

Leslie Haddon and Roger Silverstone

Information and communication technologies and the young elderly

Report

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**Information and Communication Technologies
and the Young Elderly**

by

Leslie Haddon and Roger Silverstone

March 1996

**A report on the ESRC/PICT Study of the Household and Information and
Communication Technologies**

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CONTENTS

1. Introduction	4
1.1 Origins of the Study	4
1.2 Aims and Approach of the Present Study	5
1.3 Design and Conduct of the Research	7
1.3.1 The population	7
1.3.2 The Research	8
1.3.3 The analysis	8
1.3.4 The report	8
2. The Young Elderly Cohort	10
2.1. Wider Social Change	10
2.1.1. Early experiences as a reference point	10
2.1.2. The war	12
2.1.3. Social and geographical mobility	13
2.1.4. Affluence and consumption	13
2.1.5. Community change	15
2.1.6. Household composition	16
2.1.7. The point of retirement, savings and pensions	17
2.2. Heterogeneity, Trajectories and Transitions	17
2.2.1. Heterogeneity of the young elderly	18
2.2.2. Different trajectories into retirement	19
2.2.3. Transitions after retirement	21
2.3. Response to Retirement	24
2.3.1. Symbols of old age	24
2.3.2. Economic aspects	24
2.3.3. Being at home	27
2.3.4. Orientations	33
2.3.5. Activities and time away from home	38
2.3.6. Social networks	40
2.4. Space and Time Issues	42
2.4.1. Space Issues	42
2.4.2. Time issues: Pace	43
2.4.3. Temporal flexibility and routines	43
2.4.4. Public time and synchronising time	44
2.4.5. The meaning of time	45
2.5 Conclusion	47

3. The Phone and Computer	50
3.1. The Phone	50
3.1.1. Early memories	50
3.1.2. Entry into the home	52
3.1.3. Getting used to the phone	55
3.1.4. Experience of the phone with retirement	61
3.1.5. Issues	68
3.1.6. Beyond the basic phone	75
3.2. The Computer	83
3.2.1. Experience of computers at work	83
3.2.2. Home computers	85
3.2.3. Interactive Games	91
3.3 Conclusion	94
4. Audio-Visual ICTs and the Young Elderly	97
4.1. Audio	97
4.1.1. Early experience: Radio and the gramophone	97
4.1.2. Audio since Retirement	107
4.2. TV	119
4.2.1. Acquiring the first TV	120
4.2.2. Early TV viewing practices	123
4.2.3. Children and TV.	125
4.2.4. Changes in viewing with retirement	127
4.2.5. Programme genres watched	134
4.2.6. Teletext	141
4.2.7. The VCR	142
4.2.8. Satellite and Cable	147
4.2.9. The Camcorder	148
4.3. Media, Values and Temporal Orientation	150
4.4. Conclusion	159
5. Conclusions	163
References	
Appendix	

1. Introduction

1.1 Origins of the Study

In 1987, and again in 1991, the Economic and Social Research Council awarded grants under its Programme on Information and Communication Technologies for projects on the domestic environment of information and communication technologies (ICTs). The aims of the two projects were to conduct basic research into the relationship between families and households and their information and communication technologies in order to contribute to academic and policy debate.

The need for research was premised on the lack of detailed understanding of the social and cultural factors that affected the adoption and use of new technologies and services in the home. It was also premised on the lack of detailed understanding of the dynamics and consequences of that adoption and use. A new generation of ICTs based around the convergence of computer and video technology, advances in telecommunications, new delivery systems and the possibility of new interactive interfaces, all gave, and continue to give still, grounds both for optimism and anxiety. The optimism was, and still is, focused on the possibilities of integrating families and households into an increasingly sophisticated and responsive world of communication and information (e.g. Bangemann, 1994). The anxieties were, and still are, grounded in questions surrounding the possible consequences of social isolation or alienation, as well as the possible effects of a division between information rich and poor, that might result. Manufacturers of new technologies as well as those marketing new services were also keen to understand the changing market and the likely factors that would affect future demand. Policy makers (at least some of them) in government and elsewhere wanted to understand the social dimensions of innovation both in technological change and its consequences.

The first phase of the research (1987-90) focused on the domestic lives of nuclear families, all of whom had a relatively high level of information and communication technologies in their home. The research involved a detailed examination of the families' everyday lives. It enquired into those factors that encouraged or constrained the ways in which ICTs were bought and integrated (or not) into the home. It enquired into the ways in which ICTs facilitated or impeded families' relationships with the world beyond their front doors. Class, gender and stage in the family life cycle were all seen as important in understanding differences between families and the precise character of each family's own technological culture. ICTs were not seen as determining changes in family life and certainly not, on their own, destroying it; nor was their use itself seen as simply determined by wider social or cultural forces. The research indicated that it was necessary to understand the place of ICTs in the family and household as the product of a dynamic set of historical and social conditions, visible not only in the micro-sociology of the family and its immediate environment but also in the macro-political economy of changing industrial and technological societies.

