there.
Melanie: Mmm.
Julia: But I am connected with some of my business colleagues and some of my business clients on there. So, umm, business clients I get on quite well with, umm, are on there as friends, which is quite nice in some ways, in that, you see a different side of each other. Umm, so you have the formal sort of ritual you go through when you're interacting with business clients, seeing one of my clients who's just had twins for example, putting up pictures of them, talking about the experience. Umm, other, other clients talking about where they've been for holidays. And so some of these things, which are important in relationship building with clients, sort of emerge through Facebook.

Technology is here enabling the enmeshing of two sides of Julia's identity, the formal business identity and the informal social identity, in a way which is beneficial to the building of her relationship with her clients, and ultimately the business. The affordances of technology for networking generally are hybridising aspects of identity that might otherwise remain separate, but are now being brought together in a novel 'third space'.

7.3.2 Being other than me (experimenting with myself)

In line with Gee's (2003) ideas on 'projective identity', certain online arenas facilitate the 'third space' for experimenting with personas which may or may not be adopted offline. These arenas can become 'liminoid' practice areas for the acquisition of novel conceptions about the self and its identity, in terms of new skills that may be mastered or new roles that may be assumed. However, there were very few genuinely experimental older people in this study, and the activities of Pierre with respect to experimenting with increasingly risqué, sexually orientated communications have already been demonstrated in the section on Subject Positions.

The negative aspects of 'being other than me' – i.e. identities adopted for criminal intent – will not be examined here (although they are obviously possible and relevant to the topic) because they are not part of the lived experience of the participants who agreed to give their views for this study.

Sadie is a keen player of World of Warcraft, a game which could be interpreted as being one of the 'liminoid' arenas mentioned above. Sadie discusses a fellow player, someone that is known to her in the online and offline worlds, so that comparisons can be made between their personal and digital identities:

Sadie: It was really interesting being in a guild because you've got these people who online are a bit larger than life in a way. I mean your guildmaster was a guy who online was really generous in mentoring newbies, in real life he was an ex-streetfighter, a little wiry guy.
Melanie: Oh right.
Sadie: Who was, you know, yeah, just a little wiry sort of chipper guy, who was into Egyptology. But online he was a mentor, who was really good at fostering people to grow and to encourage you, and just to have the right tasks and encouragement and some invitations to participate. And I really, I mean I would never have stuck in the game if it hadn't been for this guy, um, because he was welcoming and took me to, you know, you go into places where your character would not last for more than a few minutes. And he'd take me in there and be patient when I was lost in these really complex environments, where you're in these like mazes in effect, and I'd get lost a lot, and people would have to wait for me, because my character was a lower level than the others. And I would attract critters that would try to kill me and then they would have to protect me and then they might all get wiped out. So it was quite a, what, it was just a very affirming thing for him to include me.

In the online game of World of Warcraft, unwanted offline identity attributes can also be left behind; age, reputation, physical debilities can all be shed and replaced with identity affirming traits. As mentioned previously (see Francis's comments about Second Life in the introduction to this chapter) this experimentation process is more to be inferred from the behaviour of others than actually experienced by the participants themselves. It is raised here as a positively viewed example of identity experimentation.

Sadie confirms her own struggles about revealing her age on what may be perceived as a game for the younger age group:

Sadie: …about the age thing, my friends in the game who knew my age told me not to publicise my age because it's not very cool to be a lot older than everybody. So they would lie about my age. What is her age? Oh she's 31. It happened a number of times. Not always. What happened in a couple of cases where I told people my age, I suddenly became their mentor. They would confide in me and ask for advice about stuff.

Sometimes, where it was advantageous, she shed her age and publicised herself as younger. Confessing her real age, on the other hand, led to unexpected changes in other people's perceptions such that the game-play changed around her. Age in the online world is thus a variable that can be experimented with, sometimes left behind and sometimes used to interesting effect dependent on the perceptions of the game's audience. Sadie is 'dishonest' about herself here only to be pragmatic in her gameplay, and not for morally dubious reasons.

Sadie draws attention to the fact that work has been done on taxonomies of game-player types (identities) specifically:

Sadie: Richard Bartle did a whole load of work on this bout 20, 30 years ago. And he talked about, at that time, he said - his taxonomy is too simple now but it still resonates with me - that there are people who are like killers he calls them, adventurers like explorers, achievers and social people.
Melanie: This is a theoretical taxonomy that's been applied to gaming particularly?
Sadie: Yes.

As noted in the literature review, Zackariasson (2010, p.280) draws attention to Bartle's early taxonomy of gamers which arranges players into four categories "socializers, explorers, achievers, and killers".[95] This work will not be discussed further here since this study is not about gaming per se. These taxonomies do highlight, however, the different identities that older people could assume and manipulate if they were to indulge in gaming.

7.3.3 Ageing is (not) an identity – identity work processes around ageing itself

Participants had been told that this was a study of people aged fifty and over, as such the topic of later life was inevitably bound to be raised even if the researcher did not raise it. The following sections present an analysis of the entire data set checking for age related statements, which were then classified into themes. The themes that developed as a result of this were: age acceptance (including using age related material on the internet), age denial (rejecting age related material), age irrelevance (concerning how people use the internet), age inappropriate (concerning the material and applications that older people find on the internet).

7.3.3.1 Age acceptance

Shirley is content to join in with age related websites such as Saga and the activities they provide, as they give her access to her age peer group:

[95] See for example Bartle, R., 1996. Hearts, Clubs, Diamonds, Spades: Players who suit MUDs. <http://www.mud.co.uk/richard/hcds.htm#1>, [accessed 27.01.13]. Bartle states that this online paper is an April 1996 extension of an earlier article which he gives as: Bartle, R. A. (1990a). Who Plays MUAs? Comms Plus!, October/November 1990 18-19.

Shirley: Do you know about Saga?
Melanie: I don't know a lot about Saga.
Shirley: They've got Saga zone. It's very good for…
Melanie: Can you get it on the internet?
Shirley: Saga zone yes. But that's supposed to be for, I think it's over 50s.

This should be compared to Robert and Howard below, both of whom reject the idea of 'age related' websites. In Shirley's case she wanted to make friends of her own age specifically and SagaZone proved to be the ideal vehicle. In Robert's case he did not want to be labelled as 'old' by the sites he uses, and in any case did not feel the need to expand his social circle in this way. For Shirley it was not a labelling process, but a practical way in which to recuperate from feelings of isolation after the death of her husband.

Age acceptance can be forced on people because of the evidence provided by their own ageing parents. Having to come face-to-face with the realities of ageing is a preparation for assisting the parent, which then becomes a form of rehearsal for personal ageing:

Marie: I mean I think quite a lot about old age, not so much because of my age, but because of my mum.
Melanie: Yeah.
Marie: And you know, the way that she has changed in the last few years, and how many things are more difficult for her, so inevitably I start to think well what can I do to protect myself so that I'm not in her position sort of thing. She's in a very fortunate position actually, compared to most people her age.
Melanie: Mmm.
Marie: But nevertheless, there are things that aren't so good. So I do tend to, I do think about old age much more since she's been living nearby than I used to. And I try to think about how I will cope with different things.

In spite of this, it would seem that it is the previous generation that are currently old, and not the present one as in the later excerpt from Marie (see below).

There were however, some participants who more fully embraced ageing, rather than just merely accepting it, as can be seen in the summary table below:

Table 23 Statements related to age acceptance obtained from older people

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Vanessa	This conversation occurred as part of an interview which took place in the New Year following the November focus group. Vanessa here talks about some of the comments that came up during the focus group and her susequent thoughts on them. **Accepting all the ages of human life** Here Vanessa does not distinguish later life as necessarily a worse time of life. **Preferring later life if you had a difficult earlier life** Her feelings on later life being better are coloured by earlier experience. Vanessa prefers her life as it is now. Researcher notes of Gavin that: **Liking to be called older** Reaching older age is here a badge of honour for Gavin; something he has earned, or a type of achievement which he enjoys having recognised by others. Vanessa and Gavin both thought that Iris had a heavily resistant attitude which they found quite immature.	**Vanessa:** That was when Iris, that was what set Iris off. Not wanting to talk about old people. **Melanie:** No it upset her a bit. **Vanessa:** Well, I mean she shouldn't have come if she was upset about talking about older people. **Melanie:** Well, it's very, it can be quite a difficult topic I suppose. **Vanessa:** I don't know why, because I accept each age as it comes. I'd never want to go back because my life while I was younger wasn't good. **Melanie:** Yeah, so I think talking about the present, that's just talking about what you're doing. But that future question, well she said it quite lightheartedly but… **Vanessa:** I think that's because she's getting nearer there than we are. Gavin was amazed by the conversation. He was on the bus coming back afterwards. **Melanie:** Oh right. **Vanessa:** And he was flabbergasted with Iris, her attitude and how immature it was. **Melanie:** Oh really, how interesting. I said to Gavin on the email when we were trying to think what to name it [the focus group event] and the age group thing - I don't like 'older people'. But he said 'oh, I quite like to be called older'. **Vanessa:** I don't mind being called older, I mean I'm not technically, I'm middle-aged. **Melanie:** Somebody called me older when we had a focus group with some youngsters and I was talking, and they called me older. **Vanessa:** Yes. I used to. When I was a child I used to think people of 50 were really, really old, but they're not. **Melanie:** 50 is the new 40. **Vanessa:** Actually it has changed, you were old at that age when we were children. You were, when I was a child.

The preceding section is noteworthy because it provides evidence that the perceived threshold of later life seems to be changing culturally as people live longer, but also remain healthier later into their lives. The definition of 'old' is being pushed back to a higher age bracket.

7.3.3.2 Age denial

As can be seen from the table above, mentally resisting the processes of ageing was raised as one of the issues about growing older – as Vanessa and Gavin both note

concerning Iris. Also, Shirley accepted her age when it was pragmatic to do so, and yet sometimes denied it as a process in itself, as she relates:

> **Shirley:** You don't want to be classified as over 50 do you?
> **Melanie:** Mmm.
> **Shirley:** You know, you don't want to think, most people over 50 have still got young minds.
> […]
> **Shirley:** It's funny because I went to a make-up testing thing a few weeks ago, and it was supposed to be something, a new foundation for mature skin, you know. And I didn't like this word. Haha. For mature skin, but I couldn't think of another word you can use, because that makes you sound old doesn't it?

Shirley does not want to be associated with any of the labels that classify her as old (e.g. over 50, having 'mature' skin). This is in spite of the fact that the manufacturers of the foundation she is referring to have deliberately tried to use a non stereotyping word such as 'mature' for their product. Mature was intended to have positive rather than pejorative connotations, but was still not perceived in this way.

Shirley here privileges the mental attitudes of ageing but rejects the physical signs; Clara can be seen to think similarly:

> **Clara:** […] You know, you kind of have to admit it after a while. You know you fight getting that hearing aid, and those glasses, and those false teeth.
> **Melanie:** Haha.
> **Clara:** And everything else, and you keep dying your hair as long as you can. But then you're like OK, just give in!

Clara's excerpt demonstrates a form of age denial, and yet the ageing process cannot be totally resisted. Eventually, Clara gave herself permission to admit to her actual age and the changes with which age is usually accompanied.

Another form of age denial can be seen in the manner in which age is always associated with the previous generation, whatever age the person themselves happens to be. In this way of thinking being old is always attributable to others, but never happens to the self. This can be seen in the transcript of Marie:

Melanie: Would you use any websites, or have you used any websites, aimed at people aged 50 and over?
Marie: I probably have, umm, having said that, haha, I've looked at them on behalf of my mum, hahaha.
Melanie: Hahaha.
Marie: I think that's true! I looked at Saga, actually it was my sister kept saying to my mum that she should go on holiday with Saga. And my mum, my mum, she's got the internet but she's not any good at looking anything up. I say she's not very good, she just doesn't try. And I looked up that, and then in order to go into it I had to sign up.
Melanie: Oh.
Marie: And then I got an email saying that I was part of Saga, and I went, **unsubscribe**! Haha! Because I thought I don't want to be connected with it. Hahaha. I know I'm over 50 but I don't feel like I am.

Aging is thus a process to be resisted as long as possible. For the study participants, age was seen as something that happens to the body, but not, so far, to the mind.

7.3.3.3 Age irrelevance

Robert prefers to be seen as a person first and foremost rather than a member of a certain age group; his online activity reflects his identity in other ways dependent on the type of products he needs or his group affiliations. The same is also true of Howard and Vanessa, who do not think about age as a factor in their internet usage. The following excerpts demonstrate the thoughts of Robert, Howard and Vanessa with respect to their age irrelevant internet usage:

Robert: If I want to buy something I look at the website which is selling what I want. I don't look at a website thinking well I'm over 60, so I will look for a website which is selling these things to over 60s.
Melanie: No.
Robert: I just look for a website that is selling what I want. Or if I want some information, you just look for information. When I am doing these quizzes for Royal Signals, they're all over 60, but I don't think to myself, well I'd better go on and find a website that's got quizzes for over 60s, I just go on a quiz website.

Howard: I definitely don't use any, or er, er, intentionally select them [websites for over 50s] because of, because they claim to do that. I'm sure I must have come across, but I've definitely not used any on a regular basis. I don't think about age when I'm googling the internet.

Melanie: This is more like information based, I think there are, and I haven't looked totally, but I think there are websites aimed at 50 and over and I wondered if you had ever been on them?
Vanessa: No. No. never.
Melanie: Hahaha. So I can't ask you what you think of them.
Vanessa: No. I'm not interested in patronising…
Melanie: Where they're aimed at different types of people.
Vanessa: I'm not age specific on the internet.

Here age is certainly not viewed as an identity when using technology.

7.3.3.4 Age inappropriate

Oddly, in spite of stating that his own age is irrelevant to his internet usage, Robert then suggests that he is not interested in using certain tools because they are inappropriate to his age group, implying that they are really for younger people:

> **Melanie:** You wouldn't want to go on these Twitter things?
> **Robert:** No. I don't know. I'm not interested.
> **Melanie:** Nothing else has kind of grabbed you, you've not seen anything?
> **Robert:** I think a lot of them, they're not aimed at my age group […]

However, this seeming contradiction can be viewed as Robert wishing to use more 'mature' applications and material, but not 'old' material which would label him as such. Robert's use of the internet is mainly pragmatic, and applications such as Twitter could be viewed as time-wasting and frivolous.

7.3.3.5 Resisting the stereotypes of ageing

There is a need to be aware of imputing ageist stereotypes during interviews for 'ageing' research. This is a key issue when talking to older people; when does 'ageing' research become 'ageist' research? Here, in trying to determine whether there was any difference between younger and older people's usage of ICT the researcher came up against a negative stereotype. It was instantly pointed out by Clara, the interviewee:

> **Melanie:** I'm just wondering if it says something about, maybe, how things may have speeded up for people and therefore they like short bits of communication. I don't know why what you said made me think of this. But maybe if you like, maybe older people may have more time then they may prefer to do things the usual, longhand, proper way, whereas people on the go, lots of people in their lives, send a quick message here and there. I'm wondering whether that's kind of the appeal of it. If you have a faster life you do things in little chunks.
> **Clara:** That's really the stereotype isn't it? The older person has all day, and they're just bending your ear all day with their awful stories of how it used to be.
> **Melanie:** Is this a stereotype then. Haha.
> **Clara:** It's a stereotype.
> **Melanie:** Is there something in the stereotype?
> **Clara:** There could be. I don't know.

There are issues here around re-inforcing stereotypes and also how far older people have themselves imbibed them.

7.4 Identity Work - Propellants

This section is designed to review the overall data set in the light of thinking about the triangular diagram of identity management (given in the Methodology section) and what drives people to maintain their level of engagement with ICT (i.e. remaining constant with respect to the time spent on identity management issues or the level of complexity of the applications used) or alter their levels of engagement with ICT (i.e. engaging with more or less time/complexity). The propellants in this section are divided as follows:

- **Rewarding propellants** in older people's usage of, or thinking about, ICT and thus what may propel them to start, or sustain, or increase their engagement with certain tools for managing their identities.
- **Discouraging propellants** in older people's usage of, or thinking about, ICT and thus what may propel them to stop, avoid, or decrease their engagement with certain tools for managing their identities.

In addition, the previous sections on identity work (processes) contain general information about positive and negative identity processes. These previous sections are thus relevant here as these processes can also be read as having an impact on an individual which could propel them up or down the identity management levels. Positive processes may act to sustain or increase engagement with ICT and identity management methods. Conversely, negative processes may lead to disengagement with some or all methods of identity management. Sustaining ICT usage and conversely, preventing disengagement are key concerns of the Sus-IT project.

7.4.1 Rewarding aspects of ICT involvement

WHAT PROPELS PEOPLE TO START, SUSTAIN OR PROGRESS THEIR INVOLVEMENT?

This includes the following (with respect to identity management and ICT):

- starting to use something for the first time
- sustaining a level of engagement
- spending more time on something
- increasing the number of tools used
- engaging with more complex tools
- getting addicted to something

7.4.1.1 Personal Identities

ENGAGING IN 'FLOW' ACTIVITIES

'Flow' activities are those activities referred to by older people which can be deemed to be inline with the theories of Csikszentmihalyi (2002) and have positive outcomes for the person concerned. These have been tabulated as follows:

Table 24 Engaging in 'flow' activities

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Marie	**Having specific (identity management) tasks that I have set myself** Being goal-orientated in software usage and managing personal time appropriately	**Marie:** So it is quite unusual for me to sort of think 'well, I'll just spend some time on the computer'. I tend to think 'well, I'd better check my email'. Or there might be things that I specifically want to look at on the internet and I'll switch it on because I specifically need to look them up.
Ernest (W)	**Achieving personal goals** **Challenging myself positively** Geocaching suits my personal identity - it enables me to achieve a set of personal goals, keep a record of my progress and monitor myself against the progress of others.	**Ernest:** Geocaching, being the search for hidden containers using a GPS.
Anna-Maria	Anna-Maria's personal goals are to keep up with what her children know about ICT. These are all beneficial, self-driven, achievable challenges in line with theories on Flow (Csikszentmihalyi 2002).	**AM:** […] when I go back and I speak to my sons, I can be a bit more confident about what I do with the computer now. Cos now I know things that they don't. Haha. So that's good you know. **Melanie:** Yeah. Yeah. **AM:** I think it's a challenge, it's always a challenge. **Melanie:** Mmm **AM:** Having kids that know more than you. **Melanie:** It's a good challenge though. **AM:** Yes. Yes. It's a good thing. It makes you try harder, yes.
Francis	**Solving intellectual problems (having an enquiring mind)** Wanting to better myself as a computer programmer as it makes me feel good about my mental abilities. Getting engrossed in the task at hand. Increases in time and complexity involved in this.	**Francis:** [my wife] used to say that sometimes she would come down in the morning, and yeah I didn't bother to come to bed last night, but look at this screen, and do you know what, it draws a line from one side of the screen to the other, and I've written it in machine code, and it's dead bloody clever. […] **Melanie:** So what keeps your motivation going with these things then, is it your science background or an enquiring mind background…? **Francis:** Oh an enquiring mind background I think.
Sadie	**Being entranced by software gaming environments** Sadie was propelled to use World of	**Sadie:** Yeah, so what you've got is an environment where it changes, you've got snowy places, where your little character, you can hear the snow crunching underfoot, you can

	Warcraft due to its beautifully crafted environments and character actions/activities. This fascination kept her in the game. Sadie appreciates the endeavours of software programmers to produce complex and intriguing game surroundings. Sadie is here intrigued by the landscape of the imagination. Unlike Tom and Anna-Maria (below) she is entranced by its level of fictionality and its creativity.	see breath coming from your little character's mouth. It's always, huh (noise like a sigh), sighing and moving around. There's a lot, some people call it World of Chatcraft because your character can dance and tell jokes, um, and just do silly social things, like clapping and crying and mourning your demise and you know all sorts of silly things called emotes, so I guess what it was for me was discovering that it's, umm, I mean it's fabulously beautiful.
Sadie	**Participating Actively** Gaming can be a form of active participation in contrast to more passive activities like watching movies. This is a contrast to some people who would see gaming itself as passive since its not happening in reality.	**Sadie:** What happened was, you know, at that time, I mean I stopped watching TV. Not that I've ever really been a big TV watcher, but to participate actively is powerful and so one of the things I say in my presentations is, if you've got a group of like your family or your friends, to go and have an adventure together is far more compelling than going to see a movie together.
Clara	**Being competitive** This is also a Flow (Csikszentmihalyi 2002) phenomenon, since technology enables you to either have the goal of beating yourself or others in a visible way. The self can be monitored. These are potentially reachable goals.	**Clara:** I know my mom plays Solitaire all the time on the computer, She could play it with cards but she doesn't. It's faster on the computer and they give her a score and my mother's very competitive and wants to beat the score. **Melanie:** Haha. **Clara:** The AARP website has lots of games for seniors. **Melanie:** Oh right OK. **Clara:** And you can register and have your score posted in one of two ways, either for your own personal diary of scores, or you could put it out there for all the other geriatrics to see if they could beat ya.

CONNECTING SELF TO THE WORLD

Using technology is, for many older people, a way of feeling that they are connected to the wider world. Statements made by older people in conjunction with this idea are tabulated as follows:

Table 25 Connecting self to the world

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Marie	**Receiving messages from people you would never normally meet (broadening my identity)** Twitter - allows small elements of novelty to enter your life and brighten it up.	**Marie:** I think it is quite weird because it's like I said to my [boyfriend] 'I'm following Barack Obama and the Dalai Lama on Twitter' (laughing). **Melanie:** Hahaha. **Marie:** And it is quite weird to get little messages from the Dalai Lama and Barack Obama. Haha.
Graham	**Channelling my libido through the internet into the outside world** The internet enables my offline identity and relationships. I can meet more people in the real world.	**Graham:** And unless you're going to have a permanent relationship between your avatars, and that satisfying enough, then that's absolutely fine. But that's not what I need. I need love. I need connect. I need to look people in the whites of the eyes.

Geoff (Q)	**Massaging my ego** Emailing a female penfriend leads to a 'frisson' in gender identity.	**Question:** Have you ever contacted people out of the blue? What made you do this? What kind of response did you get? **Geoff:** ....Only the lady from Vancouver. **Question:** […] How did you feel about this? **Geoff:** See above - very pleased.
Robert **Anna-Maria**	**Aiding people to feel connected to the world as a citizen of a global community** Needing to feel current, up-to-date and connected with what is happening in the world. A similar sentiment is expressed by Anna-Maria.	**Robert:** I think they want to feel as though they are part of every… **Melanie:** …part of everything **Robert:** …you know, the wide world website, if you like. **AM:** […] It makes me connected, it makes me feel that I am connected to the world.
Elizabeth	**Exciting to discover new things about the world from your armchair** The joy of discovering new knowledge which fits in with personal interests. Finding new technology exciting.	**Elizabeth**: I just thought it was absolutely incredible that you could find out all sorts of things from anywhere in the world. **Melanie:** Mmm. **Elizabeth:** It just excited me thoroughly. I was writing a pantomime at the time. I wanted to find out about the, umm, American Football team called the Redskins, can't remember which part of America they're from now, and I got onto their website, and found out all about them, and you know, what their uniform was like, and you know what sorts of jackets they wore, their logo. And I was just overwhelmed by it because it was so accessible I could just get to it from sitting in an armchair.
Elizabeth	**Keeping up with the young but <u>not</u> trying to be young** Wanting to find out what the younger generation are doing, but without feeling the pressure to change personal identity. This is interesting given that it was a gaming environment with great scope for adopting an alter ego.	**Elizabeth:** I'm quite happy to be that [an old fogey]. At one point when I was a school librarian, the kids that were coming into my school library, the boys got me interested in gaming. **Melanie:** Mmm. **Elizabeth:** And doing an online game with them. And I sort of joined their online game. But being part of that sort of anonymity, with my profile page for that, I emphasised the fact that I was OLD. […] I probably said something like I was a school librarian, and that I was a very mature person, because I don't want my identity to be mistaken.

INCREASING PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Statements made by older people that involved methods of increasing their personal knowledge and skills, and thus a sense of personal empowerment, are tabulated as follows:

Table 26 Increasing knowledge and skills

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Francis	**Empowering myself through online information** The internet acts like a giant memory store, in that you don't need to know or remember things you can just go back to the internet and look it up.	**Francis:** But the internet puts you back in power doesn't it? **Melanie:** Do you think so? […] **Francis:** I don't need to know **that** any more… So I think it's quite an empowering thing because you've got all that information out there. **Melanie:** Yeah. **Francis:** And it's quite a thrill to be able to go and splash around in it.
Sadie	**Scaffolding people to enable them to develop new skills which could be used in the offline world** Sadie believes that gaming environments are complex enough to allow people to develop real skills which can be used offline. It is a training environment – an apprenticeship – for transferable skills.	**Sadie:** What I found very interesting coming into that space as an educationalist is how complex it is and how it scaffolds people to really develop huge like, folk who are really conversant in that space have learnt a whole lot of skills. And when you get to, that time when I started playing it was level 60, then suddenly, I mean I thought at level 60 that was the end of the game but in fact it's when you have enough skills, when you have finished your apprenticeship and you can start to work in large groups, 10, 20, 40. […] When she organised a quest, she did one quest that was a hundred per cent, she couldn't have done it better. I'd never seen anybody do it nearly as well. And that needs planning and practice. It's sensitivity. It's a sophisticated level of leadership. So that's been one of the things I say in presentations, you know, this is actually an environment that can train leaders.
Julia	**Searching for medical information for self-monitoring purposes** Keeping oneself informed of one's health is seen as a positive use of the internet.	**Julia:** Well yes. Safety obviously. And when you're older I think, well, access to medical information, without sort of scare-mongering, for self diagnosis. Certainly as you get older you need to know, sort of, what something might be a sign of. So a health thing.

OVERCOMING LIFE TRANSITIONS

Technology usage can be one factor in overcoming key life transitions as reflected in the table below:

Table 27 Overcoming life transitions

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Shirley	**Overcoming death of spouse and associated loneliness** Key life transitions bring unwelcome changes in personal identity which can be overcome by making use of online resources	**Melanie:** I mean that's the reason for this particular topic is to think of ways of overcoming that possible feeling of isolation. **Shirley:** This was the reason I joined Saga really.

EXPRESSING MYSELF

Technology usage is associated with a valuable means of expressing the self as tabulated below:

Table 28 Expressing myself using technology

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Elizabeth	**Feeling I have something worthwhile to say** Having confidence in oneself and one's opinion and being able to demonstrate that through online means. Here Elizabeth feels she is a woman of the world to whom other women can relate. Relates to Elizabeth's desire to be a 'Bluestocking' – feeling clever and wanting to express it. A pioneering female identity.	**Elizabeth:** Ah, right, basically, I've got 2 blogs. But one I haven't touched for 18 months, 2 years, perhaps. I started off doing a general sort of blog about what I thought of the world, what's happening in the world, and a bit about my family, which I suppose was influenced by various correspondences. You have newspapers, these women that talk about their families, and things. And I did that in a sort of anonymous way. […] **Elizabeth:** When I was in school I was one of the cleverer kids, and I saw myself as a Bluestocking which was fine. Then I suppose I had to explore other identities and I came back to the fact that I was a Bluestocking, and I was clever, and I wanted to prove that I was clever.
Anna-Maria	**Expressing oneself online is a form of personal release (good or bad emotions)** Sharing personal emotional experiences is seen as beneficial or cathartic.	**AM:** I know that sometimes when I feel down, umm, it's a release to write something but I am careful what I write. And when I'm happy and I want to share my joy, umm, I don't have many people to share it with here, so I feel I can share it because those are my friends.

HAVING TOOLS FOR EMERGENCIES

Technology is increasingly seen by older people as a useful aid in emergency situations as tabulated below:

Table 29 Having tools for emergencies

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Clara	**Having ICT for emergency purposes** Older people can see the benefit of having a mobile for emergency purposes. Clara (American) says that in America used mobiles are marketed in that way.	**Clara:** They do make a big deal about selling them for emergency purposes only. I haven't seen them here, but in America they're always saying donate your used cellphones and they'll set them up so that they just dial the emergency 3 letter code which is different than yours here, 888 or something, 999.

MAINTAINING MY INDEPENDENCE

The other practical aspects of technology usage do indeed spur on older people as can be seen below. This idea of maintaining the independence of older people is one of the key aims of the Sus-IT project.

Table 30 Maintaining my independence

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Clara	**Wanting to feel independent** Here Clara provides an example of how technology can help maintain personal autonomy.	**Clara:** But if I were going to sell it to older people I would point out that… **Melanie:** Ah this is interesting… **Clara:** ...it's less expensive in many ways. It saves having to make a phone call, and all of that. Because old people like to maintain a sense of independence, and you can get on there and you can look things up yourself, anonymously as it were without having to make phone calls or anything.
Vanessa	**Technology becoming more appealing as mobility decreases and isolation increases** Vanessa feels that decreasing mobility will have an adverse effect on her relationships. She would be propelled to use the computer more in this case.	**Vanessa:** No I can imagine it, if I'm not as mobile, umm, if there ever comes a time when. You know, I mean I, even now I think in those terms that my knees aren't very good. I may need knee replacements, and you are going to be out of order for a bit. Well I hate being out of touch, so I prefer people to come and see me. I probably could see myself using it more.

ENJOYING MYSELF

Older people such as Clara are using technology as a means to enjoy themselves, and not just as a tool for practical purposes as can be seen below:

Table 31 Enjoying myself using technology

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Clara	**Using technology as a distraction from less attractive activities** Clara used ICT to distract her from unpleasant things, like boring or abusive work phone calls – the less attractive side of her work identity.	**Clara:** When I was at work I was a probation officer, and people would, and child support, and what I really needed for them to do was for them to say I have a problem with my case, see how much money you can get me on it and then get off the phone. But they wouldn't, they would just talk and talk and talk. And I can't say 'shut up, let me do my job'. You kind of have to let them range on. So I would have work to do around my desk but if they got really bad or abusive or anything, I would go to minesweeper, you know minesweeper as a computer game? **Melanie:** Yeah. **Clara:** With the little bombs. **Melanie:** Yeah. I think so. **Clara:** I started calling that mind, M. I. N. D., sweeper.

7.4.1.2 Group Identities

Technology was seen by several older people as an important means of maintaining identities in group contexts. Identities highlighted here include managing the family identity, managing societies, keeping up with peers, and maintaining business contacts particularly.

MAINTAINING THE FAMILY IDENTITY

The use of technology made by older people for maintaining the family identity, managing family links and supporting emotive ties is tabulated below:

Table 32 Maintaining the family identity

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Penny **Shirley**	**Wanting to discover the family identity** Internet-enabled ancestry research has become a great motivator for many people to engage with online facilities.	**Penny:** I suppose of late, my favourite occupation has become that of producing my Family Tree. I first became interested five years ago when I discovered the 1901 Census online. **Shirley:** It's fantastic. Because when I started my family history research, it was about 25 years ago, of course there was none of that. So it was just hard slog around record offices and graveyards and that sort of thing. Whereas now most of that is on the internet.
Robert	**Encouraging and maintaining the family identity** Technology is bringing (dispersed) families closer together. This was expressed by several participants.	**Robert:** Yeah. A sister in Canada and a sister-in-law in Indonesia. **Melanie:** Yeah. **Robert:** And I use MSN video to talk to my sister in Canada once a week. And maybe once a month - my sister-in-law can't use it - but I've got two nieces who are, one's 18 and one's 16. **Melanie:** Mmm. **Robert:** And we'll communicate, sometimes by MSN or Yahoo but mainly these days on Facebook.
Eddie	**Overcoming the new mobility** Eddie explains that the geographic mobility of today's families can be overcome by the use of appropriate communication technologies.	**Eddie:** The grandmother texting the granddaughter is, when they have moved away as well, because of all this new mobility and all this issue where she's in Scotland and she's still living wherever and that. It's maintaining relationships because relationships do need maintenance, they need looking after and nurturing.

MAINTAINING SOCIETY RELATED IDENTITIES

Some older people find increasingly that technology is becoming their main method of organising their society related activities as highlighted below:

Table 33 Maintaining society related identities

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Marie	**Managing and maintaining a group identity** Impetus to begin using Facebook came from: e.g. choir (encouragement from another choir member to look at choir photographs) and people she met on holiday (sharing photographs and maintaining that happy holiday feeling)	**Melanie:** What got you into Facebook then? **Marie**: Umm, well Steve… **Melanie:** Aha! **Marie:** he sent me, well through Facebook really I suppose, sent me an email saying… **Melanie:** Choir Steve…? **Marie:** Look at the photos on Facebook!
Robert	Robert does administration for various societies using online means (Royal Signals Association, Probus, Malta and Libya Association)	**Melanie:** Mmm. So people are quite happy using email? **Robert:** Oh yeah. But then Probus… **Melanie:** Mmm **Robert:** Even though I'm not a secretary, and I take the minutes. Once I've typed them up, I send them out on email to everybody. **Melanie:** So they all communicate by… **Robert:** Yeah. They all communicate. Got a group on my email addresses, committee for the Probus, and they get it. Or Royal Signals Association, we do exactly the same with them.
Howard	Howard also uses his IT skills to manage group memberships.	**Howard:** Got a couple of friends at church who are in their 80's, in their 70's then, had come up from Guildford, where there had been a really lively U3A. They were missing it having come to be near their grandchildren for a few… they sort of twisted a few arms to get an organising committee to launch it. Well me, partly for my IT skills, I don't know if they thought of my IT skills, the role I actually played in that… …obviously, groups like that setting up in this day and age need a sort of membership database and associated functions and erm, I had the technology and the knowledge to, to do that, so that was what I suggested to be my major contribution.

MAINTAINING PEER IDENTITIES

A few older people indicated that significant peers can influence technology usage either in terms of acting as positive identity role models or through exerting subtle peer pressure or persuasion. The evidence for this is provided in the table below:

Table 34 Maintaining peer identities

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Billy	**Having positive peer group role models** Billy feels that older people need positive ICT-user 'identity role models' of their own age to learn from and emulate.[96]	**Billy:** Another way around it is, of you can get a bunch of people who are of the same age group that you're trying to convert over. Friends. Friends of friends. Convert them to the idea. Some people are already doing it.
Jonathan	**Feeling that you have a choice about how you enhance your life with technology** **Being driven by fashion** **Being driven by peer-group persuasion (friends want to send him picture messages)**	**Jonathan:** Oh yes. I think most people use technology to enhance their lives in the way that they want. And, umm, there's lots of drivers here. There's choosing what you want to do, and choosing which bits of technology you want, and what you want to use. There's the fashion driver, umm which I resist with my mobile phone. **Melanie:** Bet my mobile phone is better than your mobile phone. **Jonathan:** Yeah! Um, but on the other hand it's a combination, so for example, I suppose I am under some pressure to get a mobile phone that supports picture messaging.

MAINTAINING BUSINESS IDENTITIES

The study incorporated some older people who have used the available technology to run their own businesses, finding that there are certain useful tools on the internet to assist them. They also study the tools to see what they have to offer both themselves and their business clients as can be seen below:

Table 35 Maintaining business identities

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Julia	**Learning the new technologies to mentor clients as part of her business** Social networking tools have power as commercial tools. Julia is aware of this and spends time learning the new tools to discuss their potential with clients	**Julia:** Umm, I've just started using Twitter. **Melanie:** So have I. Haha. **Julia:** more from a business point of view than a personal. I've got a personal and a business account, but it's the business one I'm trying to develop because I'm trying to understand why it's grown so quickly… **Melanie:** Yeah. **Julia:** Umm, and partly because of my clients, I need to tell, talk to them about if they're going to have Twitter accounts and Facebook accounts to talk to their customers then they need to understand what they're doing. So I need to go

[96] The Sus-IT project held a very successful Festival of Social Science at Cotmanhay (funded by the ESRC) where older people presented to an audience of older people about their positive experiences of technology, and the difference it had made in their lives. Thus older people acted as positive identity role models for ICT usage in order to encourage others to participate more.

		there first and learn about it. So that's a bit new.
Julia	**Saving time in business** Julia appreciates the labour saving quality of technology and uses tools purposefully to save her time for other things.	**Julia:** I'm really, really interested in saving time that way. **Melanie:** Mmm. **Julia:** Using electronic media to save time, and time in business is really important.

7.4.1.3. Software and Hardware – Design and Implementation

Several participants found that the way the technology was designed at an impact on their motivation towards it as can be seen below:

Table 36 Software and hardware – design and implementation

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Marie	**Software suiting the fun side of my identity** Wanting to use software more if it suits my home mood.	**Marie:** […] when you get on Facebook it seems like fun. Hahaha.
Vanessa	**Making technology easier to set up** Vanessa feels that the setup process is a hurdle to be overcome. Simpler technology would be more enticing.	**Vanessa:** I'm sure they could be made easier to set up! **Melanie:** Haha. They're supposed to be plug and play! **Vanessa:** I know! I know! But I always want something idiot-proof. That's how I feel about technology. It's got to be idiot-proof.

7.4.2 Discouraging aspects of ICT involvement

This section encompasses factors which propel people to reduce their engagement with ICT or indeed to stop engaging altogether. It also covers factors which prevent people from engaging with certain tools, or prevents them from engaging in certain ways with the tools they are already using.

This section includes the following (with respect to identity management involvement with ICT):

- ceasing to use something gradually or abruptly
- spending less time on something
- decreasing the number of tools used
- engaging with less complex tools
- not getting started with something
- not engaging in certain ways with tools already used

7.4.2.1 Personal Identities

BEING CONSERVATIVE

Certain older people felt that having a conservative nature held them back from experimenting with various technology tools. Other older people felt that given enough incentive these conservative responses could be overcome. This, however, needed the correct type of 'marketing' for the activity concerned so that older people could better understand how the appropriate tools might usefully relate to their everyday lives. The corresponding evidence is provided in the table below:

Table 37 Being conservative

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Anna-Maria	**Not having an adventurous nature** Preferring to feel safe with what one knows – leads to not experimenting with certain types of software. Evidence of a type of conservatism.	**AM:** No, not experimenting, no. I will never for example use these dating services, or make new friends and whatever, no. […] But things that I don't know about, no I won't. I'm not so courageous maybe, I don't know.
Sadie	**Not being a self-generator** This is concerned with personal efficacy. Second Life requires you to be a self-generator – you must create your own activities otherwise you will not find it satisfying and thus not involve yourself further. In comparison to World of Warcraft where the activities are created for you and the environment itself sustains you (scaffolds you – see above).	**Sadie:** Yes, so the difference with Second Life is that you've got to be a self generator. You've got to be in there wanting to create something to stick around, but for the rest, once you've had a little explore, unless you've got something you're doing in that space, you just won't hang around.
Sadie **Clara**	**Being too conservative in one's approach** People need to be encouraged to go beyond themselves and their own expectations. Clara also highlights the conservative approach of some older people. Sometimes it is not a case of cost, they just do not want to spend their money on something.	**Sadie:** We still have this mindset that is conservative and boring basically. But the reality is that I've had the luxury of World of Warcraft. The average person needs to make the transition. **Clara:** Older people tend to be more conservative anyway, don't they. […] **Clara:** And I don't think that older people want to buy the newer things. They have the money. Older people are more conservative with their money.
Clara	**Being sceptical of benefits** People wonder whether technology will really be a benefit. This deters them from acquiring it.	**Clara:** You know I see both sides of it. I've seen where we had no idea where we were, and it [the SatNav] says turn left turn right, turn left, turn right, and there we are. Haha! And other times when the battery was running low, and it just says follow the road, follow the road. And we've missed the exit because the battery was low and it was giving us bad information. […] So if you haven't grown up with it, I think you're a little more sceptical of its benefits.

Clara	**Not wanting to be bothered** This could be seen as another aspect of conservatism – being conservative with one's personal energy. How to spend oneself rather than one's money.	**Clara:** Now [my friend] he texts people all the time. **Melanie:** Mmm. **Clara:** I don't. I don't ever text anybody, It's like another whole layer of learning to do stuff, and I just don't want to be bothered.

BEING CONTENT WITH THE WAY THINGS ARE

Some older people did not feel the need to use certain tools because they were content with the status quo, and thus did not want to change their lives. They did not search out certain facilities as they did not feel the need for them:

Table 38 Being content with the way things are

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Robert	**Not needing to expand my social network** Some people feel content with the social circle they have acquired over the years. They feel comfortable with their existing social identity. They don't need to add further complications.	**Melanie:** […] would you actually use your computer to make new friends, or do you just use your computer to just maintain the circle of friends you've got. **Robert:** I think yeah! I'd not make new friends. No. **Melanie:** Mmm **Robert:** I don't think. I suppose you get to an age where you're not bothered about new friends. I've got plenty of friends, I don't need to make new ones. **Robert:** But I think once you get to an age where you think 'well, I've got what I want to do. I know what I want to do and I'm contacting the people I want to contact. That's it, why have more?' **Melanie:** Mmm **Robert:** Just complicates life.

NOT WANTING TO ADOPT FICTIONAL IDENTITIES

Some older people did not want to use technology that would lead to the adoption of fictional identities, due to their lack of interest in either fiction, or fictionalising themselves.

Table 39 Not wanting to adopt fictional identities

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Tom	**Not being interested in fiction prevents me from fictionalising myself** This refers to the reason why Tom	**Tom:** My reaction is I've no idea whether I would find it potentially difficult I just don't want to be bothered. And my not wanting to be bothered is actually related to my dissatisfaction

	does not experiment with changing his identity through gaming software – the self would become a form of fictional role play rather than a possible reality.	with some kind of fiction. I think you can learn an awful lot from some sorts of fiction, which can be very good, stimulate the imagination, reveal aspects of life and personality that you didn't know about before. But an awful lot of the fantasy stuff. Harry Potter. And even more, who's the… **Melanie:** Tolkien? **Tom:** Tolkien. I cannot bear Tolkien.
Anna-Maria	Another participant expresses the position about not engaging with gaming software and its fictionality similarly.	**Melanie:** So you're not getting to the point where you would play like online computer games. I'm not getting that's your kind of thing. **AM:** No. I don't like that because I feel it's a waste of time. Because I don't come from a place where I like fictitional things. **Melanie:** Right. **AM:** And even when I choose my books to read I don't read fiction stuff, I usually read things where I can learn something, or something related to my study, but maybe more casual. So for me playing those games is really a waste of time.
Robert	**Not needing an alter ego** Some people feel content within their own identity. They also prefer simplicity to complexity.	**Robert:** So, yeah I've heard about it [avatars], but not to the extent where I'd be interested in using it, we'll put it that way. **Melanie:** mmm **Robert:** I've no… **Melanie:** You don't want to create any kind… **Robert:** No. **Melanie:** of alter ego for yourself then. Hahaha. **Robert:** No. I've got enough with this one without wanting another one!

FEELING GUILTY ABOUT TIME WASTING

Having not grown up with technology, certain older people were inclined to value judgments which set a higher importance on activities in the real rather than virtual world as can be seen below:

Table 40 Feeling guilty about time wasting

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Penny	**Feelings of guilt at spending too much time on something ICT related** This refers to how people think they should manage their time. Some participants feel that one's offline identity is more important than one's online identity.	**Penny:** So it does impinge on your time, doesn't it. It does kind of… it creeps into time that you wouldn't necessarily use in that way. **Melanie:** Mmm… **Penny:** Because I wanted to read the papers and sometimes I find myself on the computer. And you know I really should just be reading words on the page. So it's changed my mindset. **Melanie:** But that kind of begs into question what is a valid use of your time? And what you want to use your time for. Why do you think 'computer time' is less valid than 'paper time'? **Penny:** Yeah why do I think that everyone will

Harriet		send me an email everyday just updating me on things? **Harriet:** But when you spend too long, it makes me feel my life is too short to be on a computer for that long.
Billy	**Recognising time wasting nature of addictive technologies** This section refers to the creative writing elements on SagaZone specifically and internet surfing generally. Billy wished to manage his time in fruitful production of materials rather than waste his time (even if it was enjoyable).	**Billy:** I gave it up because I got addicted. I thought if I wanted to do the writing, and some of these other things I had to create that space. If I didn't I'd get bound up in there, it's very addictive. You sit down and you get into ancestry and what have you, and good god almighty one avenue leads to another and before you know it you're zig-zagging through a whole bunch of things.

NOT WANTING TO DEAL WITH OR CREATE INAPPROPRIATE MATERIAL

This relates to an older person's sense of netiquette in terms of not wanting to see the inappropriate material created by others or not wanting to create such material themselves.

Table 41 Not wanting to deal with or create inappropriate material

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Robert	**Having to deal with inappropriate material** This propels me to switch something off, or stop communicating – if it does not suit my more conservative netiquette. The reverse side of this is: **Not producing inappropriate material** Some people will not engage in certain ways because they feel it is inappropriate, or unsafe, to do so. Again this is part of a personal netiquette.	**Robert:** I think you get to an age where if anything, if it's something you don't like you just switch if off. **Melanie:** Mmm **Robert:** You don't feel inclined…you, you… I suppose when you're young you'll stay with it to see what's happening, whereas when you're older you just think I don't want to know this and just click it off. **Robert:** And it's the same with emails. You get a load of spam, don't you. You get it thrown at you. I only open emails from things I know. **Melanie:** Mmm **Robert:** I never open email, even if it's from a company that I'm not going to be interested in. I don't open it. **AM:** You know, I mean, I think you have to be careful what you write. People write things that shouldn't be on Facebook. […] **AM:** And as well, I don't like to write, I'm going away, or whatever, because you never know who might be seeing it, because you can go onto friends and whatever. I feel that, I will say that I've been somewhere, but I don't say I am going somewhere.

BEING A PRODUCT OF MY UPBRINGING

Some older people felt that their technology usage was regulated by cultural material from their past, which viewed technology as either geeky or male-orientated. There is a cohort issue at work here.

Table 42 Being a product of my upbringing

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Clara	**Being a product of the times people grew up in** This is a cohort rather than an age issue. Clara says she grew up in an age where women were raised to do housework not mechanical/technical things. It is also a gender identity issue here. Clara thinks that the times have moved on and the gender issue no longer applies for the younger generation.	**Clara:** There was maybe a transition when it was more, you know, mechanical. What about when all the technical stuff was just considered nerdy? And what girl wants to be nerdy? **Melanie:** Yeah that's true actually. **Clara:** It was just boys who were nerdy. But now everybody does it. It's lost that social stigma. Not if your stuck in the time warp, the mental time warp of your, the age you grew up in.

7.4.2.2 Group identities

Interestingly no negative propellants were implicated with group identities. Although negative issues arose in conversation concerning potentially harmful minority groups, these did not impact negatively on the individual's usage of ICT for identity purposes.

7.4.2.3 Software and Hardware - Design and Implementation

Older people noted that certain aspects of the design and implementation of software and hardware could impact negatively on their personal motivation. Banality and boredom were implicated here, as were a lack of the more appealing human qualities of nurturance. These factors have been tabulated for convenience as follows:

Table 43 Software and hardware – design and implementation – negative propellants

WHO	WHAT	DATA COLLECTED
Marie	**Software not suiting my identity needs** Email being business-like when I want it to be playful. Software not appropriate for home/social/ informality.	**Marie:** I'd had enough of blooming emails all day today. The last thing I want to do is switch on the computer and look and see some more.

Marie	**Already using something similar (for managing self and relationships)** Therefore feels it is a waste of time to operate on two similar environments.	**Marie:** And Yahoo do one as well because I got, umm, a friends request from my cousin, umm, and she was, well, this thing asked me if I would be her friend or something, or keep in touch on Yahoo. And I didn't want to because I'd already set up a Facebook page…
Harriet	**Tools being too banal for me** Not finding the tools suit my feelings about my own identity as a creative person.	**Harriet:** To me it's banal. **Melanie:** Hahaha. **Harriet:** Most people's lives, unless you're going to be creative and have interesting… something that's inspirational and more, umm, I'm not sure, you know, like just having some more, yeah, more creative content, then I think it would be useful.
Elizabeth	**Getting bored with a software tool because its limits have been explored** The available software having finite limits, and once these have been explored the software is no longer of interest.	**Elizabeth:** I started off with the Facebook games, like Zombies and stuff, and I have to say that after a while I got bored with them. **Melanie:** They are boring games. Yeah. **Elizabeth:** And, but there is a certain amount of technique with them as well. And you can work out ways of winning. And I think that once I worked that out I lost interest in it.
Elizabeth	**The internet losing its anarchistic nature** People appreciating the idea that the internet is not currently fully controlled and that it is therefore a tool of the people and not the state. For some people this is its appeal and control would lead them to being less interested or to stop using it. Elizabeth thinks similarly to Pierre in this regard.	**Elizabeth:** I think the other things would be when the internet stops being subversive, when it gets controlled, if it was all totally controlled, which I don't think it can be. I wouldn't use it. I love the subversity of it.
Anna-Maria	**Worrying in advance about ICT complexity** This can be an entry barrier. However, it needs awareness raising sessions to prove to people that it can be done – technology can be mastered. Older people demonstrating positive digital identities to other older people – to act as role models – would help here.	**AM:** I remember going to, starting work after a long time and not being computer literate and really worried because I thought it was so complicated. And then when you actually learn how to use the computer it's so easy. **Melanie:** Ah right. **AM:** And email is the same thing, you know. **Melanie:** Mmm. **AM:** I think for a while I wasn't too sure I wanted to get involved in this thing, because it looked like something complicated, and the young people did whatever. But I think nowadays I can't do without it.
Sadie	**Changing software coding so that it no longer suits the identity of the person concerned** The gaming environment changed at a time of personal change so that it no longer met personal expectations.	**Melanie:** I think you've kind of answered some of my question as to why your engagement level would drop. **Sadie:** Well I think like there was a number of things that happened, and they changed the game, that's fine, I mean things change. The people I was bonded with moved on to other things. They put a lot of money into making it much bigger. I couldn't get my character up. I couldn't get online often enough, cos I was doing other stuff too, to keep up with everybody else. I suddenly became, felt like the little kid, sort of going 'hold on, wait for me!'
Clara	**Technology lacking human warmth** The identity of technology still has a	**Clara:** My stepmother has a huge family, so there's always grandchildren and people coming to see her because she's the grandmother, she makes the delicious meals. You know, she's the

	long way to go before it catches up with the identity of real live human beings.	warm cuddly factor that technology isn't giving you really. I mean when you're sick technology isn't going to take your temperature and make you chicken soup.
Eddie	**Not being able to build trust because of the limitations of hardware and software to convey human identity** Eddie is wary of using software to communicate with strangers because of the trust issue. Eddie is here firmly on the face-to-face side of the benchmarking debate concerning the quality of human relationships.	**Eddie:** You know it's so easy to be, it's easy to be dishonest on the internet because you can say things and there is no way of really telling, not looking in the person's eyes to know whether they are telling the truth. You can't see any body language to tell you one way and another whether a person is, sort of, being honest with you. And I do rely a lot on non-verbal communication in my social relationships with people. Building trust is a very important thing, and I know it takes a very long time to build up trust with a person.

7.5 Summary

This chapter demonstrates that older people's usage of ICT is implicated in a wide variety of identity-related 'work' processes. These in turn are related to the purposive action of Gidden's (1984, p.3) theory of reflexivity which posits the human being as a "purposive agent" in his own identity. This agent can select materials, cogitate on them, and incorporate them, or in turn be challenged by them and reflect on what that means for the self-project. ICT presents a third space in which these processes can be perceived and their outcomes imagined prior to any adoption.

Whilst many of the work processes highlighted in this chapter have a beneficial effect on self-esteem, not all of them are perceived in this way. Those positive outcomes of identity processes, however, re-inforce an individual's ongoing desire to engage with technology and thus sustain its usage in line with the Sus-IT project's objectives.

Future work could seek to reduce the effect of the negative identity work processes highlighted here, which can lead to a progressive or sudden disengagement with technology. The following chapter will look at identity stakeholders, who are precisely those people who could have an impact on ameliorating the more negative identity impacts of technology.

Chapter Eight: System Map Part Three – ICT Identity Stakeholders (vested interest in your identity)

8.1 Introduction

> The only parties who will benefit from supplementing an individual's physical identity with a cyberspace-dwelling digital doppelganger are those who, whether for legitimate or illegitimate ends, seek to exploit it — a long list whose most notable members include profit-hungry businesses, malicious hackers and overzealous government agencies. (Wainwright 2002)

In a wired world, it is not just the self that has an interest in one's personal online identity, since for various reasons, some more harmful than others, there is a whole raft of people and organisations that may have something to gain from how people appear online. Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, is now famous for making statements such as:

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

Interestingly, Zuckerberg is making his appeal to the world's public on moral grounds, with his comments on integrity amounting to an 'interpellation' to all 'right-thinking people' to adopt a single identity approach. Ironically, Cutler (2010) points out that Zuckerberg has to contend with counter allegations that his policies concerning Facebook are not always ethically based, since there are many instances of issues being raised over his privacy policy. Also, his insistence on a 'single identity' means that people can then "carry their social connections with them to any site" (Ha 2011); this is therefore expediency and not ethics. The inference is that Zuckerberg has a vested interest in increasing the social connectedness of Facebook users, and this would be hindered by inconsistent or multiple online identities.

But it is not just stakeholders in people's *online identity* which is the issue here. Companies also have a significant interest in people's *personal identity* being aligned with a technology brand, witness Apple's 'I'm a Mac, I'm a PC' advertising campaign, in which people, it would seem, were no longer themselves but had become, by

association, the actual technology in question. Such is the power of the brand association with Apple that queues of a thousand people will form outside the London flagship store for the sole intention of purchasing the next release of the iPhone (Emery 2010). As Wainwright's (2002) opening quotation emphasizes, tying up personal identity with technology in this way is a phenomenal way of increasing profit margins for those exploitative "profit-hungry businesses".

As the quote at the beginning of the section indicates, the list of stakeholders in one's online and personal identity does not end with social networking sites or companies with products to sell, but continues with those of more malicious intent such as identity thieves and hackers.

Several of the participants in this study have felt their (digital) identities to be bound up in ways that are not necessarily wholly under their personal control. Discourses concerning authenticity are used to manipulate people's online behaviours. Filling out a profile – identity proforma – online can sometimes make people feel that they are yielding themselves up to the unseen machinations of other entities, whether the overall outcome is positive, negative or neutral. Various participants have debated the effect of these identity stakeholders at a personal and social level and their thoughts are given here.

In terms of Gidden's (1991, p.189) theory of reflexivity, it is acknowledged that there are many potential external influences on identity caused by the flow of modernity; as he states there are massive "changes which modernity sets into being" which can impact on the individual. So far as self-identity is concerned, the work of the reflexive human being lies in maintaining a sense of the "unification" of the self Gidden's (1991, p.189). This must therefore be done by "protecting and reconstructing the narrative of self-identity" in the face of such external changes and conflicting tensions with the self-project (Gidden's 1991, p.189). ICT and its stakeholders are implicated in these external influences; individuals need to be able to manipulate their personal narratives and digital identities in the light of the activities of people and groups who have something to gain by exploiting Wainwright's (2002) "cyberspace-dwelling digital doppelganger".

8.2 MY identity is THEIR business

Here the word business can be taken in one of two ways, either on a capitalist, commercial level, or in its more general sense suggesting having a concern with something as in the phrase 'mind your own business'.

8.2.1 My (offline) identity is being socially assigned by others according to the kit I own

Graham raised the idea that one's identity is now being registered on a social level according to the type of information technology that one chooses to own and then publicly display. There is an increasing awareness that people are being 'branded'[97] with an identity by others according to a hierarchy of 'coolness' dependent on the 'brand' they elect to associate with, as Graham points out:

> **Graham:** …But you know there is a hierarchy with this kit, and where you are in the hierarchy like socially and all that. You know some people go 'nice-looking toys, that's really cool'. You know if you're walking round, if you're walking round town with an iPhone 4, it says something about you, modern, design lead. It's like the old Apple Macs which were, the old Apple computers, they were for teachers and designers and stuff.

For Graham, Apple and its associated products are registering on his consciousness as the latest hot property, and owning an Apple product demarcates you, in a sense, as belonging to a special 'club' in which members acknowledge each other. The kit is an identity marker and enables entry into the club. There is thus an implicit onus to display the kit occasionally in a conspicuous manner, so that one's place in the social hierarchy can be continually affirmed by others.

Graham, however, questions the assigning of his own identity in this way, as the following quotation demonstrates:

> **Graham: ...**where you sit in society and what tribe you belong to, despite the fact that I don't want to belong, I don't want to belong to the HTC tribe, because there's the Android tribe and the Apple tribe. Why do I want to belong to a techie tribe?

[97] Here both meanings of the word should be understood – branded (as in stamped using a branding iron) is a mark indicating the identity of an animal and therefore who owns it, and branded (marketing) as in the distinctive traits and identity markings of a commodity.