In the second phase of the research both the concerns and the approach were carried into three different kinds of domestic settings, differentiated both by household composition and presumed differences in their relationship to ICTs. In consecutive years the research has focused on teleworking households (Haddon and Silverstone, 1993; 1994), lone parents (Haddon and Silverstone, 1995), and the young elderly or newly retired¹. The extension of the research into very different kinds of domestic settings, albeit all based in the South of England, provided an opportunity to think through some of the wider issues associated with the place of media and information technologies in everyday life (Silverstone, 1994), as well as offering a constant stimulus to confront those wider understandings as new research findings emerged. Each more or less distinctive household-setting therefore offered an opportunity to explore different dimensions of media and technology use as well as to identify consistencies and commonalities, for example the changing relations of home and work (teleworkers), the implications of economic and social disadvantage (lone-parents), and, in the present case, changes in the life-cycle.

1.2 Aims and Approach of the Present Study

The present study focuses on the lives of the recently retired and the young elderly. This is a group that has so far not been intensively studied from any perspective, let alone from the point of view of their relationship to media and technology. Yet both in their growing numbers as a proportion of the population of the UK, and in terms of their purchasing power, they are becoming increasingly significant. The cohort in the study reflects the demographic range of the population as a whole. Yet it is distinctive both by virtue of the experience of life on either side of the second world war and its coincidence with the rapid expansion of, particularly, broadcast technology. The subjects of our study are also members of the first cohort that had extensive access to occupational pensions, providing for some a greater degree of financial security and independence, and a higher disposable income, than previous generations of the newly retired would, in the main, have had.

This study would raise now familiar issues in relation to information and communication technology use in domestic settings. The particular character of the domestication of media hardware and software, the factors affecting particular patterns of use and of resistance would, we expected, emerge in such a way as both to reinforce and challenge previous findings. Gender and class differences would quite clearly be a focus of concern, as would the changing patterns of use, and the integration of both old and new ICTs into the daily patterns of life both in time and space, and into private and public domains.

However the young elderly or newly retired provide an opportunity to study a number of quite distinctive aspects of the place of information and communication technology in everyday life. First of all the young elderly are, in the main, and certainly in our

¹ The two terms - the young elderly and the newly retired - are used interchangeably in the following report depending on whether the focus is on a biological, age related stage, in the life-cycle or whether the focus is on economic and social status.

study, moving through a crucial period of their lives as they manage the transition from work to retirement. For the most part our respondents were still healthy and both physically and mentally competent, but for many the first signs of a deteriorating old age were beginning to emerge. In both these contexts - the new kind of domesticity that follows the retirement of one or both partners and the shadow of creeping incapacity - communication and information technologies arguably will, or could, play a significant role. But the focus of the study is not just on the present or the future. The young elderly provide an opportunity to enquire into the history and pre-history of information and communication technology use, to trace how that history has intertwined with the biographies of different individuals, especially so in a group whose childhood for the most part offered access to early radio and whose subsequent lives have been lived through the most profoundly significant changes in our increasingly media dominated century. This coincidence of memory and experience, the movement through life and generational cycles, both human and technological, and the management of a predictable if uncertain future, together offer a rich and complex agenda for research.

The methodology for the present research drew on the experiences of the first phase study. It involved qualitative case-study based research into the daily lives of the young elderly where the aim was not to provide a generalisable or representative tableau as much as an assessment of the various factors which contribute to the particular character of their domestic lives, and an understanding of their variations and dynamics.

This form of case-study based research is particularly appropriate because of the flexible and exploratory form of interview that can be used. Such interviews are conducted on the basis of a schedule defining topics and specific items for discussion, but not requiring specific answers to specific questions. This allows those - in this case the young elderly - who are taking part to give detailed accounts of their experiences or perceptions and to cite instances where these are relevant. They are also encouraged to explore and formulate their attitudes towards the central issues being studied - both those which are predefined and those which are of most salience to them as individuals. There is the opportunity for them to discuss their underlying feelings and beliefs. Essentially, then, such methods allow the accounts and perceptions of those being studied to enter the research findings in a way that is usually impossible with pre-structured interviews or survey based methodologies. In this case it was precisely the ability of our subjects to negotiate their own agenda and define the particular character of their own experiences, both of their status as newly retired or young elderly and of ICTs, that was crucial.

The subject areas covered by the research were as follows:

- household information including family/household size and composition, tenure, household income
- biographies of the each member of the household, focusing on their relationship to information and communication technologies (principally television/VCR, radio and the telephone) in their families of origin, in the families that they created and in their present household, together with a focus on their educational and employment histories

- patterns of everyday life, including the use of time and space, and the relationships both within and outside the household (e.g. with children, grandchildren, extended family and neighbourhood)
- the management of resources and the strategies relevant to the financial management of the household
- the acquisition, ownership, control and use of information and communication technologies.

1.3 Design and Conduct of the Research

The case study field-work was conducted during a nine month period in 1994.

1.3.1 The population

The population for the study comprised 20 young elderly households. The majority of the households consisted of a married couple, both of whom had retired formally from full-time work. Four households consisted of single individuals. The age range varied between 58 and 75 with the majority falling between 65 and 73.

The population for the study was assembled to include a wide range of economic circumstances, but with a view to representing roughly the demographic pattern of the young elderly within the population of the UK as a whole. However the location of the research, principally in North and East London and in Brighton, obviously had consequences for the character of the population and their life histories. Specifically, we were able to interview a significant number of households that, with or without associated upward social mobility, had moved from traditional working communities in the East End of London during their lifetimes, as well as those who stayed behind. Two households included first generation immigrants, but in order to limit the already complex environments that we were exploring (and for obvious demographic age related reasons) we decided to exclude Afro-Caribbean and Asian households. The study of such households poses distinct and important questions with which we could not adequately deal given the limits of the present study.