This pressure to conform evidently does not interest Graham, and he resists such socially constructed and independently assigned identity markers. In any, case what would lead him to forge a possibly false allegiance with one technology brand over another? A brief look at the 'Apple Brand Experience' may highlight some of the difficulties faced by people who are aged over fifty; the brand can be positioned as follows:[98]

Table 44 Apple brand experience – the difference between the Mac and the PC

"Hi, I am a PC"	"Hi, I am a Mac"
I am boring, formal, cold, old, unreliable, slow, not inspiring	I am cool, trendy, young, friendly, casual, reliable, fast, looking for fun

Apple's brand positioning is 'young', and young is associated with 'cool'. Someone aged over fifty may not be accepted as part of the Apple 'tribe' by the younger people who are the archetypal Apple consumers. Alternatively, it may look as though older people are just trying too hard to appear cool by adopting Apple products when the brand's positioning is clearly youth orientated. Perhaps Graham excludes himself to prevent being or feeling excluded, or because he finds it difficult to align himself 'authentically' with the brand image. The image does not appear to offer any form of 'interpellation' to the older consumer here; they are therefore not recognizing themselves as a 'subject' in the social formation the brand offers, nor do they feel subject-ed to its norms. However, this is not to say that older consumers in general do no not feel comfortable with purchasing Apple products. But here they would be buying a practically useful technological product, rather than engaging emotionally with a marketing outlook. Pragmatism is thus the key word here.

8.2.2 My (offline) identity is being demographically constructed from my online activity - profiles

> A user profile (userprofile, or simply profile when used in-context) is a collection of personal data associated to a specific user. A profile refers therefore to the explicit digital representation of a person's identity.[99]

Websites are increasingly asking users to set up profiles in order to be able to access site facilities and perform certain tasks. Although the definition of a profile concerns

[98] *Apple brand experience,* 2011. <http://www.slideshare.net/korhan/apple-brand-experience-presentation>, [accessed 30.03.11].
[99] *User profile,* 30.03.11. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User_profile>, [accessed 30/03.11].

the "explicit representation of a person's identity" it is obviously debatable as to how much of an individual's identity it actually contains. Also, the details asked for are dependent on the site, and thus only certain aspects of identity can be expressed, and yet these may be more than the individual would want to convey in any case. The latter is especially true for people who value their privacy and have concerns about the ultimate usages of the data they supply about themselves. This is in tension with the companies and organisations whose policies and aims require people to be more open about the data they supply about themselves, rather than less. As Zuckerberg (2009) said of the year 2009 "it has been a great year for making the world more open and connected". This serves to re-iterate his policy objectives, since for him "a world that is more open and connected is a better world".[100] The question here is, better for whom? Is this an 'interpellation' to all democratically minded citizens of the world to perpetuate liberal, democratic principles across the globe? As Dror (n.d., p.62) points out "transparency and openness" has become the slogan for "quality democracy". Such concepts as these are thus part of the overall democratic discourse which the public is being expected to accept on the moral grounds that they are "better". But Dror (n.d, p.62) goes on to argue that:

> "transparency and openness" are serious norms. But they must not captivate thinking. They are what the Greek called a *pharmacon* [sic][101], that is a material which if taken in correct dosage, heals, but is poisonous if taken in too large quantities. If applied carefully, transparency and openness are valid recommendations, normatively as well as instrumentally. However, it is a gross error to think that the more openness and transparency the better.

Dror makes these comments regarding democracy generally and not in response to the debate concerning Zuckerberg's policies, however they would seem to have a general applicability to the ambiguity of the situation. 'Transparency and openness' may serve their function as a moralistic social 'ideal', but they may not serve the individual very well if their personal privacy is invaded to their detriment. However, it just may be that in some indefinable way the global adoption of 'transparency and

[100] *Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg "a world that's more open and connected is a better world," adding more privacy controls*, 24.05.10. <http://www.ditii.com/2010/05/24/facebooks-mark-zuckerberg-a-world-thats-more-open-and-connected-is-a-better-world-adding-more-privacy-controls/>, [accessed 31.03.11].
[101] More commonly known as pharmakon.

openness' is simply better for the likes of Zuckerberg. In which case his emphasis on the ethics of 'openness' is somewhat disingenuous.

Graham's response to the fact that he has to provide a profile on Facebook, which can then be used for marketing purposes, is extremely pragmatic, in the sense that he recognises that whilst it is 'free' in principle to use Facebook, some free things can come at a price:

> **Graham:** …Art has become a commodified, and is now you know...
> **Melanie:** What about people?
> **Graham:** I don't know, are people being commodified? I think they try, I think they try and commodify them, but only in the sense that every other big company is trying to workout what you do, who you are, what box you fit into. So they can sell you exactly what you need. And everybody does that.
> **Melanie:** Mmm.
> **Graham:** I've no issue with that in relation to Facebook, but people have. If you want something for nothing, when it becomes conditional, you whinge about it. Well fuck off. You know this is free. Again nothing's free, so you have to pay for the, they have your little data, and they send you, you know, appropriate or what they think are appropriate advertising. You know, clearly it's working because if it weren't, they wouldn't keep getting the advertising dollars. You know it's obviously working for them, it's working for companies. Stop whingeing about it.

For Graham, the inevitability of advertising in a capitalist world, with its need for demographic data on the individual, is no longer worth complaining about. Together with this, he therefore accepts that his 'identity', or what little of it can be gleaned from his online profile (his "little data"), is susceptible to market segmentation, and he will thus be targeted on Facebook with adverts supposedly appropriate to his demographic. For example, if a person is in their fifties they will be targeted with adverts for fifties dating and so on. In running a free site, Graham accepts that Facebook has to make money in other ways, in fact he would even go some way to paying a minimal fee to be able to use it :

> **Graham:** Because Facebook is trying, obviously it's only going to make its money through advertising.
> **Melanie:** Yep.
> **Graham:** And it's trying to keep that reasonably subtle. There's only three or four on there, but if you click one, another one comes up and quite often, and I understand that. I'd pay for Facebook, a couple of pounds a month. I'm not paying more than that now. Because it's fairly basic. It doesn't cost them anything, there is nothing to it, there's no cost for the individual. Obviously there's a big cost, there is four hundred million people at $12 a year or whatever it is, that's fucking 4 million. And you know, that's kind of like 'come on guys, fuck off'.

Thus rather than 'I am me' on the internet, the alternative would be 'I am my market segment'. In filling out a profile for such sites, a person's identity is in part reduced to commercially exploitable components. The more information is provided, that is

the more open a person is, the more commercially viable their online 'identity' becomes.

During a conversation about profiles, Francis explains that offline 'identity' can frequently dictate the sites people use and hence the profiles they provide. Certain sites automatically attract a certain demographic by interpellating people in different ways. By setting up a profile on any particular site people become 'subjects' of that site's aims and policies, and this can help stakeholders in determining people's identity characteristics:

Melanie: That is a profile. And I kind of think different sites have different profiles and that's a kind of identity that they're granting you, obviously then you creep out round the sides because you have these freeform text boxes.
Francis: And you can almost know who people are by which identity ones they are members of.
Melanie: Mmm.
Francis: [My wife] is a member of Twitter.
Melanie: Yeah.
Francis: My children used to be a member of Bebo.
Melanie: Yeah.
Francis: If you're middle class you managed to get onto Facebook. If you're an aspiring young professional you use, I don't know what it's called… there's one that's CV based.
Melanie: LinkedIn.
Francis: Yeah, LinkedIn […]

Francis is here noting that sites such as Bebo have been recognised as having a younger demographic, and that LinkedIn is obviously aimed at the professional community. Francis's comment about his wife being a member of Twitter, is more complex than it looks, since only 14% of people on Twitter were aged 50 plus according to figures given by DigitalBuzz (2010) for the year 2010. Francis may here be alluding to the fact that his wife (Elizabeth in this study) is someone who is interested in current affairs, likes to be kept up to date, and also likes to maintain her own presence in the online community as she feels that she has opinions of value to relate to the world at large. Perhaps, then sites such as Twitter can unwittingly attract a demographic that they do not necessarily interpellate directly, since again they may attract people through reasons of utility and not image or brand.

8.2.3 My (offline) social identity is being caught up in the business modelling of social activity sites

There are now various websites designed to facilitate socialising in the 'real world'. For example, Meetup.com (2011) describes itself in the following ways:

> **Meetup is** the world's largest network of local groups. Meetup makes it easy for anyone to organize a local group or find one of the thousands already meeting up face-to-face. More than 2,000 groups get together in local communities each day, each one with the goal of improving themselves or their communities.
>
> **Meetup's mission** is to revitalize local community and help people around the world self-organize. Meetup believes that people can change their personal world, or the whole world, by organizing themselves into groups that are powerful enough to make a difference.

Those who set up new community groups on Meetup (2011) must "pledge to create real face-to-face community", there is thus yet another ethical imperative at work here. The software entails a minimal subscription payable in advance by the person who sets up the Meetup Group in question. Organisers must then decide whether to foot the bill themselves or recoup the costs occasionally from members; thus some type of business model must come into force.[102] Meetup (2011) can be contrasted with Spice[103] (2011), which is another online organisation that enables offline social activities. Spice (2011) has an annual subscription fee plus expects you to pay for individual activities. The key difference is that Meetup enables its members to be self-organising, whereas Spice puts on a programme of events on behalf of its members. Graham has been a member of both types of social activities groups, and is aware of the business models involved. In connection with this, Graham gives the following anecdote concerning business battles between the various internet-organised social groups in his area[104]:

[102] The researcher is a member of two local Meetup Groups.
[103] This stands for Special Programme of Initiative, Challenge and Excitement.
[104] Here the researcher says 'oh wow' because based on her knowledge of the business models involved in some of these sites she can see what the punchline of the story is going to be.
Names of people have been changed.
IVC (2011) requires an annual subscription.
City Socialising (2011) has graded membership, there are costs associated with Bronze and Silver membership.

Melanie: Mmm, yes, because that, basically what you're saying is that the Spice model is basically a top-down, but the…
Graham: Meetup Group is more democratic.
Melanie: Meetup Group is more bottom-up.
Graham: Yeah, it's more bottom-up. There's no marketing involved at all other than more people go out and say 'I went and it was really good', or come long, or whatever. Robert and I, because we both do a lot of organising, the people at IVC, and at City Socializing, both invited us to go along, because obviously as business orientated they wanted to get our people into their business.
Melanie: Oh wow.
Graham: Unfortunately, what happened was Robert went along and pulled people out of their business into ours.
Melanie: Yeah.
Graham: They went, 'Oh, it costs 5 pounds a month, and you have to do this and do that', and Robert said 'ours is free'.
Melanie: Ha ha.
Graham: Ha ha. End of conversation.

Being so greatly involved with these sites, Graham's (social) identity has become entangled with considerations of the various business models involved. Graham's preference for the more democratic, bottom-up methods of social organisation is clearly in evidence here. With such groups as Spice (2011) it is obviously a case of "MY social identity is THEIR business".

8.2.4 Thinking about which stakeholders can be trusted on the 'democratic' web

> The next internet revolution will not be created by geeks, MBAs and venture capitalists. It will be created by you, me and everyone else. Welcome to the democratic web (Stibbe 2006)

> Benevolent Dictator for Life - The informal, slightly tongue-in-cheek title given to a respected individual in the open source development community who sets general directions and makes final calls in certain situations within the scope of a given project. The BDFL is a tacit acknowledgement that communal, consensus-based decision making within the open source community occasionally runs up against obstacles, in which case a single authoritative voice can be useful. That BDFLs survive and flourish in these otherwise anarchistic contexts is attributed to their personal charisma and their reluctance to wield their power except in rare moments. (Urban Dictionary 2011)

There is an inherent contradiction here in the possibilities afforded by the web. Evidently the web was created and facilitated by those with the money, power and/or knowledge to do so. Whatever, the original motives of these stakeholders, there is an acknowledgment by commentators such as Stibbe (2006) that Web 2.0 heralds a democratic era in internet usage. Users need no longer rely on provided content but can generate their own. What was once done by the few can now be done by the many. Yet the internet, in the main, still needs the few who can provide

the tools for the many to actually operate. It also needs people who can sometimes make ultimate decisions as to how the tools should progress.

Francis wonders whether the truly democratic web can actually work in practice:

Francis: […] and that thing about democratisation is a good one I think, because one of the problems of being on the Internet is, it's too democratic.
Melanie: Mmm. Ah that's interesting.
Francis: I'd actually like to say, actually I'm dead bloody clever. We're going to organise this, you 3 or 4 people get over here and we're going to write this thing. It's like a pantomime. You can get 24 people in a room, I've written a script, you duhduhduh, we'll produce something. Bang. To do that on the internet requires a lot more new skills I suppose, in order to manipulate people into doing things.
Melanie: Ah that's interesting.
Francis: Because there's not enough bosses. Or there are no bosses. Which is good. But bad.
Melanie: Haha. You need benign dictators.
Francis: You know there are benign dictators on the web?
Melanie: Are there?
Francis: Oh yeah! People who invented, for instance, Linux.
Melanie: Yes.
Francis: The guy who invented it, Linus Torvalds, he is elected benign dictator for life of Linux.
Melanie: Mmm.
Francis: Yep. The guy who invented the internet, his name is Berners Lee, he is the benign dictator for life of the internet. He can actually decide what he wants to do, and people go, 'Yep, that's OK'. And Jimbo Wales, who runs Wikipedia, isn't!
Melanie: Oh!
Francis: Cos he's a bit of a slimy toad.
Melanie: Haha.
Francis: Haha. He did invent it, umm, he is a very clever bloke. He gives the impression of being very public minded. But leaves an unpleasant taste.

Here, Francis relates that in various web communities, there are those stakeholders who are acknowledged as having a benevolent influence on web development; their opinion is to be trusted as being in the public interest. And yet Francis disputes whether this positive appellation could extend to include all those who have initiated what would appear to be quite democratic Web 2.0 orientated systems, Wales and Wikipedia being a case in point. According to McCarthy (2008) stories in the news concerning Wales' inappropriate editing of Wikipedia entries, his possible misuse of foundation funds, and his ties with venture capitalists which call into question his non-profit aims, have all served to tarnish his image in this regard. The public evidently needs these stakeholders to maintain a clear moral and community-orientated 'identity' with respect to their internet decision-making in order to merit the approbation heralded by the title BDFL.

If most of the stakeholders can be seen to uphold the public interest, then it would seem to be invoking a type of conspiracy theory to suggest that they might have ambitious aims concerning world domination for their internet products. Are there any stakeholders of whom it really could be said that they wish to control the way people operate? If not, what are the likes of Zuckerberg actually trying to achieve? Francis continues this discussion in the following way:[105]

[105] The researcher does not necessarily give out their opinions here or elsewhere, some of the remarks are intended merely to prolong the discussion or just play devil's advocate.

Melanie: I'm struggling with some of these tensions and I quite like exploring them, these tensions between what you want to do with yourself and what they want to do with it.
Francis: Do they exist?
Melanie: I don't know.
Francis: Who are they? I don't think they exist.
Melanie: Ok. Get me going on that one then.
Francis: I think when that guy started Facebook he was doing it as a programmer, just playing about and going 'ooh, this is good. I wonder if I can get my 10 mates to do it'.
Melanie: Yeeeahh.
Francis: And then it takes off.
Melanie: Then it becomes some kind of geometric progression.
Francis: And then it becomes some kind of geometric progression, and even then I don't think he realised he was in charge of something. I don't think he fully realises he's in charge of the world. You could just be in a room and have Dr Strangelove thoughts about 'How I vill rule the vorld' [heavily accented in an amusing way]. How did they have this information? I think he probably employed these three guys to do marketing and one of them comes up to him and goes, 'You know with this information we've got here, we could not only market Facebook, we could market things internally'. And he's got people going 'and you're not actually making any money are you? Can you not run adverts like Google runs adverts?'
Melanie: Mmm.
Francis: Because I'm told they're not actually making any money are they? Facebook isn't.
Melanie: Facebook isn't? I can imagine they aren't
Francis: They aren't making any money. Google's making money. Google's actually getting these adverts you look at, but people don't look at Facebook adverts and go click on em.
Melanie: No.
Francis: As much as they ought to. So I don't think these people are actually. I think there are, manipulation happens because the marketing guy goes, 'I've learnt that I can do viral marketing and I need to know who the 40 year olds, who will appeal, who I should send the viral marketing to.
Melanie: Mmm. Yeah, you see.
Francis: But I don't think there's anybody trying to start the Matrix.
Melanie: No. OK. Because…
Francis: I think the Matrix might start but only by accident.
Melanie: But that's what I'm thinking. What. Yes, some of this is purely accidental isn't it?
Francis: Yeah.
Melanie: Because I can't think they sat programming one day and thought, 'Yeah, I'm programming this because basically I want to create a global village of however many billion people'.
Francis: Yeah.
Melanie: I want to get together with my mates, and by the way my mates have got mates and the mates have got mates, and maybe that's…
Francis: And that's quite interesting. It's quite an interesting intellectual problem. I mean do I want the people in China to all jump up and down at the same point to see if the world will move by an inch?
Melanie: Mmm.
Francis: No, I can't be bothered.
Melanie: Haha.
Francis: Haha.
Melanie: So you think it's an accident.
Francis: I think it's an accident. I don't think these people are trying. I think the politicians are desperately trying to get back into control.

What Francis is essentially referring to here is the general, stereotypical view of the geekiness of technology obsessed programmers. Francis feels that computer programmers are far more interested in their own programming skills and overcoming personal technical challenges, rather than world domination. In Francis' opinion their obsession concerns the programmed product itself and not the eventual outcome of that product in practice. Hence Francis would say that Zuckerberg did

not intend to try to rule the world, it was just an accident that events seem to have turned out that way. However, Francis does allude to the fact that the governments of the world may now see Facebook as a threat, since as a community it has nearly 600 million users worldwide (Slideshare 2011) and is thus about twice the size of the US.[106] Facebook users are thus citizens of a substantial new global city, and in possession of unprecedented means of mass communication with those fellow citizens. How people choose to use that mass communication tool for discussion purposes may have effects for social good or ill. Francis continues his discussion of internet democracy thus:

Francis: Because they [governments] feel this democracy idea has gone too far. People are actually having discussions without them telling them what to think.
Melanie: Is this why they're going whole hog about e-government? Because they're putting that stamp back on? This is what real government is, we're a democracy, and we don't want any of your democracy because **that's** really democracy.
Francis: I think the e-Government thing, oh that's the computer programmers going, 'oh, the driving licences, we could do it a lot easier, yeah, you'll end up with those 50 girls in the secretarial pool not being employed anymore'. But that's not my real motive, my real motive is that I actually want to go on and write a clever little programme where you can renew your driving licence. Umm, because I used to do that kind of thing. It'll save a fortune because people are going to lose their jobs over it, but people are going to lose their jobs anyway. No, I think if I was going to look at trends, it might be the fact that you get the government leaking information and then doing what the papers say the headlines are the next morning, might be a by-product of the internet.
Melanie: Mmm.
Francis: It's that they haven't actually got the thing to say, 'we're gonna invade Austria'. They have to go 'we don't like Europeans'. And then people come back and say 'we don't like Austrians'. Oh, we're going to invade it.
Melanie: Haha.
Francis: Haha. You know what I mean, they're not leading, they're following. 'Oh, if you don't like Romans, we'll throw a thousand out'. I can't believe that the French President actually woke up one morning and said 'we're going to throw out a thousand Romans'. I think he's thinking, 'this is going to be good for my next election if I, umm appeal to the general idea of the fact that people are a bit worried about their own national identity, and feel that the gypsies are stealing it away from them'.

Francis suggests that world governments will think the democracy of the internet is in competition with their own pronouncements. This may be especially so with governments that do not subscribe to the democratic ideal. He does not feel, however, that the implementation of e-government is a determined response to populist internet democracy, as this can be seen as just another instance where the programming prowess of the geeks is accidentally leading to technological progress. Francis also questions the ability of democratic governments to lead democracy, in the same way that he questions the ability of ICT stakeholders to do so. For Francis,

[106] Wikipedia 03.04.11. *List of countries by population*. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_population>, [05.04.11]. This page gives the population of the US as 311,103,000. It gives the population of the world as 6,910,100,000. According to these figures Facebook contains 8.7% of the world's population.

governments, it would seem, are merely seeding ideas then awaiting public response to sanction their actions. These ideas are taken to appeal to the national identity of the countries concerned, and therefore any response can be taken likewise. Francis feels that in the case of ICT stakeholders the potential power they have gained is an accidental part of their programming ability, whereas the power of governments is taken from their desire to follow public opinion rather than dictate it. Therefore, in the main, Francis feels that the geeks can be trusted as their ulterior motives are far more likely to be code orientated.

8.2.5 Companies and organisations are vying to be able to determine your ultimate identity

There are various companies and organisations involved in trying to determine who is the 'real' you, and they wish to be seen to be able to do this with total accuracy. In some cases this also means that they must have robust measures to prevent the theft of your identity by others. Verisign (2011) is one of the key companies in the field of user 'authentication', providing "solutions that allow companies and consumers to engage in communications and commerce online with confidence". Francis discusses Verisign as a company that has a vested interested in matters of 'identity':

Francis: Do you know a company called Verisign?
Melanie: I've heard of it yeah. They, you see that on the small print on some websites. I think.
Francis: Their business is identity. They are trying to identify who people are and what they are. And when this company started I was doing IT in Norway. And at the time the Norwegian banks were very concerned about companies like Verisign because they were going to say whether people were good or not, and who they were. And the banks were worried because they suddenly realised that was their business. The banks aren't in the business of keeping your money. The banks are the people who say who you are. Because when I actually push you into a corner and say you're not, you're not, you're not, finally, you can get out your credit card and say 'Yes I am'.
Melanie: Haha.
Francis: This is me. You can't delete me. I have a credit card. And that was a level of identity that seemed relevant to what you were talking about.

With the formation of new companies that deal in digital identity (technological level of identity), there is a perceived threat to the 'raison d'etre' of companies who have previously seen the authentication of identity as their business. In the extract above, Francis refers to a debate that was provoked in Norway within the banking system following the advent of Verisign. Interestingly, Francis refers to the process of 'authentication' as saying "whether people were good or not", implying a moral

imperative that people are who they say they are. This would thus correspondingly lend the banks the 'moral high ground' in verifying an individual's identity. The implication is that the banks feel they are losing the 'moral' initiative here, and that they are being overtaken by newer and perhaps trendier methods of authentication, such that the moral solidity of tradition and longevity no longer holds sway. Perhaps it is no longer enough to say that 'I am me' because I have a credit card with my name on it.

But who else could vie to have a say in who you really are? And what kind of attributes would make up your identity? Francis attempts to answer the question in the following way:

Francis: […] But if you really want to find out who I am you probably want to talk to Tesco rather than Facebook.
Melanie: Yeah.
Francis: And that would really tell you who I am.
Melanie: Yeah.
Francis: Or you can go and find my Wikipedia log and find out what sort of things I have been playing about with for the last two years. I pretty much know who this guy is…
Melanie: Mmm.
Francis: In a deep way, not he spent £70 in the petrol station.
Melanie: Yeah. This is interesting. Yeah. What kind of profiles would you find out most about someone? Yeah, that's kind of interesting.
Francis: Yeah. I think Tesco have probably got the… If their job is not to make money I think their business aim might be to get a track on who everybody is.
Melanie: Mmm.
Francis: Because once you got a track on everybody, who everybody is, then you've got the kind of business value that Facebook has got. Cos Facebook isn't worth anything really.
Melanie: Mmm.
Francis: It's only got a perceived value and the perceived value that it's got is because it knows who everybody is, and where everybody is, and how to talk to them.

Is this a case of 'you are what you eat', or 'you are what topics you choose to write about on Wikipedia', or even 'you are the groups of people you choose to befriend on Facebook'? Who gets to define who you are and why? And what is the level of value placed on that authentication process? Who has the ultimate say?

8.3 MY identity is a desired commodity in its own right

The participants in this study are acutely aware of the potential of internet data given about themselves to assist in the theft of identity. For some participants this can act as an inhibiting factor in their usage of ICT. Charles for example is reluctant to use Facebook for the following reason:

Charles: […] But Facebook I haven't got into, mainly because having spent a fair bit of my working life working for a data organisation in Nottingham which was very much on credit card, databases holding credit card, insurance details, the whole lot, I'm very aware of how much information and how your identity can be taken etc. And I think there's a certain naïveté highlighted, but I was well aware of this before, about people using Facebook and not being careful enough about the information they put out there which is used against them.

Charles' working life for a data organisation has given him a sharp insight into the nature of digital information, how it can be accessed, and the uses to which it can later be put. He therefore does not wish to maintain a personal digital identity as the information in it could be of great value to others.

8.4 MY identity is being watched by others for reasons beyond my control

8.4.1 Monitoring for abusive purposes

Older people, especially those with children and grandchildren have become alert to the possibilities of the internet being used to monitor and then groom/prepare potential victims for (sexually) abusive purposes.

Robert: Yeah. But I don't… The downside of it is. Uh, I know who I am talking to, because I only talk to people I know.
Melanie: Mmm.
Robert: But you get young people, they talk to, they make friends with anyone who comes up and says 'I want to be your friend'. And I think that that's wrong. Uh, in the sense that, if I wanted to be that way, I could put my grandson's photo up and say that's me.
Melanie: Mmm.
Robert: And start talking to 15 and 16 year olds. And they wouldn't know any different.
Melanie: No!
Robert: And I think, I think a lot of grooming does go off on Facebook, and the other networks.
Melanie: Well, yeah, the ones that, like, younger people are on.
Robert: Yeah.
[…]
Robert: Um, because young, young lads and young girls, can get taken in by it, by somebody talking nice to them, even if it's an older man, as I say, starts grooming them, and then. That's the only thing, I suppose I worry about it, in that respect.

Robert's opinion, is that the potential for abuse is a problem caused by the incautiousness of the young. He feels that it would be impossible for himself to be fooled by strangers because he will not entertain their approaches on the internet. He does however turn this round to say that it is not just the young who may be subject to potential forms of abuse by strangers with criminal intent masquerading as harmless individuals. There are also implications for (vulnerable) older people who

begin using the internet later in life, and who may not appreciate the incipient threat that social networking might contain. Robert continues:

Robert: To be honest, some 80 year olds are going on Facebook…
Melanie: They are.
Robert: …and starting.
Melanie: Yeah.
Robert: Surely there should be somewhere they can go, and go and say 'I'm thinking of doing this, can you tell me what the implications are?'
Melanie: Mmm.
Robert: Or 'what should I look out for'? Because I suppose an 80 year old woman is as vulnerable as a 16 year old girl in some ways.
Melanie: Well you know, the amount of people who could say, well you know 'Ooh you're old, and where do you live…?'
Robert: Yes exactly.
Melanie: 'I'll come round' And they might think they are making a friend…
Robert: A friend…
Melanie: when it could be someone who might rob them…
Robert: It could be a 17 year old yob from somewhere. Because as I say that's the only downside with it all, because you don't actually know who you're talking to.

The internet can be used to discover people possessing the 'vulnerable identity' which certain criminals wish to pursue for their own purposes. This chosen identity demographic can then be prepared for face-to-face meetings. Robert is concerned that people new to the internet should be able to get training on how to recognise and avoid such situations. Robert here, as elsewhere, acts as a venerable moral custodian.

8.4.2 Monitoring by potential employers

There are other aspects of stakeholder interest in people's online identities, which although not fraudulent like identity theft, or criminal, like people who try to groom younger people, may yet have detrimental outcomes. Charles points out that companies may check people's Facebook details to see if they are the type of people that the company wishes to employ:

Charles: Or employers can use it, and say 'hold on a second, I'm not employing you because I've looked at Facebook and that's not the sort of attitude I want'. That sort of environment can make people bravados, 'Oh I can put up this'. But it doesn't truly reflect who they are. It can be an image, and can be misguided when you're young, if it's an inappropriate image. But you think it's a cool image to have up there. I'm very wary about the abuse, or the misuse, or misinterpretation that can come about through those sorts of things.

Potential employees may not like the image that people portray of themselves, even if that image is not necessarily fraudulent. Companies may also not approve of the groups with which people associate, or the activities in which they are involved. But if people use the affordances of technology to creatively re-imagine their identities, and then link this 'false' persona with a 'real' name then it is even more likely that they will be misinterpreted. Charles is concerned that this problem will affect the younger generation since he believes they are less cautious about what they write under their actual name than the older generation would be. He also suspects that younger people are more image conscious, and will write about themselves in less circumspect ways in order to maintain that image. But these snippets of themselves may not be appreciated by HR departments looking at whether to employ them within their company. In response to reports that Facebook data has been used in this way, TUC's[107] (2007, p.3) briefing tries to clarify to HR departments what their responsibilities are in this area. TUC (2007) highlight that it could be tantamount to discrimination if HR act in accordance with data obtained about such matters as sexuality or ethnicity, especially "if this information is not available on application forms but can be deduced from a search [of] personal profiles online". However, it is the rumours of this happening that have impacted on the public mind, as can be seen with Charles, in spite of the best advice of organisations such as TUC.