No attempt was made to control for the amount or quality of ICTs in the home. All households had television, radio and a telephone. Most had some form of record or tape playing equipment, many had a VCR and some had a computer.

The young elderly households in the study were recruited in a number of different ways: through organisations working amongst, and on behalf of, the elderly (whose help we acknowledge); from personal contacts; and through snowballing within informal networks.

1.3.2 The research

Each member of the household was asked to complete a time-use diary covering a full week. Details of their activities were sought with reference to their location, both inside or outside the household, whether they were undertaken alone or with others, and the use of technologies.

Subsequently in depth interviews were carried out either singly or jointly in the case of two person households, following a predefined schedule identifying the main topics of discussion. Two interviews, one focusing on personal circumstances, the other on relationships to technology, were conducted. All interviews were tape recorded and fully transcribed. Interviews were supplemented by photographs of the main domestic space of the home and observations of decor and domestic arrangements. All interviewees were given a small gift as a token of our appreciation of their participation.

1.3.3 The analysis

The analysis was conducted on the basis of the production of individual case studies. Each set of interviews was rewritten as an integrated case study which followed a common structure. The structure was in turn defined by the originating concerns of the research and the need to provide an accurate account of the history of the family/household and the individuals within it, their economic circumstances, their experiences of lone-parenthood and their relationships to information and communication technologies. It is on the basis of the completed case studies that the following report was constructed.

1.3.4 The report

In what follows in the main body of the report we have used the case study material to explore a number of key themes relevant to our principal concerns with the place and significance of ICTs in the lives of the young elderly. Our aim is not to claim that our sample is exactly representative of the young elderly population, it is rather a series of individual case studies which were designed to reflect, broadly, the demography of this section of the population as a whole. But while we cannot represent absolutely all experiences of the young elderly and the newly retired, we have attempted to cover many of them.

The report attempts to break new territory, and as such cannot be conclusive. The issues that we raise as a result of our interviews cover a great deal of ground, focusing as they do on the complex interrelationship of past, present and future at a moment when major life transitions are being negotiated. As before in our work there is no principal claim that information and communication technologies occupy privileged status in the lives of our respondents. On the contrary, the research is geared to exploring what role they do have, what role they have had and what role they might have in future. Throughout the pages that follow we attempt to preserve a clear sense both of variation and change, both with respect to the character and quality of the lives

of the newly retired and their experiences with information and communication technologies. Research on the elderly, and certainly everyday discussions of the elderly, tend to become quickly both reifying and homogenising. In attempting to avoid both pitfalls we insist on listening to the voices of our respondents as they themselves explore the meaning of their present age and status in their own terms, as they offer through that exploration insights into the conflicts and uncertainties as well as the pleasures and freedoms that have emerged, and as they discuss their own pasts and the salience of information and communication technologies both to those pasts and to their everyday lives both in the present and the future.

The report consists of three principal sections. In the first we describe our cohort, focusing on the specificity of their life histories relative to those of previous or later generations. We identify and discuss the social, economic and cultural aspects that mark this generation as distinct, with respect to their experiences of pre-war recession, war and post-war affluence. We identify and discuss the different paths of social and geographical mobility that those in our population have taken. We attempt to identify and describe the different routes toward retirement and the different experiences of retirement that emerged during the research period, as they so significantly are, on differences of class position and work history as well as, crucially, on gender. We also discuss both the economic and symbolic aspects of the experience of retirement, their implications for participation in a wider culture of family or neighbourhood as well as for the quality of life at home. And we begin to address a theme that we pursue throughout the report: the changing experiences of space and time on the one hand, and the structuring of everyday life through those changing experiences on the other.

The two following chapters explore in some detail our respondents' lives with information and communication technologies. In the first the focus is on the telephone and the computer, and principally on the first of these two. In the second attention shifts to radio and television, as well as to other audio-visual technologies. In both these extensive chapters we address a wide range of themes. Underlying all of them is an attempt to grasp the dynamics of a complex process: highly differentiated through time and space, and dependent entirely on the activities of individuals whose decisions and routines define the social and cultural matrix through which media and information change must be understood.

2. The Young Elderly Cohort

This study of the young elderly enables us to follow up in more detail the intersection of life cycles and broader historical developments. In our previous studies we tried to locate teleworkers and lone parents in social context - both these categories themselves and the experience of teleworking and lone parenthood in the 1990s were not quite the same as they would have been in the 1960s, for example. Representations of the experience, social support networks and work options are just some of the circumstances which had changed. Of course, the people taking part in those earlier studies had their own biographies prior to the circumstances that made them the objects of our study: some of our teleworker sample were in their 50s and some of the lone parents in their 40s. How they experienced the world now, was a reflection of their earlier life. It is that question which is privileged in this current study given that the young elderly have had both longer biographies and lived their early life in an era when lifestyles were very different: in the pre-war and war years.

In fact, when we look at what the young elderly, the 'recently' retired, do now - how they evaluate and react to their circumstances and how they use and in general respond to ICTs - we can only do so if we appreciate the circumstances of their earlier life. Hence, we focus not on 'the young elderly' in general but this cohort of young elderly, who were born and went through various stages of their life course in specific eras - different from the previous young elderly (now the older elderly) and from the next generation of young elderly. To start this section, then, it is appropriate to pick out a few of the significant broader social developments which coincided with and shaped their earlier lives.

2.1 Wider Social Change

2.1.1 Early experiences as a reference point

Many from this cohort grew up and lived their early adult years at a time when money was tight and this, of course, influenced how they evaluated purchases and managed their income. For many of our interviewees, the habits formed earlier in their lives continued to the present day.

Sam Waters: We've never been extravagant in some ways because I suppose in our early lives we had rather austere sorts of lives where we had to save every penny you could to save.

Janice Waters: We've always had the same sort of lifestyle and, as I say, we never because we were sort of poorer in those days, we've never really been wanting everything that everybody else has got, you know. I mean, I suppose to a certain extent we're all right, you know. We're quite happy.

The Williams echoed similar sentiments.

George Williams: I think probably our generation always needs to be able to justify. You know, even if you can afford something you think "Well, do I really need it?"

Dorothy Williams: As you say, I think we've always been cautious. We've never been... It was hard going when we first came home and got married after the war and started to buy a house and things like that. So we've always been reasonably, as you say, cautious with money and you feel you've got to justify what you buy. And I don't think we're any different from that now really.

Those days of austerity frequently served as a reference point for evaluating their current lifestyles. For example, even amongst those with a lower income, they might think of themselves as constrained and having to be careful about what they spent, but, having known 'real poverty' in their youth, they usually did not perceive themselves as being 'poor'.

Bernie Griffith: We had a bit hard life but... we didn't take no notice because we thought that everybody was in the same boat them days. I would never say poverty because, like I just said, you were all in the same boat together. And I know it was a poor life but it was a bit happy, wasn't it, more than what it is now. You know, not so much worry and rushing and all that. But we all got by.

Often their early years were a reference point - a time of stability and security - and quite a few expressed the same sentiment as Bernie: 'we was poor but we was happy'. Although they recognised that they are materially better off today and, in many senses, more comfortable, a number were ambivalent about the other changes that had taken place and what they had lost. For example, there were fears about law and order - that it was less safe on the street for them - and they lamented the break up of more traditional communities.

Fred Clough: Times were hard. They was very hard but they was happier because you could go out at night even as children. I mean there was the docks on one side, the factories on the other, men used to come off the ships, but we had no fear and we only had gas light. No electric light. You could play out in the streets. If we were outdoors, we had either a key would hang on a string just behind the letter box. You'd lift the letter box up and get hold of it or the door would be unlocked. There was no fear of mugging or your home being broken into and if a neighbour was missing, another would always go in to see if they was all right. As children, we used to have to go messages for our neighbours. If you asked for money for milk, "What am I? A walking moneybox?" You had to earn it and earn it hard. I used to, as I say, I used to look after my father's rabbits and chickens, go up and help him on the allotments, sell his stuff and I used to get sixpence a week for that, working hard.

He added later that he was glad to have lived when he did and would not have wanted to be young nowadays. He continued this romanticised memory of working class life.

Fred Clough: You had the door open. You could leave the door open. You had no fear of coming... I've seen the men come round to empty our gas meters. They used to come round with a bike and the bag used to be on the back, the coins. Now the van that used to pick all these coins up used to be open. The shutters used to be open at the back. There was no hold ups. There was robberies. Banks were robbed but they didn't commit the violence that they commit now. An armed robbery was never heard of and if a villain got caught, he used to say "Fair cop". That was it. But there was no armed robbery. You very seldom heard of rape. Murder was headline news.

LH: Do you worry about this change? Do you worry about break-ins...

Ivy Clough: Yeah, I do. I'm looking behind me all the time I'm out.

Finally, the young elderly interviewees had usually been brought up in households where mothers were housewives and there were strict and traditional gendered divisions of domestic labour. There had, of course, been some departure from this pattern in their own lives. Although some women gave up work when they married, many returned to either full- or part-time work when their children were older. However, in a lot of households a more traditional division of labour existed, with some wives referring to their husbands as being 'of the old school' in such matters.

2.1.2 The war

Given that our sample covered a 17 year age range from 58-75, our interviewees were of different ages when the war occurred. Some were only children, while others were already young adults - either fighting or in other ways being involved in the war effort. This was a significant reference point, and formative for many. Some travelled to places they would not otherwise have - including being evacuated from London. Others learnt new skills. Of particular relevance to this study, the role of radio changed slightly the experience of waiting for the war news. And now with more time on their hands, a number of our interviewees relive those years in terms of watching war programmes and films.

Of course, with the 50th anniversary celebrations, some of these memories were being stimulated at the time of the interviews - and indeed, more material than usual was being broadcast about that period. But in addition, some organisations for war veterans had only been formed recently as the age cohort reached retirement age. As Roger Summers explained when describing his ex-RAF clubs and events:

Roger Summers: What happens is that people, when they leave the service, they're tied up with making their careers, their families and all sorts of things. Then they retire and they get a little more time. A lot of the organisations that I belong to; Sterling Aircraft Club, 199 Squadron Reunion, Arnold Scheme,... some of these have only been in existence for ten years or so. They weren't in existence before because no one had time to think something up.