8.5 Summary

This chapter has highlighted that certain aspects of (digital) identity manipulation are subjected to external influences created by a number of ICT stakeholders, which include governments, software companies, and criminals. Tensions are thus experienced in the management of personal (digital) identity, as people begin to recognise the potential effect of the activities of these external parties. The tensions alluded to here can potentially impact on the way a person chooses to portray themselves, and indeed on how much of themselves they are willing to portray in any given cyber situation. In a sense there is a felt presence of unknown cyber-lurkers who can act as a brake on (digital) identity tendencies.

[107] Trades Union Congress

Giddens' (1991, p.189) theory of 'reflexivity' takes into account that modern society imposes on the individual certain external challenges that must be faced. It is an integral part of the reflexive project to maintain a sense of personal unity by finding methods of negotiating these external influences on the self in order to reconstruct a personally acceptable "narrative of self-identity". It is evident from the discussion that older people recognise these challenges to the self; it also evident that their very willingness to discuss them means that they are attempting to negotiate what the challenges might mean to them on a personal level.

The next chapter will examine further some of the tensions in (digital) identity management, but this time through analysing the effect of the provided tools, in their numerous guises, on the older people who took part in this study. The analysis will proceed in terms of assessing the 'lived experience', or phenomenology, of the ICT tools as felt and expressed by the older people in the study. The tools take certain forms which must, of necessity, have an impact on what can be done with them and how they are experienced.

Chapter Nine: System Map Part Four - Using Tools (Phenomenology - Lived Experience)

Whilst enabling the expression and manipulation of identities, Digital Technology tools can also be seen as partly constitutive of (digital) identity in that they have a specific look and feel, provide certain defined fields requiring only certain types of information, and target (or are targeted by) a certain demographic. These tools are then perceived by their users in certain ways. This section thus highlights the 'lived experience' or phenomenology of various technologies as expressed by older people. In this way it is hoped to elicit a feeling for how their (digital) identities are perceived to be entwined with the technologies; some of their experience is noted as positive engagement and some of it takes the form of bemused resistance.

ICT tools take their part in what Giddens (1991, p.23) terms "[t]he mediation of experience"; as he notes, "[v]irtually all human experience is mediated". Giddens argues that "[m]odernity is inseparable from its 'own' media" which includes ultimately that of "the electronic signal" (1991, p.24), and these media have an impact on "the intimacies of the self" (1991, p.4). Asking people to describe their 'lived experience' of the mediation of technology, is to accept Gidden's (1991, p.35) premise that:

> to be a human being is to know, virtually all of the time, in terms of some description or another, both what one is doing and why one is doing it. The logic of such a standpoint has been well explored within the perspectives of existential phenomenology[.]

This "reflexive awareness" of existence has "discursive features", or in other words individuals are capable of providing "discursive interpretations" about the phenomenal world they experience (Giddens 1991, p.35). This point about the discursive interpretation of 'phenomena' underscores the present study's analysis of the meanings that older people invest in the technology that they experience. As Giddens (1991, p.188) notes, "all phenomenal worlds are active accomplishments" and what follows in this chapter therefore represents the 'active accomplishments' of the older people concerned, whereby their "reflexive awareness" of the impact of technology on the self-project is personally negotiated and then expressed in words.

9.1 Using my Laptop/Writing a Blog – 'Feeling at home with technology'

The following piece of writing was provided by Elizabeth (W) in response to the instruction document provided for the creative writing element of the study (the phenomenological, or 'lived experience', component).[108]

I AM IN MY STUDY
(Elizabeth)

I am in my study, sitting straight backed at my laptop which is on the pull out desk of the book case that my husband made for our first house, many years ago. This is important because I am surrounded by the books, papers and notes that are part of my research. The little hole made in them for my laptop is womblike and comforting. I feel warm this morning, sometimes it is cold in this room and I switch on the fan heater to make the room even more cosy. Everything is perfumed with the smell of incense, I think it was labelled as "moon", but it is a bright floral smell. I burn incense for relaxation, and in the background is the sound of Schubert. It could easily be Scissors Sisters, I like any sort of music, and again it is very low level, just for relaxation, too loud and I start listening and don't concentrate on the task in hand. I am updating my Blog. I feel guilty because I don't manage to update it on a regular basis. I have a sense of "My Public" out there waiting to hear my latest pronouncements on the state of [my research], but deep down I think no-one is reading it.

Currently I don't have a great deal to say. I have posted a lot about the [examples] that I have visited [for my research], I am dredging my brain to think of something pertinent, yet I have to be cautious about the speculations that I thinking about. I need to tread a fine line between giving out general information, disclosing opinions given to me anonymously and any data that may be used in the thesis that will be identified as plagiarism when the thesis is put through the plagiarism software at the end of the PhD journey. The Blog is about the research journey, so an update on my position is probably the best idea. I like to treat the blog as a creative object in its own right. I think of its style as a reflection of me, I think of the juxtaposition of the photos, the colour of the text and the background, the ease of reading it as a good read. I want people to feel at home and comfortable when reading it, thinking things like "That's interesting!" or smiling as they read.

I have always been a bit of a diarist, always with the eye to the public, even when I was 12, so I was more likely to say that I had gone shopping and list what I had bought than confess my love or lust for a certain boy or other. When I write, I do it spontaneously, the words grow and themes develop as my butterfly mind thinks of them. They take a shape of their own, unplanned, weaving their way around thoughts, feelings and expressions. Sometimes they surprise me, sometimes the words don't fit what I want to express. I take that as a sign of age and think back with nostalgia to the quick witted days, before I had children, when I was a creative being all of my own. Today is a good day and I feel poetic, empowered, because on the Blog I can write freely in my own style, not constrained to the academic stringency expected for my thesis. I spent years creating my free style, avoiding jargon and academese and now I have to re-learn all I pushed aside from my English "A" level. Ah me, such is life....

[108] The information inside the square brackets in the following piece of writing has been generalised to anonymise the data.

This piece of creative writing from Elizabeth can be set within a context of "topophilia" – literally love of place – as developed by Bachelard[109] (1994, p.xxxv) in *The poetics of space*. Bachelard's (1994, p.xxxv) phenomenological work examines notions of "*felicitous space"* in order to determine "the human value of the sorts of space that may be grasped, that may be defended against adverse forces, the space we love". Bachelard (1994, p.xxxv) notes that such spaces are "eulogized", and are assigned "protective value" as well as other "imagined values". For Bachelard (1994, p.5), the current home contains a residue of our previous homes, as he writes "we bring our *lares* with us", maintaining the "treasures of former days" and multiplying the sense of security and protection. According to Ancient Roman Religion, 'Lares' were the guardian deities "of the hearth, fields, boundaries or fruitfulness, hero-ancestors, or an amalgam of these".[110] They were "believed to observe, protect and influence all that happened within the boundaries of their location or function".[111]

Elizabeth's study can be seen as one of Bachelard's (1994) well loved 'felicitous spaces' through its abundant associations with warmth and cosiness. This feeling is given added weight by the reference to the family bookcase that was built by her husband for their first house. The sense of felt security within Elizabeth's study is thus magnified by this continuity with the past, and with the emotional link provided by the knowledge that this piece of furniture was handmade by her husband to suit its particular purpose. This bookcase with its pull out desk is the perfect repository and guardian (Lares) for Elizabeth's laptop.

The laptop is not an 'unheimlich', or out-of-place, singularity in this cosy environment, but is as cosseted as an unborn child in its "womblike" hole of research paraphernalia. Elizabeth evidently has maternal, nest-building feelings associated with this piece of communications technology and has carved out a little emotional niche in which it can take pride of place. The incense and the carefully regulated noise level of the music add to the feeling of warmth and relaxation surrounding the laptop. This laptop is well beloved.

[109] Bachelard, G., 1994. *The poetics of space.* Boston: Beacon Press.
[110] Wikipedia, 2011. *Lares*. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lare>, [accessed 10.05.11]
[111] Ibid.

And yet a feeling of angst begins to emanate from the laptop as soon as Elizabeth contemplates writing her Blog. Although Elizabeth has carefully explained the protective values she has assigned to the ambience surrounding the laptop, these are in some sense designed to counterbalance Bachelard's (1994, p.xxxv) notion of "adverse forces". The adversity derives from the guilt she feels about not updating her research Blog regularly, combined with a sense of powerless and inutility that the Blog may not be read by her intended audience anyway. The Blog can be an uncomfortable place for Elizabeth in other ways since it may lead unwittingly to charges of academic plagiarism. Elizabeth has carved out a niche for her laptop within her home, in the same way she expects that her laptop, and the associated web tools it allows her to access, will carve out a niche for her with respect to 'My Public'. Elizabeth's sense of self and her identity as a researcher, are emotionally bound up with the tools that facilitate the public display of her expert knowledge. For Elizabeth, the Blog, like her study, becomes a type of residence for her public to inhabit. Her maternal, nest-building instincts decree that she should build this place so that people "feel at home and comfortable" within it. She wishes to design it as yet another "felicitous space" in which people think things like "that's interesting", and feel like "smiling" as a result of the things they read there. The Blog is also felicitous in that it empowers her own linguistic creativity and is an escape from "jargon and academese". It is also a place to regain a sense of an autonomous and separate self after years raising children; a place to be "a creative being all of my own".

PARTICIPANT RESPONSE

> I like it! I like the idea that my laptop is almost an icon. I also see that I probably imbue everything with emotion, and I hold objects (real and virtual) to have special significance. There is a word and a theory about that, but I can't remember what it is. It is not the object that is important, it is the history or story that it holds. I am in Uni today, at the temporary nest, but when I get I home will have to label the "study" the "Felicitous space".

The researcher's intervention – provision of a commentary to the participant – added to Elizabeth's reflexive awareness of the phenomenal worlds of using her laptop and writing a blog, such that she was in some (minor) way changed by the process of producing the creative writing (discursive interpretation) about her experiences. This is in line with Myerhoff's view of the mutual reflexivity of participant and researcher,

and that neither party remains unchanged in the process of discovery (see Section 2.2 above).

SUMMARY OF ELIZABETH'S INTERPRETATION

Technology – in the form of a laptop and a blog – are entwined with Elizabeth's identity as a researcher and knowledgeable expert in her field of endeavour. In the main technology is a positive force, but it does give moments of personal angst. Identity processes are at work in the writing of Blogs since this activity enables Elizabeth to express her thoughts, and at the same time deliver them to an audience. There is also an element of self-publicity here in that her intellectual property has become a form of commodity which has public value, and she wishes this to be openly recognised.

9.2 Using Facebook –'the innards are on the outside'

Penny's discussion of her use of Facebook turned to personal family matters, in particular the uploading of baby scan photographs, as is highlighted in the following exchange:

> **Penny:** Yeah, I suppose for me it would be things like friends and family, and friends of friends and they do that odd little bit where they, you'll know it's somebody's birthday so you remain on a sort of familiar level rather than… you might not have known that otherwise, so you can actually send them birthday messages, you know, 'have a good birthday'. All sorts of stuff isn't there... photographs of families, incidents that they've had. Somebody actually put a photograph on there of their baby in the womb, you know those scans, the first scan. I didn't even know she was pregnant.
> **Melanie:** Giggles (in a slightly surprised way)
> **Penny:** That's kind of, that's too much information, I suppose. Maybe, it's very, it's very expansive isn't it? People disclose more don't they?

The fact that one of her acquaintances has uploaded a photo of her own womb is, for Penny, a failure to respect one's own personal identity and that of the unborn child. For Penny this over-display of visual information is a violation of privacy, in that it is just 'too much information'. This conversation thus provides a very telling metaphor about the use of Facebook (and other software tools generally) in the opinion of some older people, which can be shortened to 'the innards are on the outside' (third voice phenomenon), or 'turning oneself inside out'. It would seem that Penny suspects that people feel seduced by Facebook into revealing too many of their inmost secrets, things that should remain fundamentally private. This can be seen as 'eroding the inhibitions surrounding one's identity'. The giggle in the middle

of Penny talking about this was because firstly the researcher found the idea of baby scans on Facebook slightly obscene, then had a bolt of recognition about it being a visual metaphor.

These startled reactions of participant and researcher to a baby scan being placed on Facebook have a profound resonance with the idea in Light's (2010, p.583) article which suggest that identities are being turned inside out by technology.[112] The display of bodily insides on Facebook is also further evidence supporting Light's (2010, p.588) discussion of phenomenologist literature, which concerns "how tools *extend* bodily function and boundaries and thus impact on identity". For Penny, Facebook has indeed extended the boundaries of her friend's body, putting insides on public view, thus turning Penny into the unwitting audience for the physical innards of her friend's identity. Light's (2010) article also highlight's how Goffman's[113] work on back- or front-stage performances has been explored with respect to technology (such as mobile phones), and that most people would feel on a privacy level that "their insides should be backstage" (Light 2010, p.559). Penny's exchange further corroborates Light's (2010) finding that 'insides' are not for public theatre. Penny further expands on her ideas concerning what should be the public and private face of personal identity, and whether technology is eroding these boundaries:

Penny: Or we have got used to the idea of keeping some things as a social face and some things that are secret?
Melanie: Mmm…
Penny: But having… is that eroded or by-passed because you have become so used to using that medium? And the more familiar it becomes the less inhibited you become…
Melanie: Mmm…
Penny: You know, those cues are sort of ignored and you just go ahead with it, go on with the idea? No, it seems such an open way of communicating doesn't it? And also it's a sort of generational thing. I always find that, you know, the children's… what they divulge is entirely different. It's not general, but obviously, I think [my son] would divulge more on Facebook than [my daughter] would bother with. So that's, you know, but she, because she has children she feels she wouldn't.

Here Penny examines the idea of an identity we perform (the performative, dramaturgical, front-stage identity of Goffman), or in other words the social face (mask, persona), and the private one we keep to ourselves (Goffman's back-stage

[112] This interview and analysis were carried out prior to reading Light's (2010) article.
[113] Light gives the citation as: Goffman E. The presentation of self in everyday life. Penguin Books; 1959. (1990)

identity). Penny goes on to explore whether Facebook, through its daily familiarity, is 'eroding the inhibitions surrounding identity' (eroding the mask) or bypassing this conception entirely so that no mask is used whatsoever. However, she goes on to qualify these thoughts. As Penny, notes there are still certain inhibiting factors, notably her daughter will not exhibit certain things on Facebook because of her own children, thus maintaining a sense of family decorum. This ironically brings the topic back to where it started; whether you allow people to become familiar with your family (baby scans) or keep your children's privacy sacred. The idea of the 'familiar' thus remains true to its origin in the word 'familia' (Latin – family). 'Overfamiliar' thus becomes the over-displaying of one's family by public display of baby scans.

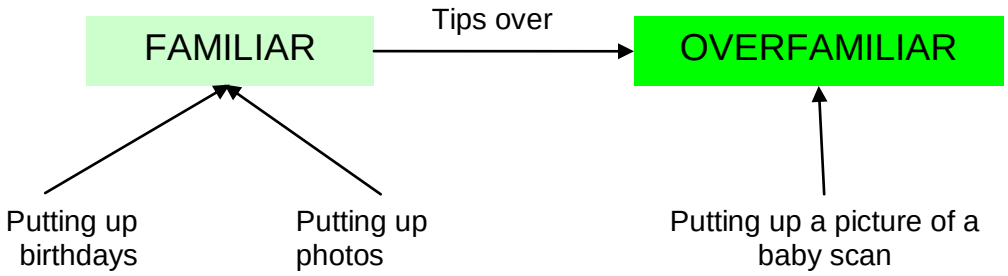

Figure 19 The familiar and the overfamiliar in social networking usage

9.3 Using Facebook – 'Bricolage' or 'identities manufactured from trash'

During a discussion about Facebook, Penny raised questions concerning individual subjectivity and how it is constructed using the available software tools:

Penny: […] You know, if you go to work, somebody's not very well, or there's been some bad news, and then they say 'ooh I think I should tell you in case you think, you know, I'm being a bit off with you'. It's not…It's that kind of. You can disclose that much. You don't necessarily have to disclose the nitty-grittys, do you?
Melanie: Mmm. So, you know, it's still kind of only selective. Even though there's more of it, it's still selective. You are still portraying something that's private and secret in your own particular way. There's still something, you know, you've wrapped it up and couched it in a certain way.
Penny: Huhuhu! Yeah, do we think that Facebook page is representative of us, you know, as a unique person?
Melanie: Um..yeah. It's a set of soundbites and snapshots of what you want someone to know
Penny: Um, on a particular day…
Melanie: Mmm.
Penny: …on a particular time.
Melanie: Mmm.
Penny: …in a particular mood.

This conversation demonstrates the third voice phenomenon at play, since Penny's idea of nitty-grittys brought to mind the idea of verbal/textual/graphical 'bits and pieces' and how people might select from these sound-bites to portray things about selfhood and identity. Penny wonders how consonant these grouped sound-bites are with any actual identity. Are they in any way 'representative' of an individual? Or have people merely performed a process of 'bricolage' to fabricate a new online identity out of bits of everyday, mundane trash? Harriet echoes the feeling that the materials that people choose to represent themselves are frequently very banal:[114]

Harriet: There's something about Facebook. Umm, I just think it's so boring. If people used it creatively, but as far as I'm concerned most people abuse Facebook. I've not even really looked at Facebook to see what it is. But just listening to it, it's like people say 'I've just made a cup of tea and I'm going to sit down and have spaghetti'. To me it's banal.

These ideas resonate with Lawler's (2008) discussion of identity 'bricolage' alluded to in the literature reviews above. Facebook can turn everyone into a 'bricoleur', a postmodern term for someone who can "make do with whatever is at hand, rather than fuss over technical expertise".[115]

Barnatt (2011) explains that Web 2.0 services facilitate the mash-up of all types of data, in comparison to Web 1.0 which was about viewing delivered content:

> Whereas the unnamed "Web 1.0" that came before it was largely concerned with creating and viewing online content (reflected in the browser wars and in a proliferation of websites that few people ever visited), the Web 2.0 concept highlights services that allow people to find and manipulate content, coupled with those that enable all types of media and services to be published and interlinked (or "mashed") in places that lots of people actually know about.

In a sense, the Web 2.0 toolkit could thus itself be classed as a bricoleur/bricolage phenomenon, since it is now basically do-it-yourself out of the detritus of life rather than dependent on the technical expertise of others to produce quality content for us

[114] I remember a conversation with a late baby boomer like myself who had started a blog and wrote all kinds of philosophical things on it. He gained no response. Then he started writing things like 'Cheeses Saves' and was inundated with replies.
[115] The Bookman, 2011. *Postmodern terms.* <http://thebookman.wordpress.com/2008/03/01/postmodern-terms-absence-to-curtain-wall/>, [accessed 07.11.11].

(the high culture of experts shifts to the low culture of crowds). To illustrate the ability of Web 2.0 to create instant bricolage, here is a diagrammatic mash-up of Facebook statuses apparently representing the researcher's 'Facebook' 'identity':[116]

Figure 20 Data mash-up of researcher's Facebook statuses

9.4 Using Facebook and Twitter – 'the secular confessional/pulpit'

Penny notes the transformation in her friend's ability to open up about the death of her mother, a phenomenon seemingly brought about by the use of Facebook:

> **Penny:** But, er… yes, I am always quite surprised. [My friend] put a lot about her bereavement. Her mother had passed away and she really opened up on Facebook, in a way that I don't think she would have.
> **Melanie:** That's a kind of…what you are saying is, I think, a kind of confessional. It's almost like um…
> **Penny:** …a new religion.
> **Melanie:** It's like having a priest that you kind of confess all to. And the priest might be able to say something back or might not.
> **Penny:** Oooh yes…

Penny is raising the issue of a key milestone in the lifecourse stage here, or in other words the discontinuity of personal identity through the death of a significant family member. Penny seems to be implying that the shock of this discontinuity has caused another personal discontinuity – that of opening up about personal grief – such that

[116] Instantly, one can see that the researcher is indeed associated with all things academic (university, research, academia, fellowship) and enjoys typical research student pursuits like drinking coffee and eating biscuits, frequently in a bar known as the Slug and Lettuce).

writing on Facebook almost becomes a cathartic confessional. Facebook, in this sense, becomes the priest to whom you can confess your problems and issues. Facebook thus bears witness to the events of your life, validating your personal identity without judgment; people may give their opinion, but Facebook - the technology - is itself mute but all seeing.

Social networking tools can thus be seen as part of a new phase in what Foucault would call the "culture of confession", which since the Middle Ages has become of increasing importance to society (Sparknotes 2011). As one commentary on Foucault's work highlights, "in law, we demand the confession of criminals" and "in literature, we relish self-conscious confession" (Sparknotes 2011). Confession may have the idea of legal necessity, but it has also come to denote "a form of liberation from repressive powers that try to silence us" (Sparknotes 2011). Facebook thus provides the facility to produce self-conscious confessions and liberate people from silence. Confession advances our personal subjectivity in various ways (Sparknotes 2011):

> Foucault writes that we have become "subjects in both senses of the word": we are subjected to powers that draw confessions from us, and through confession we come to see ourselves as thinking subjects, the subject of confession. (Sparknotes 2011)

Confession on Facebook thus enhances and re-contextualises Penny's friend's subjectivity; it gives vent to her grief and re-confirms her status as a valid thinking subject in the face of personal loss and tragedy.

The conversation between Penny and the researcher moves on to the idea of Facebook as the general public's answer to *OK! Magazine*, but the idea of secular confession remains pertinent:

Melanie: But these are the kind of things that would normally be passed around your immediate circle but are now like 'broadcast news'. Hahaha. Some 'broadcast news' phrase just popped into my head.
Penny: Oh, you think it's the equivalent of OK! Magazine?
General laughter.
Melanie: Yes!
Penny: Confessing their love life, or lack of love life, or… 'ooh look, you should all be like us!' (laughing)
Melanie: Yeahssss…
Penny: Are we all the same, or are we not that different from you?

Facebook is here experienced as a personalised version of *OK! Magazine*, which is a publication which offers secular confessions about the love life, and other pieces of gossip, concerning celebs. Its front cover of celeb photos and sound-bites resembles a pastiche of Facebook's photograph albums and informal status updates. The inference here is that everyone can be a 'minor celeb' now – you can be famous in certain circles – amongst the 500 or so friends that you have. Facebook's photograph captioning facilities allow you the capability for self-publication and self-expression in immediate visual and textual manifestations. You can give yourself an identikit 'image' in minutes.

Penny notes that these self-publications can invite comparisons between the identity on display and that of the actual and invented self-publications of others. Displaying yourself in a certain manner can thus be seen as a standard against which others can judge themselves. In effect when Penny asks "are we all the same, or are we not that different from you?", she is querying whether these mundane manifestations of "shiny, happy people"[117] are actually the quotidian experience of millions, or just a plastic expression which has no basis in reality. Photographs of people are often 'composed' just for the shot and do not represent an actual happening. Since Facebook does, however, enable such manifestations, perhaps they will also facilitate a group identity of mundane-ness, thus becoming constitutive of the phenomenon rather than expressive of it.

It is relevant here to draw attention to Twitter, where self confession is reduced to inconsequential sounding 'tweeting'. On Twitter the language has developed round the idea of 'following', in the way that spiritual leaders have 'followers'. Thus everyone is at once a potential spiritual leader and also a potential disciple to

[117] A reference to R.E.M.'s single of the same name with lyrics as follows:

Shiny happy people holding hands
Shiny happy people laughing

Everyone around love them, love them
Put it in your hands
Take it take it
There's no time to cry
Happy happy
Put it in your heart
Where tomorrow shines
Gold and silver shine

LyricsDomain, 2011. *Shiny, happy people lyrics.* <http://www.lyricsdomain.com/18/rem/shiny_happy_people.html>, [accessed 04.11.11].

everyone else on Twitter. The same can also be said about Facebook since it too can be seen as a network of interlinked leaders and followers. Ernest's (W) thoughts about Twitter being a new religious structure run parallel to the discussions about Facebook:

Ernest
Twitter

The idea seems to be that you either/or "follow" someone or some organisation or you publish stuff yourself and hope some other people will want to "follow" you. Is this not just a simple ego-trip for those people who want to be leaders who hope many people will want to follow them? Is this not just some modern day equivalent of a biblical disciple who preaches to the masses and hopes people will follow them? Is Twitter a new form of religion in Cyberspace? People preach their message and flocks of people eagerly wait on every word spoken? The only difference is that rather than attend a church once a week to hear a 1 hour sermon, followers can now sit in the comfort of their living room and listen to snippets of the sermon day and night as they choose? Is this why traditional religion is losing it's footing in this technological world we live in? Are we all becoming lazy, isolated, virtual worshippers who can worship whoever we want from anywhere in the world from our armchairs?

Ernest here experiences his subjectivity in the form of a press-ganged disciple to other people's confessional egos. He wonders how this method of communication will affect the public mindset generally; will people become innured to this sound-bite sermonising, which re-shapes their identities into technology-facilitated worshippers of anyone with a socially-networked opinion?

9.5 Using social tools – 'the changing face of shame'

Shame stems from an Old English word meaning 'to cover'[118]; covering oneself being seen as the outward expression of shame.[119] Feelings of shame are associated with self-evaluation and failed comparisons with standards or values as Hiebert (2011) explains:

> Shame is a reaction to other people's criticism, an acute personal chagrin at our failure to live up to our obligations and the expectations others have of us. Personal desires are sunk in the collective expectation. (Shame is) the primary device for gaining control over children and maintaining control over adults.

[118] Dictionary.Com, 2011. *Shame.* <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/shame>, [accessed 14.11.11].
[119] e.g. the story of Adam and Eve can be seen as one of shame at failing to meet certain standards laid down for them, and covering up that shame by the donning of clothes.

Using social tools can be seen as a means of 'uncovering' the self, or at least certain aspects of it, which could imply that the experience of 'shame' may lessen its hold for some individuals through increasing technology usage. Eddie mentions 'shame' in connection with technology usage as follows:

Melanie: So you think that people, you get the impression that people, are too willing to give their privacy away without even thinking about it?
Eddie: Too ready. That's right. Too, that's too much of a willingness to do it without thinking, that would be kind of a, sort of a, subtly influenced, you know into that, where we're not thinking. Who was it, I don't know, an Egyptian, they used to not want to have their photographs taken because the devil would steal their soul…
Melanie: Yeah!
Eddie : It's something there, even having their photograph taken, that's just a normal photograph… they thought it would do something to them, take something from them. Well, maybe they're right. Maybe they WERE right.
Melanie: Yeah !
Eddie : You know, we laugh at that, we laugh at that – we go how silly, that's a technophobia! You might call it a technophobia, but it might be something more profound for that human being to feel that they've let someone see… You know because, you think about child development and finding a case for things like that. You know, shame, healthy shame and unhealthy shame, and I know things like that to do with my old professional life. Those are very interesting subjects about whether we let ourselves be seen, and things like that. They are very profound to human behaviour and human development as well.

For Eddie using social technologies, and in particular the idea of taking and displaying photographs, is linked with ideas about the uncovering of self or 'letting yourself be seen'. In his discussion he refers back to cultural beliefs whereby having your photograph taken is regarded as having the ability to steal the soul. Eddie implies that people are too eager in their use of technology to give a part of themselves away; they reveal too much of themselves, thus allowing their identities to be stolen from them. This may have an old superstitious origin, yet it also has a basis in modern actuality since in externalising the self, artefacts of personal identity are created – like intellectual property, bank details, date of birth – which can be re-appropriated by others.

Feeling shame reveals our boundaries and hence our values to ourselves (Ryan n.d.). However, according to study participants like Eddie such boundaries, and hence our ability to feel the corrective processes of 'healthy shame' regarding our own behaviour, are being eroded by a willingness to put the self on ever-increasing display. It therefore brings into question how connected we are to the digital identities we create if we can let them loose in the online world without feeling a

sense of responsibility towards them. Eddie himself feels that he would not enter into this self-display arena:

Melanie: How would what you're saying apply to you like thinking about something like Facebook, where people are putting their photos on…
Eddie: Well, I wouldn't do that. I don't like it and I wouldn't do it. And I feel concerned for some of the people who are doing it. You don't have to put your face on. You can sometimes have a profile where that's not there. So that's someone who's chosen to be on Facebook but not show their face.