2.1.3 Social and geographical mobility

The post-war years exhibited greater degrees of social mobility than before as the number and range of middle-class jobs increased. This was reflected in the fact that many of our middle-class sub-sample came from working class origins and shared similar memories to the working class sub-sample. For instance, some of those in suburban Barnet had originated in the same streets of inner-city Hackney as had the interviewees who had stayed behind in their home borough. They had often brought young families up in the late 1940s and 1950s and, even though they were on middle-class incomes, did not feel affluent. These shared roots also meant that they shared certain values: for example, when they talked about always having been careful spenders, and appreciating the value of money - even though they had more of it. Also shared was the experience of looking after oneself from the years of austerity. Both working-class and middle-class interviewees could often make things or maintain their environment, be it in terms of knitting or DIY. In fact, for males especially, being a 'handyman' put a number of our interviewees in demand from family, friends and neighbours.

The above example of the migration from inner city Hackney to suburban Barnet is just one small example of the general trend over many years to greater geographical mobility (Long and Wimbush, 1979:10). Moreover, the extended family of this cohort and their own children had often later been to varying degrees geographically mobile, including being dispersed abroad. In our own sample several patterns emerged. Some still did have family living nearby with whom they had frequent face-to-face contact, others maintained contact through the phone and regular visits, while some lamented the break up of family and loss of social support this entailed.

2.1.4 Affluence and consumption

By the time they reached middle age in the 1960s and 1970s, the middle-class part of the cohort and some of the working class interviewees were starting to be and feel more affluent. They had lived in an era of high employment for many years and the majority had become home owners (Bosenquet et al, 1990:34). Some had never got into the habit of taking holidays, using their time off work to maintain their homes.

Sam Waters: I had to look after my property, didn't I? So I used to spend a week or a fortnight painting my house. That used to be my holiday.

But many developed the habit of taking holidays away, including going abroad - which in some cases shaped their expectations and holiday habits in retirement.

While some had never learnt to drive cars, a majority of households had got used to this facility during those years and apart from taking breaks away from home had used the car (alongside the phone) to keep in touch with increasingly geographically mobile, dispersed family and friends. Some even used the car to manage a lifestyle with a second home (the Summers, the Daveys). For those who did not drive, like Frank Payne, or had lost the option (like Rosie Aldridge when her husband died), lack of personal transport proved to be a real constraint isolating them from family in particular. But for most others, the car had become an integral part of their various elderly lifestyles.

Shopping patterns had also changed during these years and into the 1980s and 1990s with the rise of supermarkets and, later, shopping complexes - where once again the car played a significant facilitating role in going for the weekly shop. Daphne Summers reflected on how these social changes had coincided with changes in her life and had shaped her behaviour now.

Daphne Summers: When everyone was at home, I used to shop daily and locally, whereas now we just go when it's necessary and take the car. I suppose supermarkets have changed shopping styles too, haven't they. I mean, there weren't any supermarkets when the children were at home. You just sort of took the trolley round the town and filled it up. Now you can fill the car, the back of the car, and you don't have to go again for a week, especially as there are only two of us.

Eva Solomon also noted how shopping had become much easier not only because she was retired but because of more recent changes in shop opening hours.

Eva Solomon: It's easier now because shops are open on a Saturday. [When I worked] the shops weren't even open on a Saturday afternoon and everything was closed on a Sunday. Now it's easier because shops are open all the time. It used to be difficult... it used to be difficult but of course teaching, you had the holidays, you had half term. I reckon things used to be left, when we were working, for holidays, that sort of thing, and then you had time to run around.

Her purchases had also changed reflecting the dual influences of being at home more and what food was available.

Eva Solomon: I think more convenience foods are available now than ten years ago even, you know. I suppose I do cater differently because I think I used to cook at the weekend for the whole week to come, which I don't bother about doing now.

Finally, the other significant innovation which had a bearing on changes in the shopping pattern of this cohort was the credit card, not only supporting large expenditures in the shops, but enabling reservations and buying at a distance. This led to new uses for the phone as well as patterns of phoning ahead to see if distant shops had what was wanted before making the decision to travel to them.

2.1.5 Community change

Some communities had grown old together. For instance, in their immediate suburban neighbourhood, the Waters had moved into the new post-war housing developments at the same time as their peers and had made local friends when their children were young. They still knew many of the people around them, even if, like most interviewees, they did not 'live in each others pockets'. They may be sociable, but that did not mean always visiting each others' houses - a certain amount of social distance was maintained.

More of our interviewees, however, had experienced the break-up of the communities they had known, reflecting general degrees of geographical mobility. This sometimes happened in middle-class suburbs, which also changed in appearance. Commenting on their area in Barnet, north London:

Dorothy Williams: We feel that the area's changed. For 40 years we've lived here and the whole area's changed radically around us; much noisier, much busier. It has changed completely. And at times we feel we would like to get away from that.

LH: What, move out of London?

Dorothy Williams: Yes. Which we felt we were doing when we first came here from Stoke Newington. We thought we'd moved out and it was quiet. But now we feel that it's enveloped us and we..., we're active enough I suppose. Interestingly enough, if we found the right place, we'd like to move somewhere out a bit quieter. This road is very busy. I mean, when we came here this was like a country lane.

George Williams: With gas lamps along the road, yes.

Dorothy Williams: Yes. And it's just built up and built up since we've been here.