Eddie's feelings about shame were subsequently raised with Penny to see how others might feel about it:

Melanie: Yeah, what is it about disclosure, why do people want to disclose themselves?
Penny : I suppose there's no restraint mode is there? Whereas if it's face-to-face or you're in a crowd you're quite aware there's a knock-on effect…sometimes people go make their comments or judgments. You can read those in a face I suppose, or you can read them in body actions. But there's nothing to hold you back, so you can just, you can just perform.
[…]
So it doesn't kind of rein you in. (Laughs). If you're going to be really, you know, you might not be thinking, you know, that's a good thing to do, but you actually go OK. That's unusual. I accept that.
Melanie : So, there's something kind of uninhibiting about it…?
Penny : Yeah, I think so
Melanie : …is what you're saying…
Penny: Yeah, because there's nothing to restrain you…
Melanie: Yeah…
Penny: …in that respect. It's as if the cautionary notes in your head just don't actually have to come into play. Or maybe they do and you can ignore them! And think oh well, that's… that's how I feel at the moment. So no, that's OK.
Melanie : Well, what it recalls to my mind is, what you're saying, is like the reverse of what it used to be like, or what you **think** it used to be like, to live in a village where everybody knew each other. And there's no shame attributable to your actions on, or not necessarily, on the internet because you can't see the people face-to-face. Whereas in a small village everybody knows each other, and you can't do certain things because there will be a certain level of shame attached because everybody knows everybody's business… I'm still not quite sure whether that's it. You see what I am trying to…
Penny : Yeah, I do.
Melanie : Because people aren't there, physically, there's some kind of level of inhibition removed. That's what I am trying to get at. Not quite sure what I am saying…
Penny: No… and I suppose it's like bad news travelling quite fast in a village so you didn't actually have to… you didn't always have to say anything…
Melanie: Mmm..
Penny: …in a village environment did you?

Penny's discussion of the topic is related to the idea that the 'cautionary notes' that a feeling of personal 'shame' would activate are deadened or bypassed when releasing information about oneself onto the internet. Certain inhibiting factors no longer come into play, perhaps because the audience is invisible, or their immediate reactions cannot be seen or heard in the same manner as in the offline environment. The reaction of the whole invisible global village is feared less than the face-to-face

response of the local village. The online environment is thus having an impact on our 'shame' responses.

9.6 Using Facebook and Using Family Ancestry online – 'Re-membering' the self and family

'Re-membering' is defined here as an act of memory whereby disparate parts (members) of self or family are brought back together in the mind by the technologically facilitated action of the self or the community.

RE-MEMBERING THE INDIVIDUAL - SCHOOL DAYS

In the course of a busy human life parts of self-identity can become submerged. People can become fragmented, with random bits of themselves being entirely forgotten. Facebook, for Penny, has become a type of communal memory, enabling these hidden elements to re-surface unexpectedly; she explains what came to light following a school re-union:

Penny: Yes, you will have to have a look at those school piccies on the Facebook pages. I did put a comment. I did put 'God, was I ever young?'
Melanie: Oh no! Haha.
Penny: I didn't even remember them being taken. I mean, why should I?
Melanie: Mmm.
Penny: But that was so you were never there. It was kind of 'oh no'. It captured a really good moment of time, you know. And it was kind of quite pleasant really. My god. Yes. Those things that have happened. And they put all our exam results on. Haha.
Melanie: What?
Penny: Yes! I always thought, I've got 3 'O' levels. I've got 4!
General laughter.

Here Penny is helped to 're-member' various bits of her own past by the re-assembled school community of which she was once a part. The community has been brought together both in person and then online, and in the process has provided various missing links concerning her personal identity. Photographs of school events and even exam results have been uploaded to Facebook, and thus recalled to mind in a pleasantly startling way, enabling the joy of reminiscence and remembrance of things once lost.

Heredity

I AM the family face;
Flesh perishes, I live on,
Projecting trait and trace
Through time to times anon,
And leaping from place to place
Over oblivion.
(Thomas Hardy)[120]

Online family tree searches can highlight other disparate branches of the family, containing previously unknown family members all across the world. Different chains of ancestry following a different branch down through history are frequently brought to light, which were unknown before the research took place. The family identity is itself 're-membered' here as Penny highlights:

Penny: …But no, if I think about IT, if I think about computers, then I also am aware that it helps me with the family tree search because you suddenly find there are an awful lot of people out there who've put a vast amount of information on there and delving for it. It supports what you've found and it leads on to more information. So you can actually, you know… And you can make contacts with people. I've made contacts with Australia and Canada, and then they sent back photographs, certificates, all kinds of things which pushes you on a bit more. And you see the family likenesses and that's a bit weird.
Melanie: Teehee!
Penny: Well, it's true! You know the gene pool is quite strong! Over time certain attributes remain.

What stands out for Penny following her ancestry research is the family 'face', in line with Thomas Hardy's experience, such that a type of deathless identity is found which has continued on from the past and will live on long after the individual family members have passed away.

[120] See for example: Hardy (n.d.). *Heredity.* <http://web.cs.dal.ca/~johnston/poetry/heredity.html>, [accessed 04.04.12].

9.7 Being Digitally Included/Excluded – 'circulo de los amigos'

Eddie suggests that the idea of the internet society has such power now that to be outside of this 'circulo de los amigos' (circle of friends), is almost to mark you out as an identity-less non-person, as the following exchange highlights:

> **Eddie :** But it's obvious that, I mean my friend, who almost tried to suggest that I wouldn't have a part in society, I would be left out, a non-person, if I couldn't get involved in the internet at one point. I felt maybe he's right, you know, it's almost that powerful a thing. It's a version of reality. This is reality. If you're not involved in this internet interaction, where do you stand as a human being even? Do you know what I mean? That's a bit scary. Well, Picasso could say, well you know if you're not part of my group, like you fellows up here on the wall [gestures at the painting on the wall of the café which portrays some men sitting around a table in a café socialising], sitting round playing cards, chatting in the café – what's the Spanish word for it - circulo - or something? There's a circle of friends…
> **Melanie:** Yeah, yeah…
> **Eddie:** …you know, that he created round him and that was their reality. They were all the poets and the artists sitting round arguing, falling out with each other, insulting each other, you know what I mean, and all the rest of it. That's their form of reality. And if you're not part of that who are you? If you're not part of Picasso's gang, you know what I mean? That's a reality.

Eddie feels that being part of a certain 'circle' marks you with a certain identity, by virtue of the traits that the 'circle' in question possesses. Group membership (inclusion) has certain benefits, in that you are recognised and thus identified as a valid/valuable member, and can then partake of what is on offer. So many services and facilities that could be of benefit to older people are now going online that digital exclusion could lead to an older person 'underclass' if they do not join the 'circulo de los amigos', and thus mark themselves as digitally included.

9.8 Using Texting – 'texting is like smiling'

Marie's lived experience of texting is appreciative of the level of joy it can bring to herself and her relationships, thus increasing a positive view of self and others. As Marie explains in the following extract, for her, texting is like 'smiling':

Marie: And I think texting is, I don't know, I always feel that I am smiling when I text someone. It's almost like I'm smiling at them even though they're not there. Hahaha. And all I'm doing is looking at a piece of machinery and pressing keys on it.
[…]
Marie: And you see other people doing it as well. Texting away and they're sort of smiling at the phone. Haha.
Melanie: Haha.
Marie: So well, I suppose it sort of depends what sort of message you're sending. Usually if I'm texting someone, it usually is some sort of nice message, either something nice has happened to me or I am wishing them something nice.
Melanie: Mmm.
Marie: Like have a good holiday or that sort of thing, which is good.

Marie's impression of texting can be seen to add a new slant to the debate about benchmarking face-to-face as the best type of communication. The fact that Marie refers to a *facial* expression which cannot be seen by the recipient of the text message neatly circumvents the argument about the lack of face-to-face cues in digital exchanges. Marie simply restates technology itself in terms of human facial expressions; so instead of feeling that she is missing out on the cues that face-to-face brings she is simply re-assigning them to the technology. Texting becomes invested with a human smile. Texting is thus like smiling. It is a brief but happy thing. These digital smiles can be sent and received. The participant cannot but help smiling when she is texting. Texting becomes a small ray of techno-human sunshine, and is thus for Marie a hybridised phenomenon of human identity merged with technological affordances.

9.9 Using technology in a solitary way to communicate with the non-present – 'communicating apart together'

In the course of the conversation with Marie it became apparent that she had an agreement with her partner that they were in a committed relationship but that they were never going to live together. Marie drew attention to the fact that this now has a sociological term known as 'Living Apart Together' or LAT.[121] This phenomenon subsequently coloured the conversation about the idea of people sitting alone in their rooms communicating with people who were not co-present:

[121] See for example Answers.com, 2011. *Living apart together.* <http://www.answers.com/topic/living-apart-together-1>, [accessed 18.11.11]

Marie: … on the one hand, we are given by the media, I think, we're given the image of kids sitting alone in their rooms all the time, and not connecting with other people. And yet, in fact, what they seem to be doing all the time is connecting, just not necessarily face-to-face.
Melanie: Yeah, I kind of get drawn back to your thing about where you're 'apart together'.
Marie: Hehehe. Well, maybe that's what we're all doing then.
Melanie: Hahaha.
Marie: Not just me and my boyfriend.
Melanie: We are communicating apart together.
Marie: Yeah.

The conversation thus led to the coining of the term 'Communicating Apart Together' (CAT) – sitting alone but communicating with others. Critics of LATs may decide to see LAT behaviour as social deconstructionism in that it displaces the traditional family unit.[122] Likewise the increase in CAT behaviour could also be seen as a form of atomisation of society, whereby people cease to have social gatherings, preferring instead the company of their computer and online communication. However, in the light of her own experience with LATs, Marie chooses not to view CATs in this way, but instead seeing the phenomenon as a new form of 'connecting' with people that is afforded by the new technologies. Society is thus changing for Marie based on the individual identities of people who choose to engage in either CAT or LAT behaviour or both, but the change is not necessarily negative, just different.

9.10 Using Email compared to Facebook – 'emailing is business-like' and 'Facebooking is fun'

For some participants, email is a phenomenon that has been introduced through work, and it is therefore tainted with residual feelings about their business/working lives. Marie explains her concerns about the imperative nature of replying to emails:

Marie: Emails, for some reason I feel they're a bit, this is probably because of work, when I was working you felt you had to reply straightaway. Mmm, and no matter how much people said 'no, you don't, you should treat them just like correspondence that came in in letter form and deal with the urgent ones, important ones and the other ones', there was just this feeling that you had to deal with them all when they came in.

CALL AND RESPONSE

For Marie, the arrival of an email elicits a conditional, Pavlovian response; she feels

[122] Answers.com, 2011. *Living apart together.* <http://www.answers.com/topic/living-apart-together-1>, [accessed 18.11.11]

pressure to reply to the email straightaway because of its personal immediacy. An instantaneous seeming email appears to demand an instant response and she does not feel she can prioritise it. An unnecessary urgency is thus created around the arrival of an email. Emails feel more immediate than letters. Because emails arrive in real time people know the person has just sent it. A letter is already at least one day old when it arrives so the mind says it cannot be urgent. But with email, people know the sender is there, waiting, now. People feel them waiting. With a letter there is a time delay, the sender has done other things in the meantime. But people wish to please the email sender by answering in real time. Because people *can* synchronise the communication, they feel they *should* synchronise it. Letters, however, are always asynchronous.

UNFINISHED TASK SYNDROME/CHORE

Unfinished task syndrome - the Zeigarnik effect - states that people remember uncompleted or interrupted tasks better than completed tasks, as they set up a feeling of "narrative tension".[123] Thus the email Inbox – a list of unmanaged emails – can be seen as a form of tension generator, since they stick in the mind if they have not been answered. The Zeigarnik phenomenon may also help to explain why Marie feels the urge to respond immediately to an email as it relieves the tension and frees the mind to concentrate on other matters. Even with social mail then, the linear Inbox list can feel like a business-orientated set of tasks, staring at people and perpetuating the tension, thus ending up as a chore rather than as fun.

Rosie's (W) negative response to some aspects of the internet is founded on the hated linearity of the list, as she explains:

Rosie and Internet shopping:
Rosie: I have tried shopping online. I hate lists and this process is nothing but a set of lists.

Rosie and Google Searching:
Rosie: I have searched for information on my computer and what I got again was lists.

The list, whatever form it takes, is a work like chore and in no way inspires older people or sustains their interest. However, software such as Facebook enables social

[123] Wikipedia, 2011. *Suspense.* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suspense>, [accessed 21.11.10].

communication, but it feels more creative and hence more fun for the individual as it is not associated with work as Marie goes on to explain:

Marie: I'd had enough of blooming emails all day. The last thing I want to do is switch on the computer and look and see some more. And maybe even though I've been, I've left work 18 months, there is still a bit of a hangover of the feeling that email is somehow work related.
Melanie: Mmm.
Marie: Whereas when you get on Facebook it seems like fun. Hahaha.

Ernest (W) also examines the phenomenon of the business-like email, and why this has given way to other methods of interaction in the social arena:

Ernest - Email

Are these new communications methods the death of email? No. Email still provides the ideal framework for business communications and a lot of ecommerce activities that also have become commonplace. The newer methods are probably taking precedence for personal communication as they tend to be more real time and simpler forms of communication, whereas email is often seen as more formal. With increasingly hectic lives, the short and frequent communication through these newer means provides a more personal and simpler approach than traditional email and so these methods have increasingly taken over in these areas.

Ernest notes that the newer technologies – such as texts and Facebook statuses – have certain advantages in modern life through being shorter, more frequent and less formal than email. Email for Ernest is now becoming more 'traditional' as a communication method, and as such is beginning to rank alongside the letter as something mired in formality which needs more thought and involvement.
It would seem that when not in a business environment, people do not want to be faced with business-like tools. Non-work time needs to be about playing, being creative and having 'fun'. It also needs to be simpler and more spontaneous.

9.11 'Masquerading as me'

9.11.1 Using Geocaching software

Ernest (W) is one of the few participants in the study to confess to deliberately masking his identity through the affordances of technology, not to be nefarious himself but to defend against the possible nefariousness of others. The piece of writing he contributed to the study concerning his development of a pseudonym for the purposes of using the Geocaching website is given in the text box below. The

piece is curiously ironic, oxymoronic even, in that his attempts to deliberately conceal his identity through the use of a pseudonym are described in a manner that demonstrates his keenness to reconstruct a meaningful and authentic, if somewhat cryptic, personal identity. His elaborate method of producing a pseudonym that at the same time conceals and reveals both his name and where he lives demonstrate an unwillingness to let go of the idea of 'naming' (pseudonym creation) as a form of identity management. Ernest evidently desires to maintain some level of personal authenticity in his masquerade. Lawler (2008, p.103) suggests that, in identity terms, people are in actual fact only masquerading as themselves in any case, stresses that people frequently do wish to remain true to what they feel is a unique kernel of identity, but the reality is that the self is only really developed in the process of producing the masquerade. Ernest is in effect impersonating himself, or performing himself, through the use of the pseudonym he has chosen (Lawler 2008, p.103).

It is interesting that his self-confessed "cautious approach" to his pseudonym choice is echoed in the stealthy online/offline activity in which he engages, thus further constituting his 'conservative' identity. The Geocaching website in itself is an oxymoron since it produces a 'community' of 'solitary individuals' pursuing a common aim related to the 'discovery' by a select few of objects 'concealed' from the many. Ernest's discussion concerning his lived experience of attempts to hide himself are oddly a type of self-deception since he takes great pains to re-reveal himself but in a furtive manner, in the same way that geocaches are only hidden to be found again.[124]

[124] Ernest's piece also corroborates Penny's view of social networking phenomena as a form of *OK! Magazine* where everyone can be a celebrity.

Ernest (1960)
Online Identities

I see the Internet as a vast source of uncertainty, where a very user friendly interface can in fact hide nefarious activity that underlies this medium. Technology is a complex thing and inevitably there are many people who would like to exploit the weaknesses in the Internet for their own personal gain (be it financial or simply intellectual). As I understand this risk I am very cautious of entering any information on the web which reveals my true identity. Identity theft has become a "new" crime driven by the ever increasing number of places where our names, addresses etc are held, and it is fear of this that is the main factor in me hiding my true self from the unknown millions who may have access to my personal details.

Many web sites these days seem to recognise this risk and so ask you to create a "user name" and password in order to access their site. This user name is then linked to your true identity (ie name, email address) behind the scenes, allowing you to masquerade under a pseudonym. This in itself makes me feel a little more secure, in the knowledge that only I have access to my account with the site in question, and no one else knows that it is really me. This idea of masquerading under a different identity seems to fit most people's cautious approach to things and allows a degree of bravado touched with meekness as we can all have a presence on the world stage of the Internet, yet at the same time remain relatively obscure. We can all be a celebrity without the trappings that go with the celebrity lifestyle....

I always use the same Pseudonym, for simplicity sake. As long as you choose a relatively obscure pseudonym then this should be possible all the time. I derived my pseudonym simply from a combination of a name linked to where I used to live and my nickname from my younger days; this then gave a pseudonym that reasonably accurately describes who I am (a person of a certain name who lives in a certain place), without giving too much away. In addition, as I first chose this pseudonym for the Geocaching.com website (see below), the first part of the name seemed a suitable one, as I chose a fictional character who has 2 identities; their real self who is seen as a respectable and well-to-do individual (the real me), and their other self who is masked and the complete opposite of their true identity (me as a geocacher). This seemed a very apt character for a website which was based around stealth, secrecy and concealment. I even added a photo of this character (in their alta ego) against my profile to emphasise the fact that I was hiding my true identity behind a mask and costume that covered up who I really was.

The Geocaching.com website is interesting, in that, by it's very nature, most people would want to hide their true identity. Geocaching, being the search for hidden containers using a GPS, is to most people a clandestine activity, in that you need to be discrete in looking for these objects and you do not want to be seen by others for fear of giving away the location and contents of these containers. As such, the hiding of your identity in the website itself complements this secretive activity. Most geocachers never meet others as the chances of going to a geocache location at the same time as another geocacher is generally quite small. Most geocachers only publish their general location in the details that others can see, thus retaining the air of secrecy that generally surrounds this activity. There are opportunities to contact other registered users by mail, but you do not get to see the email address of the person concerned unless this person replies to your email using their standard email program. This again seems to complement the security over hiding your true identity when using this site.

9.11.2 Creating a WeeMee

Elizabeth's use of WeeMee – an avatar creation software tool – echoes Ernest's invention of pseudonyms which allow him to 'masquerade' as himself. Elizabeth describes how she creates an avatar of herself in the following way:

Elizabeth: So I had a WeeMee, that reflected what I looked like, small and freckled and at the moment with red hair. I haven't always had red hair, it's something that's happened over the past 10 years. Although I always felt red-headed. My grandmother had red hair. And I inherited freckles but I had brown hair. But then eventually I decided, no, my hair's going to have to go red, so.
Melanie: Haha.
Elizabeth: So that's my identity of me, is short, freckled, glasses, red hair and that sort of personifies me.

Elizabeth takes pains to describe her WeeMee and its personally relevant 'authenticity'; her WeeMee really is a miniature version of the self. So, in spite of the affordances of technology for identity manipulation, she creates for herself a WeeMee avatar in her own image; like Ernest she is also concealed and revealed at the same time.

Lawler (2008, p.101) has highlighted a Western preoccupation between "semblance and substance", that is between "*doing* an identity (performing)" and "*being* an (authentic) identity". However, Lawler (2008, pp.103-4) suggests that this distinction is false, positing instead that the self only exists in the actual masquerade as a type of "self-impersonation". So performances do not *mask* the "true person" but instead "*make us persons*" Lawler (2008, p.106).

Both Ernest and Elizabeth inadvertently re-create themselves whilst trying to mask themselves, in a subconscious act of identity authenticity.

9.12 Bluetoothing ourselves – 'experiencing life outside the body'

Ernest (W) indulges in a 'third space' activity of imagining the future in which humans have been hybridised with a form of 'Bluetooth' (wireless connection) technology, to enable 'out of body' and vicarious experiences; this imagined experience is given in the written extract below. In his extract, Ernest is questioning the very basis of the human identity, or condition. Can he still be human and yet be dispossessed of the body? Can he still be human if he has been hybridised with technology? However, he acknowledges that what makes life worthwhile is the feeling of activity, so the bodiless brain would need to be kept stimulated in some way. Fresh stimulus could also reach the brain by being attached to a new body,

hence enabling a vicarious existence previously denied. Thinking about technology in this way has enabled Ernest to project himself into the future where he no longer physically exists yet could maintain eternal life, theoretically circumventing the ageing and death process:

Ernest (1960)
I don't want my body! An out of body experience is on its way!

Can we separate our physical being from our psychological being? Can our brain co-exist with our body without being directly linked to it? Could this allow us to experience our lives outside of our own body? Maybe this is closer to reality than it first seems.....

Our very "being", our human condition, is driven by the interaction between our nerve endings and our brain. The way we experience the world around us is similarly a result of sensory experiences.....but all of this takes place within the confines of our physical embodiment, with the brain being the "end point" and processing machine that is responsible for our worldly experiences. All our sensory experience results from the link between our nervous system and the brain; this is a physical link at present, but if the nervous system is likened to a communications network (which indeed it is), there is the potential for this communications network to become "wireless", thus allowing the brain to become separated from the nervous system.

If a means could be found to enable nerve endings in the brain to use a form of wireless communication (eg Bluetooth) to bridge the gap to the brain, then the brain could theoretically be removed from the body with no change of sensory experience. As all other brain-related activities outside the sensory (eg emotion, memory, decision making etc) are confined within the brain itself, there should be no direct effect on any of this by separating the brain from the body.

What would it mean if the brain was detached from the body but all brain functions were the same? Would this then allow us to "see" ourselves from outside of our body? Would this seem any different to how we perceive the world now? In theory no, but surely there would have to be some difference? What if our physical body was destroyed or killed off? Would we still exist, but with only our memories to go on, as no visual stimuli would reach our brain any more? Would this be an "existence" worth living? Would we get bored by just our memories of what has gone before? What if we could link in via the same "wireless" methodology into someone elses physical body? Would we then get a new existence and would this enable eternal life?

9.13 Summary of the chapter

The chapter represents the last of the 'data analysis' chapters which provide the evidence for the System Map (Grounded Theory) that has been developed by the study.

This chapter has explored what Giddens terms the 'reflexive awareness' of experience mediated by the phenomena of technology, which was discussed in the introduction to this chapter. There are several forces at work here in older people's 'discursive interpretations' of the digital technologies they experience which can be summarised below:

- older people want their technologies to be homely 'spaces' replete with valuable emotion, creativity, self-fulfilment, and values associated with the warmth of human identity, such that they make people feel like smiling and being content.
- older people are wary about giving too much of their 'innards' away, sensing an element of shame in the wanton 'uncovering' of identity, yet paradoxically create pseudonyms and avatars in their own image as an act of inverted identity authenticity.
- older people are highly bemused by modern technology and love to deconstruct its phenomenological qualities[125], particularly its confessional, *OK! Magazine*-like nature where everyone can be cool and famous but only amongst the circle of the 500 friends that you currently have.
- older people feel that being assessed as 'digitally excluded' is to be potentially labelled as being on the outside of the 'circulo de los amigos' and so as identity-less in a technologically orientated world.

These meanings are the reflexive and 'active accomplishments' of the older people in this study with regards to the 'phenomenological worlds' presented by technology.

The next and final chapter will present a series of reflections on the present study as a whole, and present these reflections in the light of previous studies and theories concerning the processes of 'growing older'. The final chapter thus represents the maturation of the grounded theory process.

[125] Rather in the manner of the Cadbury's Smash aliens discussing how earthlings make mashed potatoes from real potatoes, and then fall about laughing. Older people are still able to see the 'strangeness' of technology as befits the phenomenological approach described in the methodology.

Chapter Ten: Reflections and Conclusions

This chapter highlights a series of reflections occasioned by the study as a whole, which starts at the very broad level of the field of ageing research and then narrows in to focus finally on the unique contribution of the present study to the field of older people's usage of ICT as a mediator in the context of the 'reflexivity of identity' and 'lived experience'.

The data produced by the study is first reviewed in line with other theories and studies not contained within either the sensitising literature review at the start of the study, or the on-going literature review which took place as each new category theme was developed and discussed. This approach is entirely consistent with the Grounded Theory Method/Methodology elaborated earlier. It is re-stated here for clarity so that the reader is aware that what follows contains new literature review on the topic of ageing and ageing research generally, and then on older people's usage of technology more specifically.

The chapter will then reflect on the key artefacts produced by the study, which are the grounded theory represented in terms of:

- **The System Map of (Digital) Identity** – which is a tripartite schema of identity aligned with Gidden's theories on the 'reflexivity of identity' in conjunction with the mediating influence of technology.
- **The Schema of Subject Positions** - or in other words the 'reflexive identities' which were evidenced in the discussions and writings of older people.

The chapter will next move on to examine the implications arising from the study for the marketing and design of technology products which will be used by older people, the limitations of the present study and suggestions for further research.

The conclusions will then summarise the key contribution to knowledge of the present research study.

10.1 Ageing and Ageing Research

This study is part of the Sus-IT project and is contained within the New Dynamics of Ageing Programme (NDA). Questions about both the nature of ageing and the nature of ageing research were therefore at the forefront of the researcher's mind throughout the study in order that 'taken for granted' assumptions about the nature of the ageing process could be consistently challenged. There was a desire to avoid replicating stereotypical personal and social constructions concerning the topic of ageing. At issue here is when 'ageing' research becomes 'ageist' research.

10.1.1 The field of Ageing and Ageing Research generally

Schaie (1993, p.49) has noted that ageism can enter into research in a number of ways as given below:

(a) assumptions of restrictions on behaviour due to age
(b) positive or negative stereotypes about older people
(c) belief that age is usually or always a relevant dimension to the variables under study
(d) the untested assumption that data from one age group can be generalised to others

Schaie (1993, p.49) is questioning here "a cultural belief that age is a significant dimension by definition and that it defines a person's social position, psychological characteristics, or individual experience". This has obvious implications for thinking about age and identity related issues. Relying on chronological age is, according to Schaie (1993, p.50), "often a poor index of group differences". So although the present study incorporates people over the age of fifty, it should not be assumed that this implies that they are in any way a unified group (Schaie 1993, p.50). As Schaie (1993, p.50) suggests "most research on adulthood shows that differences between those in their 60s and those in their 80s are far greater than those between 20- and 60-year-olds". Generalisations concerning attitudes and behaviour are correspondingly difficult to draw for the age group being studied.

The 'biological model' of 'decrement or decline' is also scrutinised by Schaie (1993, p.49), who suggests that in the absence of other theoretical frameworks for ageing there has been an over-reliance on models that emphasise the negative stereotypes of "decline, deterioration, dependency, or disability". In line with this, studies have

emphasised older people as being dependent and care needing, when in fact they are frequently the care providers for both their own parents and for their grandchildren (Schaie 1993, p.50). Perhaps the most that can be said is that advancing chronological age increases the *probability* of disease related changes, but not that age is in itself a *causal* factor (Schaie 1993, p.50). Schaie (1993, p.51) therefore recommends ruling out 'age' as a causal variable in research findings.

Mowat (2004), a later commentator than Schaie (1993), also raises concerns about constructions of ageing and how these have affected research programmes. For Mowat (2004, p.14) ageing has frequently been seen as a 'problem' with the following attributes:

- something to be feared
- something to be ignored
- something that happens to other people
- a problem to "fix" through social policy
- a biological mistake that will eventually be rectified through scientific endeavour

Mowat (2004, p.15) suggests instead that ageing should be viewed less as a problem than as a time for creative opportunity with the following alternative features:

- rejects passive ageing
- is evangelistic about the benefits of ageing
- an individually constructed golden age
- an age of wisdom
- the third age of learning

The "ageing as a problem" discourse views older people as a "drain on society" and its resources, which has had a resultant effect on social policy; in this discourse older people become passive recipients of care programmes and other policies which are designed to make them "noiseless and untroubling" (Mowat 2004, p.24). Alternatively, the "ageing as opportunity" discourse presents older people as active and creative participants who have much to contribute to society; in this discourse they are an important resource to be tapped by the Big Society.

Nelson (2005, p.207) supplies some of the potential reasons behind the ageism of society which are constituted as a type of "prejudice against our feared future self". The two approaches receiving the most attention are deemed by Nelson (2005, pp.213-4) to be the following:

- **Functional perspective** – "negative attitudes toward older adults serve an ego-protective function for the stereotyping individual"; in other words people feel more hostile towards older people because potentially unwanted aspects of their existence pose a future threat to the self (Nelson 2005, pp.213-4)
- **Terror Management Theory** – later life is associated with death and the facing of personal mortality; ageist attitudes thus become a form of anxiety buffer which distances the individual from older people and hence their own death (Nelson 2005, p.214)

It is argued that the effect of these ageist behaviours is to create a self-fulfilling vicious circle in which older people imbibe these negative stereotypes or discourses (e.g. the dependency of age, passivity) and then begin to behave accordingly, which then lends weight to the original stereotype so reinforcing the negative treatment of older people (Nelson 2005, p.210).