It was more common for the working class interviewees to refer to community change. A number of them came from the East End and had witnessed the break-up of traditional working-class life (described in Young and Wilmott, 1962). While there had been changes over many years, some of these interviewees had made an attempt to preserve older forms of sociability into the 1960s, 1970s and even 1980s with occasional house parties for family and friends and spending weekend evenings at working men's clubs. But even this pattern was now faltering.

The other significant change for some, especially working class interviewees, was the greater anxiety over security. On the one hand, by virtue of age, their strength had declined and so they were more vulnerable. But, of more importance, was the perception that certain areas were more dangerous - reflecting both media images of more crime and a certain reality, given the areas where they lived.

2.1.6 Household composition

Apart from a few in our sample that still lived in two-generation households (the Waters and the Cifonellis), a number of others had lived in this way until comparatively recently. In addition, the Solomons had their son with them again after the break-up of his marriage and the Welmans had their daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren staying with them for 9 months while they looked for a new house in the area.

The Cifonellis observed that many people in their neighbourhood experienced their children staying home past their teens as job and housing prospects for this cohort of young adults worsened.

Muriel Cifonelli: Younger ones don't leave any more, you'll find, if you go round asking people because times have changed. Not to me. I mean, I'm quite happy with company or without it. It doesn't worry me one way or the other. I would like them to have their own homes but I would rather they had their own homes than sort of drift into something ghastly, so... I think my daughter will be leaving fairly soon anyway.

That experience was replicated in our sample: the Englefields' son had stayed until he was 25 and Rosie Aldridge's son until he was in his 30s. In both the Shepard and Digby households, the last children left after their parent's had retired from their main work. Being no longer young children, the two generations had often developed ways of maintaining something of their own space while occupying the same house.

Muriel Cifonelli: Their lives are quite separate from ours really. I mean they have meals with us but they do their thing and we do ours, you know. It's a community rather than a family, isn't it. I mean, it still is a family. Don't get me wrong but you live more in a community sense with each individual just meeting up at certain times during the day.

The other type of two-generational household was where the young elderly's own parents lived with them - as had been the case until recently with the Robbies. A more common situation was where their parents lived nearby (e.g. the Evans, until the last 5 years). Either way, the fact that parents were more likely to live into their 90s meant that more of this young elderly cohort than previous ones had taken on some responsibility as carers for their own parents and relatives.

2.1.7 The point of retirement, savings and pensions

This cohort approached the end of their working careers at a time when the point and even the very definition of retirement were becoming more complex as it became more common to leave the workforce before eligibility for state pensions (Laczko, 1989; Laczko and Phillipson, 1991). From the late 1970s into the 1980s and 1990s there was pressure on older members of the workforce to leave before official retirement age through unemployment, the use of Job Release Schemes, enticements by way of redundancy payoffs and official early retirement with eligibility for occupational pensions - the latter being more of a middle-class experience (Arber and Ginn, 1991:3). Even leaving the workforce through disability had increased, not reflecting an increase in health problems so much as medical decisions about capability to work in what is a grey area (Laczko and Phillipson, 1991: 234). Although some of the current young elderly do find work or continue their original careers after retirement age (Long, 1989:56), including some in our sample, this is becoming increasingly rare compared to a few decades ago. Combined with longer life expectancy, earlier exit from the workforce means the prospect of more years of retirement, including years when many are likely to enjoy fairly good health and fitness.

Many of this cohort had managed to build up some savings during their life, some of which had been enhanced by early retirement and retirement lump sums. Most households were home owners. The changing nature of pensions had also significantly affected their economic circumstances. Many, both working and middle-class, now benefit from the occupational pensions which had begun to appear at the start of or during their working lives, although this applied more to men than women, especially women who had worked part-time for many years. On the whole, compared to some previous cohorts, it is probable that more of these households could therefore describe themselves as economically comfortable - although that self-perception also reflects the reference point of their more austere early years, as we shall see presently.

However, there is another dimension to the phenomenon of early exit from the labour force in recent years. Their lack of contributions in those years can also mean reduced entitlements as regards occupational pension (Bosenquet *et al.*, 1990: 17). Also, in the period before they were eligible for state benefits, living only on occupational pensions, some of the younger ones in this cohort were within or at the edge of official definitions of poverty - at the very least those with larger occupational pensions might for a time experience a more significant drop in income. Some, therefore, experience the phenomenon known as being 'housing rich but income poor'.

2.2 Heterogeneity, Trajectories and Transitions

In keeping with the previous reports from this research, this section aims both to question stereotypes of the elderly and to appreciate the dynamics experienced by this age group.

2.2.1 Heterogeneity of the young elderly

The later sections will indicate numerous differences such as the degree of involvement in various activities and organisations, extent and form of social networks, and use and perception of time. But some key distinctions can already be made here to underline the diverse situations experienced by this group.

a) Economic circumstances

This age group had some things in common with the younger ones, such as less outgoings (e.g. for clothes and mortgages and commuting) and because their children were no longer financially dependent. Differences within the age group related (i) to whether or not people had occupational pensions to supplement state ones and (ii) to the fact that occupational incomes reflect previous earnings - which tended to produce class differences. The poorest in the sample with more limited, constrained circumstances were those existing only on state pensions (e.g. the Cloughs, Rosie Aldridge)

b) Household composition

Although couples sometimes make their own personal spaces (the Summers being the best example), in most cases a good deal of time was spent together. Even where a couple had very limited contact with others outside the household (e.g. the Evans, the Cloughs), their own company overcame loneliness. In contrast, those living alone were much more likely to express feelings of loneliness, and sometimes find the motivation to go out and seek more company (Rosie Aldridge, Frank Payne). Most of those living alone had also reached that state through widowhood - and had experienced the traumas of losing a partner as well as retirement - in fact, some still had not come to terms with their situation (Rosie Aldridge, Kitty Tarrant). For example, Rosie Aldridge had had to re-organise her life since all her previous routines had been conducted jointly with her husband.

Rosie Aldridge: You just form a life, don't you, with the two of you. Everywhere I went, I went with my husband and he used to come and pick me up at five o'clock every night from work and I used to go home lunch time and put all the dinner in the oven ready, and he'd just come in and he was in before me, he'd get it all going and come down and pick me up at five. So as I say, everything was in a routine, wasn't you? But as I say, it was such a shock when he died. It really was.

Other writers have noted how important clubs for the elderly can be for people like Rosie Aldridge (Jerome, 1986). The day centre for the elderly, just around the corner from her present flat, had now become the centre of her life - she spent all the weekdays there, took part in the activities and outings and had made friends with other women older than herself.

Rosie Aldridge: I don't think I would have survived if it hadn't have been for the day centre because we've got so much going for us. I've seen more in six years than I did all my married life. I was married 43 years, wasn't I?

LH: What, seen more in terms of been places or...?

Rosie Aldridge: Yeah, with all them others over the road, yeah. I mean, when we went on holiday it was always Clacton, sort of thing, to my daughter being she lived in a seaside place. We either got a caravan there and, you know, we always went to Clacton every year. I never saw anything really until I met all them over there.

c) State of health

For some deteriorating health is a major constraint. Declining mobility can force people to live a more home-centred life (e.g. Gwen Evans). Loss of hearing can impinge on some aspects of life, introducing certain limitations. For instance, Ray Englefield would have liked to have taken up language classes but his poor hearing made that impractical. It also caused irritations at home.

Joanne Englefield: You see he lost the hearing in one ear in the war and so with old age and, I don't know, maybe even the heart trouble, the hearing in the other ear has deteriorated quite a lot. So that makes for slight friction with us because I say things and perhaps he's only got... and unfortunately he's married to quite a chatty woman.

Fred Clough sometimes found it difficult to manage his informal role as caretaker in a block of flats.

Fred Clough: When I went down just now, that was the electrical engineer but the cleaner was there. I asked him to be here at the same time because my ears are getting to the stage now where I can't hear properly so I've got to ask other people to be me ears for me.

Ivy Clough: Oh and if he phones the council, he starts off... they start off talking to him and he says "I'll have to hand the phone to my wife because I can't hear what you're saying", so I have to take the message and put it back to him.

And poor hearing could often give rise to tensions between the couple.

Ivy Clough: When we're out, I don't talk to him much because it's a waste of time. But it's a waste of time talking to him in here sometimes. I mean, he'll be sitting there and I'll be saying something to him and he hasn't heard a word I've said. And I was out in the kitchen and I told him... asked him three times to do something last night and I was standing right beside him but he didn't hear me. I said "Didn't you hear what I said?" So he said "No, what did you say?" I said "Do you go in a trance or are you hearing me?"

Some elderly experienced relatively minimal physical impairment. For example, the McLeans ran folk dance groups on two nights a week and the main effect of ageing was that they were more tired the next day and nowadays had to play

doubles rather than singles tennis. Some minor loss of strength or greater fatigue was more common, while others simply had to be careful (e.g. Stuart Robbie, because of a previous heart attack). Lastly, there were the psychological problems, some of which predated retirement. Ivy Clough had had a history of breakdowns and depression. She had developed a form of agoraphobia and was likely to panic and become disoriented if she lost sight of her husband.

2.2.2 Different trajectories into retirement

There is often a mixture of reasons behind the decision to retire from full-time employment, or move towards retirement, at a certain point in time. These include deteriorating health and increased stress; commuting pressures; economic considerations; changing family commitments; the changing nature of the work itself; and, of course, the options offered to people - some are pressured to retire, for instance. Within our sample the main patterns were:

a) *Sudden and unexpected (early) retirement* (e.g. Albert and Vera Welman, Muriel Cifonelli).

Muriel Cifonelli: I didn't like it. Myself I didn't like it. I think it's like falling off the edge of a cliff because I wouldn't have chosen to have done it then. I might have slowed down or I might have gone and shared a teaching job with a friend, which we were considering and Haringey, although they didn't officially approve of it, they did accept that situation. I might have slowed down but I don't think I would have actually stopped, so... No, it's like going too fast and you just... that's it, isn't it. And you have to pick yourself up again.

b) *Sudden but expected retirement.*

This means that there is a definite cut-off point (usually retirement age of 60 or 65) where people moved from full-time work to not working (e.g. George Williams, Sam Waters, Nathan Solomon).

c) *Winding down* - a gradual transition to retirement over a period of years with less hours per week, part-time work or occasional work (Roger Summers, Joanne Englefield, Frank Payne, Greg McLean, Eva Solomon, Bert Digby).