Bengtson et al. (2009, pp.29-34) have reviewed the field of ageing research and recognise the following eight sets of theories or constructs of ageing and their inherent dualisms. These have an impact on who society believes older people are, and in turn who they believe themselves to be; they are therefore of direct relevance to ideas concerning identity and older people. The following is a summarised version of the theories highlighted by Bengtson et al. (2009, pp.29-34):

1. Ageing as a disease/ageing as a normal process – this relates to ideas surrounding whether ageing is pathological or just physiological. The construct of ageing as a disease has heavily pejorative connotations which perpetuate ageist responses. Ageing as a normal process is designed to counteract the 'ageing as a disease' theories.

2. Prolongevity/Natural limits to ageing – the battle between those who believe that dramatic extensions to life are possible and those who believe that there are fundamental biological limits.

3. Disengagement Theory/Activity Theory – theories of the progressive disengagement from society of the older person have been counteracted by theories of productive and successful aging.

4. The Marginalized/The Self Dependent – theories concerning how older people are progressively marginalised through social factors and social policy decisions versus theories of growing empowerment and autonomy.

5. Reductionist/Holistic Approaches to Theory Building – discipline specific reductionism with regards to gerontology influenced by biomedical models versus multidisciplinary, cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches which capture the dynamic dimensions of later life.

6. Dialogic/Continuity Theories of Ageing – life trajectories are disrupted by economic, social and political factors forcing older adults to cope with dysfunctions versus theories which emphasise continuities in adult's experiential learning and adaptation.

7. Chronological/Age-Irrelevant Definitions of the Last Stage(s) of Life – occasions where chronological age is selected as the onset of old age versus theories which suggest that chronological age is a poor predictor of any important dimension in later life.

8. Stereotypes/Varieties of Age – stereotypical views (usually negative) which homogenise representations of later life versus views which account for the varieties of later life meanings and experiences. The latter are deemed to be influenced by other variables than just age (including race, gender, class and region).

10.1.2 The Present Study and the Topic of Later Life

The theories presented above are discussed briefly in the table below with reference to both the Sus-IT project and the present study, in order to demonstrate whether they are compatible with either the ethos or the results of the research undertaken. They are also discussed in order to elucidate whether the research can shed any light on the validity of the theories. The material in the table relating to the theories on ageing can be found in Bengtson et al.'s (2009, pp.29-34) discussion, unless otherwise indicated. The material is tabulated in pairs of theories and is designed to be read on a row by row basis.

Table 45 Theories on the ageing process compared to Sus-IT and the present study

	Theory – Part one of the binary	**Theory – Part two of the binary**
Physical /Biological	**1. Ageing as a disease** Sus-IT and this study effectively reject the 'Medical Model' of later life as this views the person as the problem and that they must thus adapt to the way society is currently constructed. Instead Sus-IT believes that society and its provision can be altered to be more inclusive and user friendly.	**1. Ageing as a Normal Process** Sus-IT sees ageing as a normal process and so mainstream technologies should be adjusted to take account of the normal physiology of ageing. Age-related adjustments can be made to technology which adapt to the individual's physiological changes and as such support and sustain the individual's existing technology usage. True inclusive design – design for all and not just for older people - is also advocated here. As Tom (F) has already said "I am enormously interested in what it will mean to make it easier for me and for older people. I can't see that we're actually any, very different from anybody else. What will make it easier

		for us will make it even much more easy, much more easier, for younger people who will learn faster". The present study is not, however, concerned with the physical/biological processes of later life – it is a qualitative study of attitudes, opinions, experiences and identities. However, occasional references are made by individuals to their projected future state which may involve thinking about the onset of physical limitations such as immobility.
Physical /Biological	**2. Prolongevity** Not relevant to Sus-IT or the present study. This type of biological research into the ageing process is not being carried out here.	**2. Natural Limits to Ageing** Not relevant to Sus-IT or the present study.
Psychosocial	**3. Disengagement Theory** Disengagement in this theoretical context relates primarily to the individual withdrawing from *society* as part of the process of ageing. Sus-IT studies the factors which may lead to disengagement with *technology*, however the latter may have a corresponding effect on the individual's tendency to become disengaged from society as more services and information go online. Sus-IT's key aim is to sustain engagement with technology and all the benefits it can give in terms of remaining connected to the wider society at both the local, national, and global level. The present study is also concerned with examining and maintaining the technological and hence the social engagement of older people. As evidenced above, some key participants view it as a major element of their ICT usage that web connectedness gives them world connectedness, which can be seen in terms of increasing their personal knowledge, fostering research interests and maintaining links with dispersed family members. Sus-IT and the present study do not necessarily reject the theory that some older people have a tendency to disengage from society or certain aspects of it (either through circumstance or personal volition), however negative this may sound, but instead would rather see	**3. Activity Theory** Inherent to 'Activity Theory' and successful ageing is the idea of "remaining active" and being involved in "ongoing social activity".[126] The New Dynamics of Ageing Programme (NDA 2011) as a whole is concerned with "Active Ageing", which is now "a central feature of policy and practice in the UK and is the cornerstone of the EU, WHO and UN policies on ageing". "Active Ageing", according to WHO (2002, p.12) can be defined as "the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age". The ideas contained within Activity Theory can be seen to underpin "Active Ageing" and thus the NDA programme, the Sus-IT project and the present study. Technology obviously has the power to help the brain remain active, and to enable individuals to maintain or develop their social links either within or beyond the technology itself. The present study started from a vantage point of ICT as a vehicle for promoting ongoing social connectedness and became modified as the study progressed to encapsulate matters related to (digital) identity within a social framework.

[126] AngelFire, n.d. *Theories of Ageing*. <http://www.angelfire.com/ns/southeasternnurse/TheoriesofAgingC3.html>, [accessed 09.02.12].

	technology as an opportunity to ameliorate or reverse any tendency towards disengagement. See Activity Theory section opposite.	It should be noted that there are provisos to older people's usage of ICT for social purposes arising from the results of the study. Whilst people are content with using ICT for maintaining family links, they are not all interested in using ICT to make new cyberfriends. Some prefer to use ICT to facilitate existing or new friendships providing these take place in the offline world (for example Graham is not interested in developing avatars because he wants people in the real world to know exactly who he is, and Jonathan uses ICT to maintain his Pagan activities offline). Some older people in the study are content with their social network the way it is, and do not wish to use ICT to expand it. They prefer to avoid all the challenges that arise from the potential to meet 'inauthentic' people online (for example Robert is content with his existing circle of friends and feels his current identity is enough without having to develop a brand new one). Critics of 'Activity Theory' feel that not all older people relish new challenges, and this may therefore have a consequent effect on their willingness to use ICT for certain purposes such as making new friends online. Of the sample population in this study there were very few people actually using ICT to experiment deliberately with their selfhood; they were therefore not necessarily challenging their personal identity to any great degree. The present study therefore accepts the positivity of Activity Theory and its optimistic goals, but does provide some evidence that certain older people do not necessarily want or need continual new challenges but prefer instead to be 'active' in ways that maintain the status quo regarding their personal identity and life.
Psychosocial	**4. The Marginalized** Theories of later life marginalisation are deemed, in this perspective, to revolve round unfortunate policy decisions and other social factors which work against older people and the way they are viewed in society. However, research programmes such as NDA and projects such as Sus-IT seek methods of putting older people back on the agenda in new and vibrant ways. Encouraging and supporting older people in remaining	**4. The Self Dependent** Sus-IT's aims of increasing/maintaining autonomy and independence through the use of ICT are consonant with ideas of later life personal empowerment. Supporting older people's ICT usage can give people a greater sense of self dependence and worth as they can find out new information, shop online and carry out other tasks on their own initiative. These possibilities for Self Dependence should however be taken

	connected to the wider world through ICT usage – digital inclusion – is one of the ways in which marginalisation can be stemmed. The recommended social structures which enable ICT learning - one of the Sus-IT outputs - put older people and their needs at the centre of social thinking rather than at the margins.	in conjunction with matters arising from Activity Theory, since many older people do not wish to have their autonomy increased at the expense of their social support network. This should be borne in mind with any technology intervention; technology should indeed be personally empowering but not seen as relieving the need for human contact and warmth. As Clara noted, "when you're sick technology isn't going to take your temperature and make you chicken soup".
Psychosocial	**5. Reductionist Approaches** The NDA programme, and Sus-IT in particular, resists reductionist approaches to research. The NDA (2011) programme states clearly that it seeks to "harness inputs from a wide range of disciplines to reveal the dynamic interplay between ageing individuals and their changing technological, cultural, social and physical environments".	**5. Holistic Approaches** The Sus-IT project is correspondingly tasked with being multidisciplinary such that research into sustaining ICT usage truly reflects the dynamics and dimensions of later life, providing more than one view on the issues under examination. The aim is to produce research that could not have been achieved by one person or discipline working in isolation. The present research has been carried out from within the Sus-IT project, and opportunities have been taken to attend project workshops and work with other workpackages. However the research that has been carried out is in itself a personal journey, and the work of others on the project has not played any part in the present thesis.
Psychosocial	**6. Continuity Theories** The present study lends some weight to the idea of Continuity Theories in that the majority of people involved in the study brought their offline personas with them into the online world (since the majority could be categorised under the "I am Me" Subject Position). In the main, it appeared that people therefore wished to 'continue' with their existing offline identities in the new online environments. This could be due to feeling that they had invested a lifetime of experience and learning into their existing identities, and so they felt content with themselves (referring back to Robert again here who was quite content to be as he was, or Marie who felt that she had nothing to hide and would be proud to show her 'authentic' self to the world). It could also be that people did not feel the need to challenge their personal identity at this stage in their lives as has been mentioned in the section on 'Activity Theory'. Paradoxically, where people differed in their online personas, this was often the	**6. Dialogic Theories** Dialogic Theories highlight supposed disruptions in late life trajectories. For some older people the experience of ICT could in itself be viewed as a disruption if they have not grown up with the same or similar technology. Some recent research points to the fundamental cohort divide here being between those who were born before World War II and those born during or after it (Gilleard and Higgs 2008, p.234) where the split corresponds "to the 'mechanical' versus 'electromechanical' style of interacting with consumer goods". Those born before the war would therefore experience ICT as a dialogic issue since their familiar technologies would be 'mechanical', whereas those born later would experience ICT as a continuity of other 'electromechanical' technologies that they had used in their youth. The present study was interested in the idea of Dialogic Theories whereby ICT

	result of a pre-existing tendency to be experimental and entrepreneurial; so even experimenting with difference was for some people a 'continuation' of existing personality traits (c.f. Pierre the technology entrepreneur experimenting with Bluejacking and racy text messaging). **PRESENT STUDY – GROUNDED THEORY POSITION STATEMENT** This study therefore posits the following **theory** from an overall consideration of the sample population in conjunction with the ageing theories under reflection in this section: • **CONTINUITY** - ICT identity behaviour is theorised to derive from a tendency of older people to port their existing identity **tendencies** to the new environment such that: - If their offline behaviour is non-experimental then their online identity will be 'authentic'. - If their offline behaviour is experimental then their online identity may in some way become divergent or 'inauthentic'. • **DIALOGIC** - The above 'Continuity' tendencies between the offline and online world may, however, be interrupted by 'Dialogic' circumstances which serve to 'spoil' the sense of identity accrued over the life-course (e.g. physical changes, death of spouse), in which case people may then re-assess their identity needs and begin to experiment with a new online identity to cope with the unwanted challenge. • **DIALOGIC** – The above 'Continuity' tendencies may also be interrupted by more positive interventions (e.g. following the lead of their peers, cognition of benefits, rising to new but achievable personal challenges) that act as motivational factors which spur people to achieve new and positive identities using technology.	could be used as an identity tool to compensate for a 'spoiled identity'. Shirley using ICT in new social ways (particularly offline meetings arranged through SagaZone) not envisaged prior to the death of her husband is a case in point here. However, the full actuality of compensating for a spoiled identity was not fully explored in this study due to not encountering these spoiled identities during discussion, or perhaps people did not express them, through fear of opening up about an emotionally sensitive issue. Additionally, older people experimenting with their identities more proactively – i.e. without a causal Dialogic prompt – were not encountered to any great degree during the active research phase. This was in spite of posting advertisments seeking ICT experimenters (e.g. gamers). There were however stories reported by older people of known identity experimentation which overcame disability – for example Francis noted that someone with a disability had used Second Life to become a pole dancer. Therefore some older people do accept that the Dialogic approach, particularly with respect to ICT, has a certain validity for some individuals.
Psychosocial	**7. Chronological Definitions of the Last Stage(s) of Life** Many social policies are designed around certain pre-defined age markers for eligibility. The Sus-IT project is designed to circumvent these age markers and instead look at factors related to individual need. For example, one of the	**7. Age-Irrelevant Definitions of the Last Stage(s) of Life** The present study raises questions about whether and what conclusions can be drawn about older people's usage of ICT on the basis of age. It is not always an easy matter to draw definitive age-related conclusions on the

	Sus-IT outputs is a 'framework for adaptivity and customisation' whereby system settings adjust to match the individual person's changing physical capabilities and not their chronological age.	basis of discussions with people aged over 50 concerning their lived experience of ICT. The artefacts created within the study – The Schema of Subject Positions and The System Map – are not evidently age-related though they are drawn from discussions with older people. The present study therefore needs to contemplate whether older people are simply people with respect to their ICT usage; are they in fact just like everyone else? Would similar discussions with younger people about their lived experience of ICT herald different Subject Positions or different Grounded Theory Categories?
Psychosocial	**8. Stereotypes of older people** NDA and Sus-IT were implemented because there is an urgent need to re-assess existing views of later life as a result of the demographic time-bomb. Older people are now expected to stay active much later into their lives with increasingly higher retirement ages and longer time spent within the workforce. There is a resulting social imperative to create a 'virtuous circle' of attitudes about later life and personal and social worth. ICT usage by older people is just one area in which stereotypical attitudes of older people's aptitudes and attitudes need to be challenged. The present study, in part, challenges the stereotype that all older people are reluctant to use ICT. At least two of the participants are technology entrepreneurs (Pierre and Francis) who learned to master the concepts and the technicalities of ICT early in product lifecycles. Francis in particular views the younger generation as more resistant to understanding technology than himself since they take it for granted as a 'black box' with no desire to contemplate the internal programming. So whilst the study does recognise that there are those older people who are "resistant" or "reluctant" this is by no means always the case. And this resistant attitude can also be attributed to younger people.	**8. Varieties of Age** Sus-IT places value on the heterogeneity of older people, and supporting them at the level of personal individuality. There is not a 'one size fits all' approach here as the emphasis is on technology customisation based on need. It is difficult to draw any clear conclusions about later life and ICT usage, particularly since aptitudes and attitudes can range from ICT 'dinosaur' (Rosie) to total 'digital citizen' (Pierre). There are hence a variety of attitudes at work here. Whether any of these attitudes are specific to older people could be drawn out through a parallel study involving younger people, and using the same techniques. However, it is interesting to note that in spite of the study's willingness to recognise the heterogeneity of later life, the majority of people who participated in the study came into the category of 'I am me'. As a result, in terms of the 'Subject Positions' aspect of the study, there was not, in fact, a high degree of 'variety' within the sample population.

During the present research, the focus group and some of the early interviews were used as a testing ground for attitudes and opinions around ICT usage and later life. People were asked to project themselves forward and imagine how ICT could benefit

them in the future. In the focus group this led to a profound debate about the issue of later life and quality of life in general, unrelated to matters of ICT, which continued long after the four original questions had been answered. One person found this quite distressing as they refused to think of their life in anything other than 'active' terms (Iris). Contrarily one person found this manifested attitude quite extraordinary since they were used to a slower pace of life and enjoyed stillness, finding that their latter years were actually an improvement on their earlier life (Vanessa).

It was felt that this polarisation, and hence reification, of the extremes of thinking about later life was not particularly helpful to the study, and later interviews did not always include the topic of future projection or becoming older, preferring people to address the topic themselves if they felt moved to do so. Questions about the issue, more often than not, generated thinking about the negative stereotypes of dependency and decline which could be overcome by the use of various forms of 'assistive technology', and which then reified the whole topic of compensating for a worse self rather than optimising a better self in the minds of several participants.[127] On an ethical level the study was concerned not to repeat these stereotypes and hence fix them as 'objects' for those people who chose to take part; perpetuating the negative stereotype of decline and deterioration was not the intended outcome of the study.

The unfortunate by-product of avoiding the topic of ageing in a study of older people means that it became difficult to determine what it was that could be said about ageing and its relation to ICT more generally. The study becomes implicitly about ageing due to its focus on people aged fifty and over, and any conclusions about ageing and ICT usage are the interpretations or constructions of the researcher based on the overall dataset. The present study prefers to see later life in **probabilistic** terms following Schaie (1993, p.50), which means assuming that some aspects of life become *more* probable with chronological age rather than age being the causal factor. So for instance, people are more likely to retire or have grandchildren when they are over fifty, but not necessarily as these events could happen when they are relatively young or indeed not at all.

[127] Sus-IT has developed technology sandpits for eliciting future projections from older people about possible technology commodities which work well to produce creative, optimistic thinking rather than negative thinking about purely assistive technologies.

The researcher also began to include the topic of ageing less because people began to debate what the ulterior motives for the study were and then second guess what they ought to say which might assist with the study or even find ways to denigrate the study. Harriet, in particular, drew everything back to how ICT could be used to make budget cuts in government provision for older people, and then assumed that this must be the motive behind the present study. As this was a grounded theory study, it did not have ulterior motives and therefore the researcher did not want to prejudice what the participants might say on the topic of their ICT experience/opinion and later life.

10.2 Older people and ICT usage more specifically – evidence from online reports

In the following sections, some of the online reports produced about older people and their technology usage are discussed (in the chronological order of publication).

10.2.1 Findings by Ofcom (2006a, 2006b)

Prior to undertaking their research, Ofcom had produced an initial segmentation of older people – 'Original Segmentation' - denoting their differing attitudes towards technology as given below (Ofcom 2006a, pp.1-2):

- **'Digitally disengaged'** – no interest in technology (words such as *"fear", "complicated", "another world", "not for me"*, giving an indication of their less comfortable relationship with technology)
- **'Late adopters'** – mid-range interest (words such as *"wonderful", "incredible",* showing a relationship with technology that seemed new and full of excitement)
- **'Embracers'** – high interest (responses tended to be very rational and functional)

Following their research, a 'Revised Segmentation' was produced inline with the study findings. Both segmentations are shown for comparison in the table given below (Ofcom 2006a, pp.3-4):[128]

[128] Table is revised slightly from the original one in the report to show different order and include a fourth column on differences. The majority of the information is taken from Ofcom (2006a) except where stated otherwise. There is more than one document for the findings of this study.

Table 46 Older people and attitudes to technology (Ofcom 2006a)

	Original Segmentation	Revised Segmentation	Discussion
Non Users	Digitally Disengaged	Rejectors	the Rejecters had decided not to be involved
		Disengaged	whereas the Disengaged did not reject the idea outright and showed some interest in taking things further
Users	Late Adopters	Self Starters	Self Starters who had no training at work had taught themselves ICT skills. They are a very diverse group so far as age, income, location and health are concerned. Attitude and character appear to be the key determinants (Ofcom 2006b, p.2)
	Embracers	Absorbers	Absorbers had learned how to use computers at work and are now part of the digital age. They are rational and functional in their attitudes towards technology and easily absorb technology products and services into their lives (Ofcom 2006b, p.2).

Ofcom's (2006a, p.5) study concluded that "attitude and character are key determinants" of technology usage, but that "age, health and economics" were non factors. It is interesting here to note that Ofcom's results show an attitudinal rather than material determinant. One criticism of Ofcom's segmentation is that the term 'Disengaged' implies that these older people have at some point been engaged with technology and then at some subsequent point changed to become no longer engaged. The more appropriate term to use would have been 'Unengaged', a term preferred by the Sus-IT project. Also, the segmentation is not finely grained since there are only two subcategories in each of the main categories of user and non-user. Additionally, the whole segmentation leads towards assuming that usage is geared towards the functional and pragmatic, and whilst this may be true for many older users of technology, this is certainly not true of all. Some of the older people in the present study were game-players, indicating a move towards software usage with no intended pragmatic outcomes. Usage here would be deemed as being more 'playful' in intent, rather than either rational or functional. There is also evidence in the present study of people who are more experimental or entrepreneurial, and are technology leaders rather than following behind the trends.

10.2.2 Sarah Perez (2009). How to reach baby boomers with social media

This article comments on the Forrester Research Report (2009) entitled 'How to reach baby boomers with social technologies'. Perez (2009) notes that in the US, over 60% of those in the older boomer category are consuming "socially created content like blogs, videos, podcasts, and forums" and that this percentage is on the rise. These statistics and others are charted in the table which follows (Perez 2009). The table divides the boomers online presence into the following categories: Creators, Critics, Collectors, Joiners, Spectators, Inactives - giving a feel for the type of 'identities' that they could adopt with respect to social media. The first five of these categories have increased between the period 2007-2008, whereas the Inactives have reduced within the same time period. These figures mean that active rather than passive consumption is generally on the increase amongst older people (Perez 2009). According to Perez (2009), there is obviously a growing interest here in social media phenomena, and increasingly older people are becoming creators of content rather than just passive recipients of content provided by others.

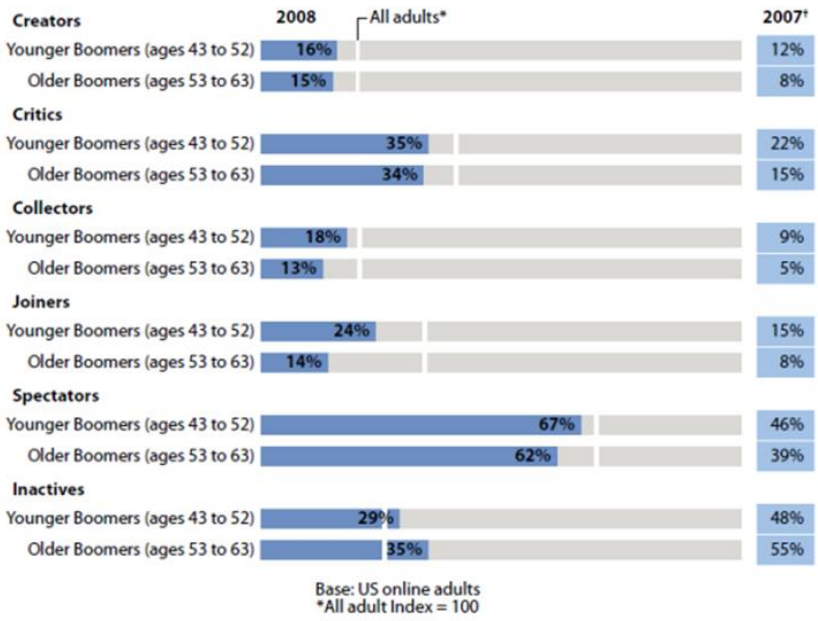

Figure 21 Social technographics of younger and older baby boomers (Perez 2009)[129]

[129] Taken from Perez, 2009.

The diagram given here involves a type of usage segmentation of social media. It would be interesting to see how this type of usage segmentation may be affected by researching overall usage of internet phenomena rather than just social media. It may be the case that older people are more active in different online environments than is pre-supposed here.

By comparison, the present study highlights several people who are extremely active in their usage of ICT, and who may in fact be deemed entrepreneurial. This balances out Perez's implication that older people are beginning at a 'standstill point' and are now having to catch up with the rest of the population. By contrast, some of the people in this study think that the position is in fact reversed; they feel they are the more forward thinking ones and that younger people need to catch up with technology and how it actually works.

10.2.3 Age UK (2009) – Introducing another world: older people and digital inclusion

This is a report on qualitative research concerning the barriers and enablers to tackling digital exclusion in later life. The findings can be summarised neatly into sets of barriers and enablers. Key barriers were determined as: lack of understanding and confidence, variation in interest, sense of inertia, and affordability (Age UK 2009, p.11). Key enablers were seen as: awareness of benefits, acknowledging the importance of the internet and having specific triggers (Age UK 2009, p.17).

The present study also analyses barriers and enablers to using technology, although the focus here is on the type of propellants which would motivate or demotivate actual technology usage with respect to identity matters. A summary of the present study's findings are given below for comparison:

Rewarding propellants

1. Personal identities

Engaging in Flow activities
Connecting self to the world
Increasing personal knowledge and skills
Overcoming life transitions
Expressing myself
Having tools for emergencies
Enjoying myself
Maintaining my independence

2. Group identities

Maintaining the family identity
Maintaining society related identities
Maintaining peer identities
Maintaining business identities

3. Software and hardware design and implementation

Software being fun
Technology being easier to set up

Discouraging Propellants

1. Personal identities

Being conservative
Being content with the way things are
Not wanting to adopt fictional identities
Feeling guilty about time wasting
Not wanting to deal with or create inappropriate material
Being a product of my upbringing

2. Group identities

None

3. Software and hardware design and implementation

Software not suiting my needs
Tools being too banal
Getting bored with the tool
Changes in the coding
Technology lacking human warmth
Tools not conveying human identity

The slant is slightly different in the present study as the Sus-IT project is interested in maintaining the usage of people who are actually using technology, rather than getting people to use it in the first place. As a result, the present study moves knowledge a stage forward from Age UK's research by looking at these factors from

within usage of technology (rather than non usage), and also by looking at them as forms of identity processes.

10.2.4 Age UK (2011) – Technology and older people evidence review

This report by Age UK looks at the evidence base concerning older people and technology in order to determine its benefits (Age UK 2011). It operates in a policy context provided by the Digital Britain White Paper and The Learning Revolution White Paper, both published in 2009. The headline benefits for older people of the usage of technology are given as: reducing loneliness and isolation, being in control, living independently and participating and contributing (Age UK 2011, pp.7-11). By contrast, the Sus-IT project has taken these types of outcomes as its actual starting point for research, in that it assumes that ICT can be used as enablers of autonomy and independence, and so it aims to determine how usage can be sustained to facilitate these enablers.

10.2.5 Richard Berry (2011) - Older people and the internet: towards a 'system map' of digital exclusion

Berry's (2011, p.4) report notes that older people, like some other segments of the population, are in the main on the wrong side of the 'digital divide'. Various attempts have been made to widen access to these under-served groups including: investment in the UK infrastructure, helping to overcome cost by providing public access, and state-funded support to help adults develop IT skills (Berry 2011, pp.6-7). These are first order, or material, divides. Berry's report (2011, p.9) also draws attention to research carried out concerning older people's attitudes towards technology usage, known as second order divides. For example, Berry (2011, p.9) notes that Reisenwitz et al. (2007) "examined correlations between internet use and three personal traits" and as a result they found that "older people who were more innovative, less risk averse and less prone to nostalgia were more active internet users"[130]. Berry (2011,

[130] The citation is given as Reisenwitz, T, Iyer, R, Kuhlmeier, D & Eastman, J (2007) "The elderly's internet usage: an updated look", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 24 (7), pp.406-418.

p.9) also draws attention to the work of Hannon and Bradwell (2007) who have identified four types of older person and their approach to the internet as follows[131]:

- **The *non-line outsider*** - not generally averse to using the internet, but is hampered by fear and uncertainty.
- **The *tech sceptic*** - critical of technology and resentful of pressure to become connected.
- **The *cautious toe-dipper*** - tentatively embraced the internet for basic tasks but is wary of trying new websites, software, or deviating from trusted brands.
- **The *digital trail-blazer*** - adventurous about trying out new things on the internet and is evangelical in their enthusiasm.

The Demos research cited here by Berry (2011, p.9) also identified that "specific age groups within the elderly population were more likely to be in one group or another" such that, for instance, "over 75s were more likely to be non-line outsiders, while 55-65s were more likely to be tech sceptics" (Berry 2011, p.9).

As a result of all the factors under consideration, involving both first order digital divides such as cost and infrastructure (material) and second order divides (non-material) such as psychological drivers, Berry (2011, p.11) posits the following 'system map' to account for the lack of internet access. The map also takes into account complicating factors like "content" which although not cost or infrastructure related could still be a material concern (Berry 2011, p.11). Berry's (2011, p.12) 'Digital Divide System Map' is given below:

[131] The citation is given as Hannon, C & Bradwell, P (2007), *Web I'm 64: Ageing, the internet and digital inclusion*, Demos.

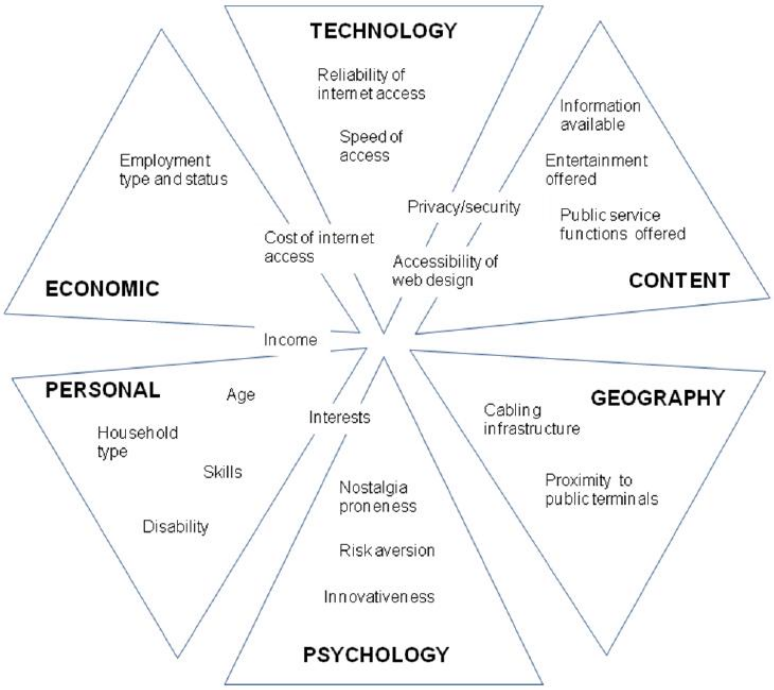

Figure 22 Digital divide System Map (Berry 2011)

Again, the present study adopts a position which is on the opposite side of the Digital Divide, in order to sustain technology usage and thus assist people from falling back to a non-user state.

10.2.6 General comments on the above studies

Many of the studies highlighted here view older people and technology usage in terms of a 'problem' of 'digital divide', and are concerned with differentiating what separates the non-users from the users. In a sense they are concerned with the non-users as a challenge to be overcome. Perhaps it would be more useful, however, for future studies if the framing of the issue were to be reversed, and instead to see in the category of older 'users' of technology positive role models, or identities, which could be followed by others. This would assist in re-framing the field in a positive rather than negative light. Where other older people have chosen to go, others may then have the option to choose to follow, and thus, in their own right, could provide triggers to spreading usage amongst other older people. The present study goes some way towards participating in the field in this positive, role-model driven manner by assessing the identity related activities, attitudes and opinions of older people with respect to technology.

10.3 Artefacts Produced from the Study

10.3.1 The System Map (A Grounded Theory Model)

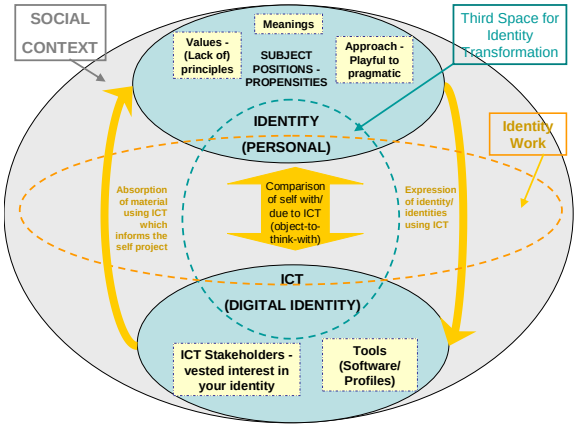

Figure 23 System Map for thinking about (digital) identity - from the present study

The System Map represents the output of the Grounded Theory process and its categorisation of research data – as such it is a model representing in brief the complexities of thought surrounding the concept of digital identity and the ideas that became associated with it in the minds of the study participants. The Map is in part, therefore, an induced 'process mapping' of the factors affecting identity when this is considered in conjunction with ICT, and is based on the reading of the combined output of all thirty participants. It has been modified slightly from the creation of the original categories as a result of the subsequent reading of theoretical ideas concerning identity processes gleaned from the available literature, but only where these ideas were deemed to mesh with or complement the framework that had been produced from the grounded theory study. In this regard, the theories of interest from the literature on digital identity in particular emphasise a tripartite identity schema whereby online identities (technical artefacts created in the digital environment) and offline identities (the perception of selfhood) are complemented by a third (liminal) space where identities can be tried, tested or just imagined prior to any potential adoption. The evidence for the production of this map was provided in the data chapters which followed. It should be noted that the system map was produced from Grounded Theory categories which operate at higher levels of abstraction than the utterances of individual participants, therefore the map itself

does not necessarily give any indication that it was produced from a study of older people; none of the named categories on the actual diagram are about later life per se.

As a result of further reflection in conjunction with existing theories of ageing (see the table above) a corresponding Grounded Theory (i.e. in the form of a theory statement rather than a pictorial model) was produced and is re-iterated below for completeness[132]:

GROUNDED THEORY STATEMENT ARISING FROM THE PRESENT STUDY

- **CONTINUITY** - ICT identity behaviour is theorised to derive from a tendency of older people to port their existing identity **tendencies** to the new environment such that:
    - If their offline behaviour is non-experimental then their online identity will be 'authentic'.
    - If their offline behaviour is experimental then their online identity may in some way become divergent or 'inauthentic'.

- **DIALOGIC** - The above 'Continuity' tendencies between the offline and online world may, however, be interrupted by 'Dialogic' circumstances which serve to 'spoil' the sense of identity accrued over the life-course (e.g. physical changes, death of spouse), in which case people may then re-assess their identity needs and begin to experiment with a new online identity to cope with the unwanted challenge.

- **DIALOGIC** – The above 'Continuity' tendencies may also be interrupted by more positive interventions (e.g. following the lead of their peers, cognition of benefits, rising to new but achievable personal challenges) that act as motivational factors which spur people to achieve new and positive identities using technology.

This porting of existing characteristics to the online world reflects Pfeil et al.'s (2009) statement that "research up to now has shown that offline characteristics of users have an impact on their online identity and behaviour", but gives provisos whereby this may cease to be true. In practice, the theory statement generated for this study may **only** be true for older people (rather than younger people), and only at the present moment in history, since they did not grow up with technologies such as computers and the internet, but came to them later in life at a time when their 'identities' had been formed and then more fully developed in the offline world. The

[132] The researcher has a BSc in Physics. It was noted that once this theory was written down it seemed to bear a certain resemblance to Newton's First Law of Motion, which states that "Law I: Every body persists in its state of being at rest or of moving uniformly straight forward, except insofar as it is compelled to change its state by force impressed".
See: Wikipedia, 2012. *Newton's Laws of Motion*.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newton's_laws_of_motion>, [accessed 20.03.12].
In other words a body 'continues' in its present state unless acted on by a 'dialogic' force.

offline identity tendencies of older people are therefore more likely to have been reified in the course of their prior existence, and thus less liable to change. If we review this theory with respect to the younger generation then it can be seen that they are more likely to take the technology for granted, but also that they begin to use it when they are in a more experimental stage of human development in any case. Technology can then be enlisted by younger people in the process of forming their initial identities rather than just expressing, maintaining or transforming them. The present study does not involve the views of younger people, therefore the data presented above does not enable a comparative study to determine what attitudes, opinions and experiences are specific to older people. However, the data can be reviewed in the light of a study where comparisons have actually been made between the two age groups.

In their study of age differences in the use of online social networking (with reference to MySpace) Pfeil et al. (2009) noted certain differences between older and younger people's usage as summarised in the following table. This has been compared to some elements of the data from the present study:

Table 47 Older people and younger people – usage of MySpace (Pfeil et al. 2009)

Younger People	Older People	Researcher Comment
Having large numbers of friends may be seen as a status symbol (p.648).	Older people have fewer friends on MySpace and are deemed to be less concerned about demonstrating the size of their social capital (p.648).	Older people are possibly more concerned with the quality not the quantity of their relationships with other people (p.645). However, it may be possible that older people have less friends on MySpace because fewer of their peers have accounts on the application (p.648). The present study found that the stereotype of the younger person having huge numbers of friends on social networking sites was an opportunity for mockery. As Marie said "I mean nobody's got 360 friends, well they're not real friends (laughing)". Marie's comment also contains a suggestion about the lack of worth of such tenuous relationships. In practice, the older people in this study tended to know the people they befriended online and thus the numbers of their friends was realistic.

Younger people tend to communicate with people of a similar age (p.649).	Older people tend to communicate with different age groups to themselves (p.649).	This suggests that older people may have accounts on MySpace to communicate with their grandchildren. Also, as before, their peers are not necessarily available on MySpace for purposes of communication in any case.[133] These two points may account for Pfeil et al.'s (2009) findings. The present study found that communicating with children and grandchildren was a great motivator for using ICT. It was deemed one of the benefits of technology by several people involved in the study.
Younger people had made more use of the Blog facility – part of the self-representation and identity building in MySpace (p.649). Teenagers seem to take care and effort in building an appropriate identity (p.649).	Older people may be less concerned with working on their presence or image online (p.650). Older people are possibly more reserved about this type of activity (p.650).	This could be a style (younger people) versus substance (older people) issue. In the present study Charles was found to be quite hesitant about expressing himself online in Blogs, whereas Elizabeth was not afraid to use Blogs to broadcast her opinion. Both positions are therefore represented in the current study, therefore it is difficult to draw any particular conclusion other than older people vary in their willingness to use blogs depending on how much they enjoy self-broadcasting. Some older people enjoy this and some do not.
Teenagers write in an informal style e.g. incomplete sentences, fashionable abbreviations (p.652).	Older people tend to use bigger words and a more sophisticated writing style than younger people (p.651). They also tend to express themselves in a more formal manner (p.651)	The present research highlights people such as Pierre who tend to write in complete sentences even in text messages and do not use the abbreviations normally in use by younger people. Charles checks the grammar of his emails a couple of times, even when emailing his wife. This formality in communication echoes Pfeil et al.'s (2009) findings concerning older people.
Teenagers appear to create profiles centred around themselves, and portray revealing personal and emotional information (p.653) Reflecting their offline tendencies, younger people strive to be "cool" online (p.645).	Older people appear to strive for a more informative and official self-description (p.653)	In the present study Marie was keen to represent an almost encyclopaedic and factual version of her interests (especially music) – but not an emotional view of herself. There is a desire here to appear 'authentic' but not emotive. Charles points out that in striving to be "cool", younger people may be misread online, and this may be used against them particularly by potential employers. Charles feels that

[133] Researcher comments.

		younger people give away too much personal information, whereas he prefers to keep this to himself for reasons of security. In this study, younger people are frequently 'othered' by older people with regards to online behaviour which is deemed to contravene their personal 'netiquette'.

In summary, the Pfeil et al. (2009) MySpace study found that younger people were very image conscious, whereas the present study found that by contrast older people were, in the main, factually informative about themselves so as to appear 'authentic' in their online activities. Being 'authentic' seems to be key to the older people who participated in this study rather than being 'cool'. Older people such as Graham certainly noted that some aspects of technology, such as the brand one espoused, could certainly suggest that one was 'cool', but then they queried whether they really needed this as part of their personal identity, preferring instead a more 'realistic' approach to selfhood.

10.3.2 Schema of Subject Positions

The Schema of Subject Positions – like the System Map – does not explicitly refer to ideas of later life. The Schema is given again in the table below for completeness. However, one could speculate on the comparative likelihood of a younger person feeling that "I'm not built for computers", when they have access to them from a young age and are more likely to take them for granted as part of their usual life. Though as Francis has pointed out some younger people are resistant to finding out how they actually work, even if they actually enjoy using them. The statements of older people also imply that younger people do not have the same 'moral' or 'authentic' approach to their online personae. It is possible, therefore that more younger people will appear at the higher Subject Positions (e.g. Positions 5 and 6, or at least the amoralist version of 6), which are concerned with the more experimental approaches to online identity. Few younger people may also appear at Position 7, at least in the opinion of older people, since they do not appear at all concerned with protecting their online identities from either close scrutiny or theft.

Table 48 Schema of Subject Positions from the present study

Subject Position	Participants
1. "I'm not built for computers", Resistant/Reluctant Realist/Naturalist	4
2. "I am me" pragmatic moralist	21
3. "I am me" pragmatic **amoralist** (not to be confused with the pragmatic moralists)	1
4. "I am a created/curated version of a basic me", pragmatic amoralist	1
5. "I can play creatively with different versions of me" tricksterish amoralist	1
6. "I can be who I want to be" malleable moralist (no sense of an offline self to be mirrored or masked)	1
7. "I am protecting me", pragmatic moralist	1
8. "I am not me" nefarious immoralist	0 (inferred from reading newspapers)

There is also evidence in the news that younger people are appearing at Position 8, as they are found to be increasingly participating in the darker side of social networking such as "trolling" (posting inflammatory comments anonymously), "cyber-bulling" and "internet stalking". For example Sean Duffy, aged 25, was found to have left vile messages on Facebook sites and was subsequently "given a sentence of 18 months after police traced the abusive messages to fake email addresses he had created" (The Periscope Post 2012). Additionally, Shane Webber, aged 22, stalked his own girlfriend on the internet for three years by hacking her internet accounts, posting cruel messages in her name, and uploading explicit photos of her to the web (Daily Record 2011).

In considering a Schema of Subject Positions which incorporates the various age groups more fully, it would perhaps need to take into account those Subject Positions which involve the formation of the initial identities of younger people, rather than simply assessing whether identities mirror, mask, or subvert a pre-existing identity as in the case of older people. This would assist in the creation of a more fully encompassing substantive theory of (digital) identity.

Comparing the Schema developed in this study with those obtained in previous research, as highlighted earlier in this section, it can be seen that it contributes to knowledge through:

- Being more finely grained (there are more positions available here) and with possibilities for more graining as the Schema is necessarily incomplete.
- It is based on the attitudes of older people – who are already users of technology - and is not just a matter of a material digital divide.
- It thus goes beyond what separates the non-users from the users of technology.
- It does this by highlighting the (digital) identities that have been adopted by the older people in this study.
- Some of these identities could be used as role models for others to follow in their own digital identity journeys.

10.4 Implications of the research

The identity outcomes of the study have certain implications for both the marketing of technology products (hardware and software) to older people and the design of the technology itself. These are demonstrated in the sections which follow.

10.4.1 Marketing of technology products

The following represents a set of suggestions for the way technology could be marketed:

- They should be presented as tools which optimize a better self (a wanted self, a desirable positive identity etc) rather than compensate for a worse self (an unwanted self, physical deficits etc).
- They should be shown to be inclusive of society in general, so that people feel connected to the wider world of people of all ages. Older people feel that they are just people and not special cases.
- They should be presented through the experiences of positive identity role-models, so that it is peer orientated. This would help overturn negative stereotypes that people have of themselves which involve a lack of faith in their own abilities.
- The appropriate identity related benefits should be extolled realistically.
- The related QoL enhancement should be emphasized, based possibly on improvements in self perception.
- Marketing should not exacerbate existing negative identity stereotypes of older people.
- Existing products that have potential for improving the QoL of older people, but which may appear to some older people to be time wasting or lead to inauthentic behaviour, could be framed in more appealing ways. For example, online game

playing could be shown to cement the family identity by offering opportunities to carry out quests together on a more level playing field.
- Marketing should appeal to the value sets which are the foundations of older people's identities.

10.4.2 Design of technology products

The following represents a set of suggestions for the way technology could be designed to incorporate the identities of older people:

- Technologies that are to be used during spare time should be fun, well thought through, elicit a feeling of personal wellbeing, and enable creativity. Older people want a change from work orientated products such as email when they are outside of the work environment.
- Technology products should not just present a series of lists, or appear to be banal.
- They should enable real world identities.
- They should leave room for experimentation with identities.
- They should be designed in an inclusive fashion with everyone in mind, not just older people, to make them truly user friendly, and enable inter/intra generational contact.
- They should seem as though effort has been put into their appearance so that the item becomes desirable rather than stigmatizing.
- Older people should be involved in user studies.
- Design should incorporate the value sets that underpin the personal identities of older people.

10.5 Limitations of the present study

10.5.1 Age group limitation

The study of people aged fifty and over was a necessary limitation of the Sus-IT project and the NDA programme more generally. In itself this was not a problem, but it did preclude obtaining data from younger people which would have enabled comparisons to be drawn by the researcher between the age groups, and thus to determine whether there were indeed obvious age differences in approach to personal identity. The advantage of undertaking this type of work during the present

study would have been in the consistency of the grounded theory data collection and analysis across the age groups due to it being carried out by the same person. Although there are a few studies which attempt the comparison between the age groups, these studies are mostly carried out with reference to individual social networking sites and not more generally as in the present study. This means that it is not necessarily possible to compare 'like with like' although some of the findings do have points of contact with the present study. This means that only speculations can be made about the complete shape of a theory regarding (digital) identity, so in practice the theory generated refers only to older people.

10.5.2 Lack of older people experimenting with their identity

In practice, older people who experimented with their identity were not found to any great degree during the lifetime of the active research phase of the project. This limitation was noticed early on, and attempts to compensate for the deficit through various advertising means were undertaken. Whilst these advertisements attracted respondents, they were in themselves not necessarily experimental with their identity, they just wanted their opinions concerning technology to be heard. The fact that few experimental older people were encountered may, however, reflect a general disinclination of older people to interact with technology in this way. However, it would require repeated advertisements in various locations, and a corresponding lack of response for this speculation to be fully verified.

10.5.3 Breadth rather than depth

As there was a paucity of pre-existing research into older people and theories about their usage of technology, the study was carried out concerning a broad range of social technology, and covered discussion of any application which the individual participant had encountered. This garnered a broad range of opinion about a broad range of technologies. No one application was therefore studied in any great detail, in comparison to a few of the existing studies, such as the one discussed earlier in this section which looks at MySpace usage. However, the MySpace study was felt to

be limited due to the fact that the older users of MySpace did not have a sufficient peer presence to demonstrate all the aspects of their potential usage of MySpace. It was merely a tool to communicate with their younger relatives rather than with their peers. As more older people participate in these technologies, their behaviour in these environments is likely to change. However, the benefit of the breadth of the present study enabled older people to talk about applications of interest to them, rather than just being limited to their experience of one application which may not necessarily suit all their needs.

10.6 Suggestions for further work

10.6.1 Validation of the grounded theory/testing statistically/finding new Subject Positions or Categories

The aim of a grounded theory approach is to produce contributions to the theory underlying the subject matter at hand. This theory should act as a springboard to further research in any case. Future research should seek to validate, refute or refine the theories obtained from any grounded theory research. Also, grounded theory is not a statistical approach, it merely notes the presence of certain categories, or certain positions and is not intended to indicate statistically how well these are populated. Assuming, for example, that the Subject Positions are validated by further research, a truly statistical approach to them would lead to an understanding of how older people are segmented proportionally between the positions available. This may then lead to ideas about how technology could be designed to suit the various Positions represented in the Schema.

It is likely that further research could also highlight Subject Positions missed by the present study, or lead to the illumination of further grounded theory 'Categories' relative to the subject matter of the research. In this way, the work could be refined and extended.

10.6.2 Extension to other age groups

As highlighted earlier in this section, the study could be 'repeated' by another researcher to encompass other, younger, age groups. This would highlight whether there were indeed any appreciable differences in attitudes to identity formation,

expression, management, and experimentation between the various age groups. This would lead to a more complete theory of (digital) identity which was not just limited to older people.

10.6.3 Use of a psychological approach rather than sociological approach

This study was carried out from a sociological rather than a psychological perspective on identity matters. However, it is recognised that other disciplines also have theoretical approaches to the concept of identity. The data in this study could be re-analysed from a psychological perspective to see how the results and analysis may differ. Or a completely different study could be carried out by another researcher who was 'sensitised' to psychological data. It is likely that the 'third voice' phenomenon would then produce completely different conversations between the participant and the researcher which could lead to a totally different theoretical analysis.

10.7 Conclusions

> [T]he more advanced the technology gets, the more human it gets, as long as one is prepared to accept a redefinition of what being human means.
> (Childs 2010b, p.265)

> The cultural underpinnings of the cyberpunk movement are essentially transgressive and transhumanist, and the widescale adoption of virtual worlds are thrusting these philosophies onto society as a whole.
> (Childs 2010b, p.265)

This study was an inductive and qualitative approach to the field of older people and their usage of technology in social contexts. As a result of following a combined methodological approach involving Grounded Theory, Phenomenology and Discourse Analysis a System Map of (Digital) Identity was produced in which Gidden's theory of the 'reflexivity of identity' became a central dynamic with regards to older people's lived experience of the phenomenological world of digital technology. Lived experience in its many forms was shown to shape how older people interacted with technology, and this in turn reflexively altered their perceptions of their own personal identities in a variety of ways. The System Map and the associated evidence in the

data chapters also demonstrated that these individual (digital) identities are impinged on by a series of historical, cultural and socio-digital dynamic factors against which a feeling of personal unity and strong self-narrative must be maintained.

This study has therefore moved the field of ageing studies forward by demonstrating how, for older people, technology has become a mediator and facilitator in the reflexive projects of the self. It has also highlighted the 'active accomplishments' made by older people as a result of their 'reflexive awareness' of the 'phenomenal worlds' of ICT, which moves beyond the more passive depictions of older people as victims in need of rescue by the redemptive powers of technology.

Such an approach to gerontology helps to advance the debates concerning older people and ICT by simultaneously resisting previous negative stereotypes about the level and nature of their engagement with various technologies, whilst at the same time producing a more finely grained and nuanced analysis of the 'identities' older people adopt with respect to these technologies which are often active, feisty and/or generally bemused.

This study has provided the opportunity to examine the often complex ways that older people think about technology as a vehicle to *reflect*, *reflect upon*, and *reflexively* re-imagine and transform personal and human identity in the context of the phenomenology of technology and lived experience.

Childs (2010b, p.265) relates, that taken to its ultimate extreme, there is a sense in which the artefacts we create in the digital environment to express aspects of our identities (real or imagined) cause the human, the machine and the abstract virtual to be blended together into "a single architecture". The older people in this study have engaged actively, either positively or negatively, with this transhumanist approach.

Transhumanism is an intellectual and cultural movement which recognises this potential of technology to become implicated in what it means to be human, and also to **transcend** our current **human** identity to become transhuman; as the Transhumanist website declares, theirs is a philosophy which:

> affirms the possibility and desirability of fundamentally improving the human condition through applied reason, especially by developing and making widely available technologies to eliminate aging and to greatly enhance human intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities (Humanity+ 2002)

Whilst on the surface, enhancing the human condition through the use of technology may appear to be a positive aim, transhumanism as a movement and a philosophy has many critics. Some of the key arguments against transhumanism can be stated as follows:[134]

- Infeasibility (*Futurehype* argument) – the transhumanist position is not technologically feasible, and is just an overhyped myth
- Hubris (*Playing God* argument) – it is inappropriate to play god with one's own nature, or to try to create a superhuman
- Contempt for the flesh (*Fountain of Youth* argument) – this is a position driven by the fear of death and decay
- Trivialization of human identity (*Enough* argument) – to seek to overcome our limitations trivializes human identity
- Genetic divide (*Gattaca* argument) – such opportunities as are provided by some technologies would only be available to a rich few, thus creating a social divide between rich and poor
- Threats to morality and decency (*Brave New World* argument) – institutions that are necessary for civilised human society would be damaged through an undermining of democratic principles
- Dehumanization (*Frankenstein* argument) – may lead to the creation of human-like creatures that society may reject
- Specter of coercive eugenicism (*Eugenics wars* argument) – critics fear the 'ablest' bias of the language of improvement as was evidenced by the early eugenicists
- Existential risks (*Terminator* argument) – these technological inventions may ultimately lead to our own extinction.

[134] Wikipedia, 2012. *Transhumanism.* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transhumanism>, [accessed 13.04.12].

The older people in this study have a complex relationship to this idea of human/technological transcendence, and its impact on life in general and later life particularly. There is an acknowledgement that the technology can assist in later life processes and the limitations imposed by biological ageing, yet there is also a moral resistance underpinning some of their attitudes to technology.

Discussions held with older people about technology are implicated in some of the same criticisms that have been levelled at the transhuman agenda. Some people fear that we may be led into believing that because humans can be perfected that they should be perfected, which is the road to a society based on Eugenics. Others fear that to be left out of the onward march of technology is in itself to become dehumanised and, as a result, a non-person (identity-less) in tomorrow's society.

However, other participants are far more entrepreneurial and risk-orientated and desire to see the technology, and hence ourselves, move forward in creative ways. They view the technology as exciting, and enabling of positive methods of identity maintenance and, albeit to a lesser degree, manipulation. Technology for them has a part to play in societal cohesion and the nurturing of human identity within that framework. It can become a key factor in the positive, life enhancing, identity projects of later life. Technology usage which is entwined with human identity in this manner is sustained by the sense of wellbeing and self-affirmation that it is able to generate, and thus it is implicated as a factor in improving Quality of Life (QoL) in later life. This positive approach to ICT and (socio-)(digital-) identity has many potential implications for the future design of digital technologies.

This study has determined that for older people there is no simple blithe acceptance or indeed complete rejection of technology, but instead a desire to debate and engage with the philosophical and phenomenological implications of life, 'lived experience' and the 'reflexive project' of human identity at the liminoid threshold of cyberspace: implications which run the full gamut from the practical, possible and (un)desirable to the hypothetical and futuristic. This is a far more complex and nuanced position than the field of ageing studies generally either acknowledges or encompasses.

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Appendix 1 – Initial Questions for Research Purposes

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This document contains a set of research questions developed from both a review of literature in the field and also from an analysis of personal experiences with ICT in a social context.

The questions are intended to collect data to perform a Grounded Theory Analysis.

The data will be collected by holding individual interviews. Although data may also be collected using questionnaires, it is intended that the main research is carried out using face to face methods (partly due to this being a project about social contact and therefore the method is appropriate to the subject). Questionnaires would be qualitative and based on the questions below.

Interviews will be semi-structured and therefore other (unforeseen) questions may be asked as dictated by the answers given by the individuals.

Also, Grounded Theory is an iterative method, whereby after some of the data has been analysed gaps will be found, and then further interviews will be held to fill in the gaps. The questions for further interviews cannot be known in advance as they are determined by the data analysis.

The questions given are not necessarily to be asked all at once, and subsets of the questions may therefore be given to different people.

QUESTIONS FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS (COMPUTER USERS)

The following questions are to be asked of computer users

DEMOGRAPHICS

Year of birth?
Gender?
Ethnic Origin?
Profession?
Highest qualification held?
When did you first obtain a computer?
How often do you use it?

THE PAST

How do you think social life has changed in general over the last 15 to 20 years or so with the advent of information and communication technologies?

Can you give us a personal anecdote about how your social life has changed with the advent of information and communication technologies?

THE PRESENT

General Questions

Describe your current social network (set of contacts).
Include:

- The people you communicate with (e.g Partner, Family, Friends and Acquaintances, Colleagues, Others)
- Are they local to you or remote?
- The type of communication involved (e.g. letter, phone, face to face, ICT methods)
- How frequently are you in contact ?

Have any of your relationships with these people changed as a result of using your computer?

Does your use of the computer for communication replace or add to other methods of communication with your social network?

What other computer-related social activities do you take part in?

Do you use any websites aimed at people aged 50 and over? If so which? What do you think of them?

Has your use of the computer had any positive consequences for your relationships with people?

Has your use of the computer had any negative consequences for your relationships with people?

Do people encourage you to use your computer for social/communication purposes?

Do you encourage others to use their computer for social/communication purposes?

Do you have any communication routines (i.e. specific dates/times for contacting certain people)? Why have you developed these routines?

Expanding Your Social Network

Do you use the computer to expand your social network? If so, why and how?

Has your use of the computer opened up new social opportunities or activities previously unavailable to you? If so, how and what?

Are there any computer-related avenues for expanding your social network that you would like to pursue in the future?

Good Social Contact

Now you have had an opportunity to think about your social life and how you might like to expand it:

What do you think are the qualities of a good social life?
How do you feel about social networking sites such as Facebook?
How do you feel about socialising using the internet, i.e. not ever meeting the person face to face but only in a virtual way?
Do you think society is more social or less social now, with the widespread use of ICT?

Unsolicited Contact via ICT

Have you ever contacted people out of the blue? What made you do this? What kind of response did you get?

Have you ever been contacted out of the blue by people you didn't already know? If so, how did you feel about this?

Helping People

Do any of your computer activities help or support others?
Do you receive any help or support via the computer from others?

Support For Using Your Computer

Do you receive any support in your use of the computer from others?
Do you give any computer-related support to others ?

Behaviour

Have you ever used the computer to behave differently towards people from the way you normally see yourself? If so, how and why?

Have people ever used the computer to communicate with you in ways that you feel are inappropriate? If so how?

THE FUTURE

Project yourself into the future:

What is your vision for using the computer to enhance social networking, relationship building, ways of communicating etc?

How do you think computers and the internet could help housebound older people to combat feelings of social isolation?

Project yourself into the future and make predictions as to how ICTs might develop to benefit the social life of older people.

Are there any ICT based avenues for social networking YOU would like to pursue personally, that you haven't already?

COMPUTER MEANING (SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF TECHNOLOGY RELATED QUESTIONS)

What does your computer mean to you?

Describe your relationship with your computer.

How would you feel if you no longer had access to a computer?

Do you wish you could change the functionality of the applications you use? What makes you say this?

Where is your computer located ?

Have you personalised it in any way?

TECHNOLOGICAL DETERMINISM

Have any of your uses of the computer changed your perspective in any way or your understanding in any area?

Have you ever felt that the applications you have used are influencing the way you behave? Is this positive or negative?

Are there ways in which you feel constrained or liberated by your computer?

ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD ?

Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience of using computers for social purposes but haven't mentioned already?

Appendix 2 – Questions Focused on Identity Matters

(NYM/AVATAR USERS)

What sort of things are you interested in?

What got you into these activities?

What do you do in these activities?

What is it about you that makes you interested in doing this?

What made you choose your avatar(s)/nym(s)

Have you changed as a person whilst doing these online activities. If so, how?

How do these activities help you think about who you are as a person?

What have you learned about yourself?

How do these things make you feel when you do them?

What positive/negative experiences have you had?

How has your interest in these activities evolved?

Have you abandoned/changed any avatars/nyms for any reason?

How do you manage your chosen identities?

What attention do you pay to how you might be perceived online?

What other things would you like to try next?

How do you think your position in the life course affects your interest in these activities?

What would make you stop using these things?

Appendix 3 – Advertising Document

Loughborough University

Information Science Department

Research topic: To B(oldly) Go: A study of the social aspects of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) usage by people aged 50 and above.

Name of researcher: Dr. Melanie Heeley
Contact details: M.J.Heeley@lboro.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mrs. Wendy Olphert
Contact Details: C.W.Olphert@lboro.ac.uk

The Project

I am carrying out research for the above PhD which forms part of Sus-IT, a project which comes under the New Dynamics of Ageing Programme.

nda PROGRAMME

The New Dynamics of Ageing programme is a five year multidisciplinary research initiative with the ultimate aim of improving quality of life for older people.

Sus IT

Sustaining IT use by older people to promote autonomy and independence.

Who am I interested in talking to?

Are you aged 50 or over and using the internet regularly?
Do you use any social media, blogs, discussion boards, social gaming etc?
In particular, have you used any pseudonyms or developed any avatars online?
Do you pay attention to how you project yourself online?

What would I have to do?

This is a qualitative study and would involve participants in taking part in an interview of up to one hour's duration. The interview would be captured using a voice recorder for later transcription.

If you are interested in taking part…….

Please send me an e-mail at the following address - M.J.Heeley@lboro.ac.uk
Alternatively, please phone/text me on 07896620350

Melanie Heeley

Appendix 4 – Creative Writing Instructions

CREATIVE WRITING ABOUT ICT AND SOCIAL/IDENTITY MATTERS

WHAT KIND OF CREATIVE WRITING AM I AFTER ?

Think of an experience whereby you used ICT (in a social or identity related way) e.g. using Skype, using Facebook, or sitting at the computer with someone and doing things on it together. Then write up the experience of this. The following suggestions may help to explain further how to think of the writing.

Here are some suggestions for the production of a lived-experience description from van Manen :

- Describe the experience as you lived through it (avoiding causal explanations, generalisations, abstract interpretations)
- Describe the experience from the inside (feelings, mood, emotions)
- Focus on a particular example of the experience
- Focus on what made the experience so vivid
- Attend to how the body feels, how things smell, how they sound, how they look etc
- It is not about factual accuracy but about the plausibility of the account as a lived experience.

EXAMPLE (WRITTEN BY THE RESEARCHER)

TEXTING

You are thinking of me. I know. My mobile phone has given off its preselected message tone and there is a symbol to say that a text message has been received. From you. You are thinking of me! But there is a time delay, so… you may no longer be thinking of me. How long ago was it since you thought of me. A few seconds maybe? Now I am thinking of you because you have thought of me. Are we now simultaneously thinking of each other? The message encapsulates a thought. But, if I think about it, that is not strictly true. The message encapsulates the idea that a thought – of me – has been in your mind. Now I am left with a remnant of a thought. A ghost of a thought. What was the actual thought that you had – of me? It is not contained within the message that you sent. That is something else entirely. Is the content now irrelevant? Does it matter what you wrote in your text? Is it the thought that counts ? So you have 'pinged' me. Am I reachable? I am only reachable if I ping you back. Am I only reachable if I ping you back? Am I my device? Am I a device? Is it me that is plugged into the mobile phone network? Am I just some kind of terminal now ? Why do I need this intermediate device anyway? I ping you back. You know that I am thinking of you. You know I am reachable. The host has been contacted and has replied. With a message – whose content is irrelevant. Would it be just the same if the message was blank, just the beeping of the device. Is that enough to register the thought, to register that a thought has been had? The thoughts are out of synch with the devices – are we out of synch ? Asynchronous comms! You ping me ping you ping me ping you. Ping pong ping pong.

Appendix 5 - Example of a Completed Email Questionnaire

THE PAST

How do you think social life has changed in general over the last 15 to 20 years or so with the use of information and communication technologies (mobile phones, computers and so on)?

All organisations now give their website address 'for access to further information'. 20 years ago, this would be in addition to information available by other means: but now it's often the ONLY point of access given. So techno-poverty is now information poverty. The changes are passing by my mother's generation (80s+), although my own generation (60-70) all seem to be pretty savvy about most new technologies.

Can you give us a personal anecdote about how your social life has changed as a result of using information and communication technologies?

20 years ago I had my first mobile phone: initially, I had it for safety, as I was carrying out qualitative social research at the time. Just a couple of years previous to that, I had asked my university employers to allow me to borrow a mobile phone (there was a small stock held at the uni) for the same purpose. I was refused, but offered self-defence classes instead!

THE PRESENT
General Questions

What does your computer mean to you?

It is my main connection to the real world.

Describe your relationship with your computer.

I use it (it doesn't have a name or anything daft like that!) – I don't understand how it all fits together! Fortunately, my partner understands the hardware and the hardware/software interface, but isn't good at using them. So we do complement each other quite well.

How would you feel if you no longer had access to a computer?

I'd feel incredibly isolated, and also quite vulnerable.

Have any of your relationships with people changed as a result of using your computer?

See below.....

What computer-related social activities do you take part in? Please explain how you use these.

Word-processing: for writing books, articles, talks, teaching materials

Powerpoint: for backing up some of the above
Internet/Google: for asking all the questions I have, from spelling, to navigation, to recipes, to instructions, to academic literature, to definitions, to quotations, to online banking.....
Skype: particularly for chatting with a single-Mum daughter at the end of each day

Do you use any websites aimed at people aged 50 and over? If so which? What do you think of them?

Not specifically, though I will sometimes browse Age UK just for interest, and joined the grandparent sections of Circle of Moms on facebook (pretty duff stuff there!)

Has your use of the computer had any positive/negative consequences for your relationships with people?

***Negative**:My partner and I probably communicate less during the evenings, as we both tend to sit in the same room with our laptops on our knees*
***Positive**: I chat much more with my son who emigrated to Canada (via Skype and Facebook); I have made facebook contact – and got to know – three cousins whom I haven't seen since they were children (now all 50+): one in Denmark and two in New Zealand; and instant messaging with all my daughters most days and with my older sister every couple of weeks (previous to this, we didn't communicate for years at a time apart from swapping Christmas cards!).*

Expanding Your Social Network

Do you use the computer to expand your social network? If so, why and how?

I am finding it easier to communicate with people, via social networking. I'm not good at doing small-talk face-to-face, but small-talk is what builds and cements friendships. It's easier via computer.

Has your use of the computer opened up new social opportunities or activities previously unavailable to you? If so, how and what?

See below....

Are there any computer-related avenues for expanding your social network that you would like to pursue in the future?

I find it hard to imagine something that is 'not yet'. I haven't explored current possibilities via phones (twitter etc) as my mobile phone is now about dinosaur status!

Social Contact

How do you feel about social networking sites such as Facebook?

I am an absolutely dedicated facebooker. Am on there several times a day, and communicate regularly with probably about half my 100+ contacts. Having said that, about a fifth of my contacts belong to either my own birth family or my partner's family. I also take part in online petitions and lobbying groups.

How do you feel about socialising using the internet, i.e. not ever meeting the person face to face but only in a virtual way?

Very few of my facebook friends are people I have never met, though some may be people I have only met once or twice and simply keep in touch (in much the same way as 'penpals' of the past).
The facebook friends I haven't met are mostly people with whom I initially found an affinity on various facebook groups, or they were friends of friends. One, for example, was discussing marmalade with a mutual friend. I joined in the conversation, and we got rather involved in 'colonising' the mutual friend's page. We decided to 'make friends' independently and have remained facebook friends ever since. We have never met in person.

Do you think society is more social or less social now, with the widespread use of ICT?

Difficult question because I think it's different for different generations. In conversations with my teenage grandchildren, for example, I found that younger generations are generally far more public in their ICT settings, they worry far less about privacy issues. My generation is perhaps the last one to really fret and fear if 'things' are too public.

Generally speaking, however, I think the part of society that is online is much more social now. Dating and friendship sites, for example, are usually much safer places (though with the occasional much-publicised exception of course) than nightclubs or pubs. People who use them just need to be as street-aware as those who were looking for friendship/relationships in the other places mentioned.

Unsolicited Contact via ICT

Have you ever contacted people out of the blue? What made you do this? What kind of response did you get?

I only contact people I have known in the past (eg Friends Re-united) – those were old school friends, mainly. The response is always very positive, but only one of those contacts has remained, once the first flush of mutual reminiscences has been exhausted. Have to admit, it's more often been me who has allowed the contact to fade away – I run out of things to say!

Have you ever been contacted out of the blue by people you didn't already know? If so, how did you feel about this?

I was at one point (over about 3 months) contacted via skype by loads of people I didn't know. In the end I both blocked each one AND reported them for abuse of skype. I only began reporting them when the simple blocking failed to stop the soliciting. I still have no idea if it was just one, two or three people who used a number of aliases, but the reporting did seem to put an end to it. I got VERY

annoyed – but then I also get very annoyed with organisations like callcentres who do random ringing for sales or market research on the landline. I even get annoyed with my own bank for 'pestering' me every couple of months with phone calls about managing my accounts with them!!!

I quite often receive friend requests via facebook from people I don't know in Africa. These are usually friends of (African) friends who either just want to be able to boast a 'white' friend, or people desperate for money. I have been out to Africa and know the poverty so I understand the temptation to do this. It doesn't bother me; I just ignore the requests.

Helping People

Do any of your computer activities help or support others?

Probably not! Unless you count the fact that I prepare stuff for my U3A sociology group on my computer. I also occasionally google for information for my Mum, who would no more have a computer in her house than she'd have a TV set!!

Do you receive any help or support via the computer from others?

Only my partner who is my resident (and much-depended-upon) Computer Services Unit!

Behaviour

Have you ever used the computer to behave differently towards people from the way you normally see yourself? If so, how and why?

I think I 'come over' as a far less reserved person on facebook, for the reasons that I gave earlier. Much easier to joke, tease, do small-talk, discuss politics etc via a computer than face-to-face.

Have people ever used the computer to communicate with you in ways that you feel are inappropriate? If so how?

A couple of years ago I was 'stalked' by someone I knew quite well. He used both email and text messages from his phone to make threats, belittle me, and generally cause a nuisance. In the end – after he had driven over from the next town during the night and posted a threatening letter through the door and then turned up himself, hammering on the door at 7am – I contacted the police who then took over and dealt with the situation. I don't know if he continued to try to make contact – I had blocked him from both the mobile and the email.

Apart from that, it has just been the spell with skype mentioned above, some of those messages having overtly sexual content; and organisations sending out spam – which we have counteracted every few years by changing our ISPs and email addresses.

Identity

Do you pay attention to the image you are trying to portray on the internet? If so, what do you do?
Generally, I try to be myself – but more relaxed and informal

Do you have different identities for different purposes ?
Not consciously

Do you have any pseudonyms? Why have you used these?
No, not at all

Do you have any avatars ? Why have you developed these?
No – don't even know what they are ☺

THE FUTURE

Project yourself into the future:

Do you have any ideas about using the computer to enhance social networking, relationship building, ways of communicating etc?

How do you think computers and the internet could help housebound older people to combat feelings of social isolation?

This very much depends on personality. My late mother-in-law (who was almost 90) kept in touch with the family, received and loved family photos, and used the internet for info etc; but as I said above, my own mother would be horrified!!

Project yourself into the future and make predictions as to how ICTs might develop to benefit the social life of older people.

As my own generation becomes the 'old old', I think that will happen anyway, since most of us use computers as much or more than we use washing machines and telephones.

Are there any ICT based avenues for social networking YOU would like to pursue personally, that you haven't already?

ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD ?

Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience of using computers for social purposes but haven't mentioned already?

Appendix 6 – Ethical Considerations

APPROVAL MESSAGE

Ref No: R09-P164

LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY
ETHICAL ADVISORY SUB-COMMITTEE

RESEARCH PROPOSAL
INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

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Title:	To B(oldly) Go: A study of the social aspects of ICT usage by people aged 50 and above
Applicant:	C Olphert, Dr M Heeley
Department:	Information Science
Date of clearance:	8 January 2010

Comments of the Sub-Committee:

The Sub-Committee agreed to issue clearance to proceed subject to the following conditions:
That a copy of the Participant Information Sheet, Questionaire and sample interview questions were submitted.
That the Informed Consent Form was redrafted and included fields for both the participants name and signature.

COMPLETED ETHICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE FORM

ETHICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Loughborough University

RESEARCH PROPOSAL FOR HUMAN BIOLOGICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

This application should be completed after reading the University Code of Practice on Investigations Involving Human Participants (found at http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/committees/ethical/ind-cophp.htm).

1. Project Title

To B(oldly) Go: A study of the social aspects of ICT usage by people aged 50 and above

2. Brief lay summary of the proposal for the benefit of non-expert members of the Committee

This doctoral research is being carried out as part of the New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) Research programme – the actual project being known as SUS-IT (SUStaining IT use by older people to promote autonomy and independence):

"Older people who are confident and empowered users of information and communication technologies stand to gain significant benefits for the full duration of their old age, provided their use of ICT can be sustained effectively"

"This project aims to generate new knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of ageing in relation to the development and use of ICT. In particular, it seeks to investigate the actual and potential barriers to sustained and effective use of ICTs by older people, and to explore a range of potential social and technical solutions to these barriers. The multi-disciplinary project team combines expertise from psychology, computer science, information science, gerontology and e-learning, with developers and providers of ICT-based products and services, and organisations representing older people. Close and sustained engagement with older people, through user panels, will be a central feature of this research".

The particular focus of the research I will carry out is to gain a more complete understanding of the social aspects of ICT usage by older people, to map the area as it currently stands (usage, attitudes, drivers, barriers) and to suggest new and relevant approaches for the future.

3. Details of responsible investigator (supervisor in case of student projects)

Title	Mrs	Surname	Olphert	Forename	C Wendy
Department	Information Science				
Email address	c.w.olphert@lboro.ac.uk				

Personal experience of proposed procedures and/or methodologies.

The responsible investigator has extensive personal experience of the data collection methods to be used in this project (developing questionnaires and conducting interviews and focus groups) and of supervising research on the topic of older users and ICT.

4. Names, experience, department and email addresses of additional investigators

Melanie Jane Heeley. Information Science. M.J.Heeley@lboro.ac.uk.
Prior experience of completing a master's dissertation in Information Science which involved creating an online questionnaire and also telephone interviewing relevant people about information flows within the field of mental health and housing. This demonstrates a prior interest in matters of social inclusion. Undertaken some research methods training in both the Information Science department and the Social Science department concerning carrying out interviews and focus groups and matters of ethical consent. Also, prior experience of undertaking doctoral research.

5. Proposed start and finish date and duration of project

Start date	01/07/09	Finish date	01/07/13	Duration	4 years

Start date for data-collection all data collection methods = Jan 2010

NB. Data collection should not commence before EAC approval is granted.

6. Location(s) of project
Desk research – Department of Information Science, LU
Data collection – UK

7. Reasons for undertaking the study (eg contract, student research)
Student research

8. Do any of the investigators stand to gain from a particular conclusion of the research project?

No

9a. Is the project being sponsored? Yes [X] No [ ]
If yes, please state source of funds including contact name and address.

9b. Is the project covered by the sponsors insurance? Yes [ ] No [ ]
If no, please confirm details of alternative cover (eg University cover).

10. Aims and objectives of project

The aim of this particular research (within the context of the main project) is:

to help promote social fulfilment in later life (and thus combat potential social isolation) with the aid of Information and Communication Technology (ICTs)

The objectives are:

to understand the use that older people make of ICTs in a social context, as social isolation can be a dominant factor in later life.
to determine older people's views about using ICTs for social purposes to understand both drivers of and barriers to engagement.
to define new and pertinent ways that older people can use ICTs for social purposes which are relevant to their attitudes and beliefs.

11. Brief outline of project
The research is being undertaken in part fulfilment of the requirements for an MPhil/PhD. The project will use a range of data collection techniques as described

below. The aim is to collect qualitative data which will be analysed using grounded theory. The output of the project will be a dissertation in the region of 80,000 words.

A) STUDY DESIGN

The following methodology will be adopted for the research:
A literature review/web research of ICT usage by older people around the world. Then, a more focused literature review of the ways in which ICTs are used by older people in a social context.

Based on the literature review, a schedule of questions will be developed to address the aims and objectives noted above. These questions will be used in the following ways: questionnaires, focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

The NDA SUS-IT project itself has spent time developing relationships with agencies, groups, and local government etc., to establish a network of older people who are interested and willing to participate in these studies. The researcher has a network of contacts with older people established as a result of organising a society for professionals/academics, some of whom are aged over 50 years. The researcher also has a network of relatives and friends who can be used for both convenience and snowball sampling. Some relatives have contacts in:
ProBus (Probus clubs are organizations for men and women who have retired from their profession or business and want to maintain a social network with others who have similar interests) and:
The Royal Signals (an association of ex-army members who had responsibility for all types of telecommunications equipment and information systems).

Questionnaires will be distributed to older people through web sites for senior people, organizations providing services for the aged, and direct personal contact or introductions from friends and relatives. Focus groups and interviews will be set up using the contacts as noted above.

A sample of older people who do not use ICTs will be Interviewed to find out the barriers to using ICTs in social ways, and possible means to overcome them. Interview questions will be prepared with reference to analysis of the results obtained from the data collection methods used above. Participants will be recruited using the means already mentioned.

B) MEASUREMENTS TO BE TAKEN

Data will be collected about people's usage/non-usage of, and attitudes towards, ICTS in a social context. Some limited demographic data (age, gender, educational level attained, and current/previous occupation) will also be collected to enable comparisons to be drawn between individuals with different circumstances.

12. Please indicate whether the proposed study:

Involves taking bodily samples	Yes		No	x
Involves procedures which are physically invasive (including the collection of body secretions by physically invasive methods)	Yes		No	x
Is designed to be challenging (physically or psychologically in any way), or involves procedures which are likely to cause physical, psychological, social or emotional distress to participants	Yes		No	x
Involves intake of compounds additional to daily diet, or other dietary manipulation / supplementation	Yes		No	x

Involves pharmaceutical drugs (please refer to published guidelines)	Yes		No	x
Involves testing new equipment	Yes		No	x
Involves procedures which may cause embarrassment to participants	Yes		No	x
Involves collection of personal and/or potentially sensitive data	Yes	X	No	
Involves use of radiation (Please refer to published guidelines. Investigators should contact the University's Radiological Protection Officer before commencing any research which exposes participants to ionising radiation – e.g. x-rays)	Yes		No	x
Involves use of hazardous materials (please refer to published guidelines)	Yes		No	x
Assists/alters the process of conception in any way	Yes		No	x
Involves methods of contraception	Yes		No	x
Involves genetic engineering	Yes		No	x

If Yes - please give specific details of the procedures to be used and arrangements to deal with adverse effects.

Some demographic data will be collected. Data about personal attitudes and beliefs will also be collected, along with stories about personal social use of ICTs. But this is not a study which involves talking/writing about distressing social and emotional situations. The data is not envisaged as being sensitive but may therefore be of a personal nature. All write ups will be anonymised and not attributable to individuals.

13. Participant Information

Details of participants (gender, age, special interests etc)

The research is concerned with people aged 50 years and above, some of whom will inevitably be over the age of 65. Even though people over the age of 65 are included in the study, they will not be 'vulnerable' in other ways. They will be people who are normally active within their communities and who volunteer freely to take part.

Number of participants to be recruited:

The overall aim is to include 50 people in the study – this will be in a combination of all the data collection methods used above (questionnaires, interviews and focus groups).

How will participants be selected? Please outline inclusion/exclusion criteria to be used.

Participants in all aspects of the research will be self-selecting volunteers. The only criterion for participation will be those aged 50 and over.

How will participants be recruited and approached?

The questionnaire will be distributed through organisations/groups relevant to older people and through personal contact, with an invitation to respond. Potential interviewees and focus group members will be identified from the contacts noted above, and they will be invited to participate.

Please state demand on participants' time.

Questionnaire completion - this will vary dependent on whether it is online (for a larger number of unknown respondents to gain a general feel for the data at a mass level) or just an electronic word document (known, self-selecting individuals who are

willing to devote more time to a detailed response) = online approx. 15 minutes, electronic approx. 60 minutes
Interviews = approx. 1 hour.
Focus group = approx. 2 hours.

14. Control Participants

Will control participants be used? Yes [ ] No [x]

If Yes, please answer the following:
Number of control participants to be recruited:
How will control participants be selected? Please outline inclusion/exclusion criteria to be used.

How will control participants be recruited and approached?

Please state demand on control participants' time.

15. Procedures for chaperoning and supervision of participants during the investigation

N/A

16. Possible risks, discomforts and/or distress to participants

None envisaged.

17. Details of any payments to be made to the participants

None.

18. Is written consent to be obtained from participants? Yes [X] No [ ]

If yes, please attach a copy of the consent form to be used.
If no, please justify.

All participants will be volunteers who will understand the idea of voluntary consent. Before completing a questionnaire or taking part in an interview or focus group, they will be given written information about the aims and reason for the study, a guarantee of confidentiality and how data will be used and stored. They will also be advised of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Those who subsequently agree to participate will be deemed to have consented. Those taking part in interviews and focus groups will be asked to sign the accompanying documentation. Those completing questionnaires will be deemed to have consented by virtue of completing and returning the forms provided.

19. Will any of the participants be from one of the following vulnerable groups?

Children under 18 years of age	Yes	[ ]	No	[x]
People over 65 years of age	Yes	[x]	No	[ ]
People with mental illness	Yes	[ ]	No	[x]
Prisoners/other detained persons	Yes	[ ]	No	[x]
Other vulnerable groups	Yes	[ ]	No	[x]

If you have selected yes to any of the above, please answer the following questions:
what special arrangements have been made to deal with the issues of consent?

See 18 above.

have investigators obtained necessary police registration/clearance? (please provide details or indicate the reasons why this is not applicable to your study)

Not necessary for this group.

20. How will participants be informed of their right to withdraw from the study?
This will be stated in writing at the front of the questionnaire and in a letter handed to participants in the interviews/focus groups.

21. Will the investigation include the use of any of the following?

Audio recording	Yes	x	No	
Video recording	Yes		No	X
Observation of participants	Yes		No	X

If yes to any, please provide detail of how the recording will be stored, when the recordings will be destroyed and how confidentiality of data will be ensured?

The interviews and focus groups will be recorded with the consent of the participants. The recordings and transcripts thereof, will be stored in a locked cupboard. Access will only be available to the student and the student's supervisor. Recordings will be kept for 10 years and then destroyed.

22. What steps will be taken to safeguard anonymity of participants/confidentiality of personal data?
Any data reported in the dissertation will be anonymised and/or aggregated so that individuals cannot be identified. All data collected (completed questionnaires, recordings if taken, and transcripts of recordings) will be securely stored.

23. What steps have been taken to ensure that the collection and storage of data complies with the Data Protection Act 1998? Please see University guidance on Data Collection and Storage and Compliance with the Data Protection Act.
See above.

24. INSURANCE COVER:
It is the responsibility of investigators to ensure that there is appropriate insurance cover for the procedure/technique.

The University maintains in force a Public Liability Policy, which indemnifies it against its legal liability for accidental injury to persons (other than its employees) and for accidental damage to the property of others. Any unavoidable injury or damage therefore falls outside the scope of the policy.

Will any part of the investigation result in unavoidable injury or damage to participants or property?	Yes		No	x

If yes, please detail the alternative insurance cover arrangements and attach supporting documentation to this form.

The University Insurance relates to claims arising out of all normal activities of the University, but Insurers require to be notified of anything of an unusual nature

Is the investigation classed as normal activity?	Yes	x	No	

If no, please check with the University Insurers that the policy will cover the activity. If the activity falls outside the scope of the policy, please detail alternative insurance cover arrangements and attach supporting documentation to this form.

25. Declaration

I have read the University's Code of Practice on Investigations on Human Participants and have completed this application. I confirm that the above named investigation complies with published codes of conduct, ethical principles and guidelines of professional bodies associated with my research discipline.

I agree to provide the Ethical Advisory Committee with appropriate feedback upon completion of my investigation.

Signature of applicant:

Signature of Head of Department:

Date

PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU HAVE ATTACHED COPIES OF THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS TO YOUR SUBMISSION.

Participant Information Sheet

Informed Consent Form

Health Screen Questionnaire*

Advertisement/Recruitment material*

Evidence of consent from other Committees*

*where relevant

Appendix 7 – Participant Information Sheet

Information Technology

Do you
Love IT?
Loathe IT?
Live with IT?

The Project and Your Participation

This research forms part of a project called Sus-IT which is looking at ways of helping people use technology to maintain their autonomy and independence as they grow older.

Sus-IT is a research project funded by the New Dynamics of Ageing programme and led by Professor Leela Damodaran at Loughborough University. For more information about the research project and the research partners go to: http://sus-it.lboro.ac.uk/

My study looks at the social uses of information technologies and is supervised by Wendy Olphert. How can technology be used to improve the social life of older people, and also combat feelings of social isolation? Are you over 50 and willing to share some of your experiences and knowledge? This can be in the form of an interview (time and location to suit you) or a focus group of one or two hours in duration. You do not have to have experience of using computers or mobile phones; in fact, I am just as interested in talking to people who don't use them as people who do.

The data will be recorded and transcribed and may be used in various research reports. The information will be stored securely in electronic form. You personal details will be kept anonymous should any of your contributions appear in research documents. The data in its original and non-anonymised form will only be seen by the researcher and the researcher's supervisor.

If you have further questions, please feel free to get in touch with the researchers using the contact details below.

Once I take part can I change my mind?

Yes ! After you have read this sheet and asked any questions you may have we will ask you to sign a consent form. However, if you wish to withdraw from this study at any time, even during the session, for any reason, please just tell the researcher or use the contact details below.

What if I am not happy with how the research was conducted?

If you are not happy about any aspect of your participation, and cannot resolve the issue to your satisfaction with the researcher, then please contact: Secretary to Loughborough university Ethical Advisory Committee- **Mrs Z Stockdale : Z.C.Stockdale@lboro.ac.uk (01509 222423)**

Researcher Contact Details:

Researcher: Dr. Melanie Heeley (M.J.Heeley@lboro.ac.uk)
Tel: 0789 6620350
Supervisor: Mrs. Wendy Olphert (C.W.Olphert@lboro.ac.uk)
Tel: 01509 635651
Department of Information Science, FK, Garendon Building Holywell Park, Loughborough University, Loughborough, Leics, LE11 3TU.

Appendix 8 – Consent form

Information Science Department

Consent Form

Research topic: To B(oldly) Go : A study of the social aspects of ICT usage by people aged 50 and above.

Supervisor: Mrs. Wendy Olphert
Contact Details: C.W.Olphert@lboro.ac.uk

Name of researcher: Dr. Melanie Heeley
Contact details: M.J.Heeley@lboro.ac.uk

I understand that the research topic is about exploring older people's experiences of and attitudes towards using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in a social context.

I understand that my participation in this interview/focus group/writing study is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any time.

I understand that spoken data will be recorded and transcribed. Spoken and written data may be used in various research reports. The information will be stored securely in electronic form. I understand that my personal details will be kept anonymous should any of my contributions appear in research documents. The data in its original and non-anonymised form will only be seen by the researcher and the researcher's supervisor.

By signing this form, I agree to all of the above and to participating in this session as part of the research.

Name _____Date_____

Year of birth_____

If you would like to be involved further, please leave your contact details below:

_____

Signature_____