This was the option preferred and experienced by a number of those in the study:

Ray Englefield: To have gone from five days a week to retire and do absolutely nothing would have been I think quite difficult, yes. I've talked to friends who have done it and they said they found it quite difficult. Most of them seem to go off on a long holiday to try to break the change of lifestyle. I did mine gradually. I was lucky in that respect. Yes, I think it must be difficult particularly if you have to retire early rather than... Civil servants have to retire at 60. I think that must be quite difficult because if you feel

active and healthy and you're not particularly wealthy, it must be quite difficult to cope.

Both the way the change to retirement was managed and how people felt about work in general had a bearing on how they viewed the onset of retirement and on how they coped with it. For example, although the Robbies had accepted early retirement from their pressurised jobs, they felt 'too young' to stop working yet and so continued to do small jobs to get them out of the home, occupy their time and bring in a little more money for a few years. Males, who had invested a major part of their life in work over the years, were more likely to view retirement with some apprehension.

The above routes to retirement were not the only ones though. Other examples included:

d) Retirement from a long career of part-time work (e.g. Lucy Griffith).

e) Acquiring retirement status having been a housewife for many years (Janice Waters, Maureen McLean, Daphne Summers) although this may have included voluntary work (e.g. Hilda Shepard)

f) Passing into 'retirement' after having left the workforce some time ago through disability or caring roles

In fact, one in six women aged 55-59 who leave employment do so in order to care for a relative in poor health (Laczko and Phillipson, 1991: 243). In our sample, Ivy Clough stopped working in 1949 following a nervous breakdown, having cared for her invalid first husband for many years before being widowed and remarrying. Fred Clough gave up paid employment in the mid-'60s to care for his sick wife and when she died he was registered disabled with chronic bronchitis and arthritis. Both had received disability pensions for years.

These provide instances of a more blurred transition to retirement status compared to leaving full-time work and, of course, largely reflect gender differences in experiences - women are more likely to work part-time or have specialised in looking after the home. For many women the two key events were (i) when their children left home (which may or may not coincide with 'retirement age') and (ii) their partner's retirement and greater presence in the home, requiring the establishment of new understandings, rules and routines. One final observation made by a number of women was that being at home when retired is by no means the same experience as being at home early in life with younger children since children make demands which structure the day.

2.2.3 Transitions after retirement

The other point to make about the dynamics of the early years of 'old age' is that a number of significant transitions can occur after reaching retirement age.

Although many of these will be discussed later, it is worth indicating now what these changes include:

a) Movement between coupledom and living alone

The more likely direction of change is to widowhood, which in terms of its effect on lifestyle is likely to be a more significant change than the end of work (Allen). But change also occurs in the other direction - i.e. meeting new partners (Frank Payne)

b) New forms of 'work'

This can involve returning to part-time work (Kitty Tarrant, the Robbies) or taking on voluntary work (Frank Payne).

c) New family commitments

For instance, taking on a greater role as carers for even more elderly parents (the Evans); involvement with grandchildren (the Solomons) which may also mean more contact with their own children (Joanne Englefield).

d) New limitations through further physical deterioration after retirement

Although health differences have already been noted, physical deterioration also takes place after retirement: Janice Waters and Gwen Evans were coping with ever-increasing mobility problems, while Sam Waters and Bernie Griffith were experiencing an on-going decline in their hearing.

e) New homes

The Summers had provided one example of a household re-locating, in this case to cut down commuting to their second home and have a smaller house to reduce housework. Once Rosie Aldridge's husband died, she felt isolated in her previous home. While he had been alive she had been very family-oriented and had never made much contact with the rest of the community during the 10 years she had lived there. So she had nothing to lose by leaving her old home, no longer a 'home' without her husband, as part of an attempt to build a new life around the day centre. She reflected:

Rosie Aldridge: Yeah, I asked to come in here because I knew it was so near the Centre, and the bus stops so I was so lonely in that other place. I didn't know anybody. I didn't even know the neighbours really. I think when you're out all day working, we both was, I never come home 'til five . By that time my daughter was at Clacton and lucky enough we had a car. I mean, that's the reason why I had to help him to keep the car running and we used to go to Clacton say every two weeks, every three weeks. So who needed neighbours, did you really when you think about it?

f) Changes in household composition

During the course of retirement, children can move in (the Solomons taking in their son once his marriage broke down, the Welmans taking in their daughter and her family) or move out (the Cifonellis' son) or elderly parents can move in or move out (the Robbies).

g) The death of relatives

When Dorothy Williams' mother died four years ago, it changed the entire pattern of her routines.

Dorothy Williams: When my mother died, I missed what I was doing with her for some time. My days weren't nearly so structured because I was always doing... she was included almost in everything I was doing really.

2.3 Response to Retirement

2.3.1 Symbols of old age

Sometimes there can be some ambivalence about the symbols of old age and coming to terms with being old.

Jack Cifonelli: I now have my bus pass. I can flash it around or not as the case may be. I was a bit reluctant to get that. My wife says to me "Don't be silly. Come on, we can have a great time." And we have had a great time with the bus passes.

LH: Why were you reluctant?

Jack Cifonelli: Well it's wearing the label, which can be OAP/Senior Citizen. Now I'll accept the Senior Citizen bit but the OAP I think is ageist. That's my view. So I thought I'm going to be reluctant about accepting. On the other hand, do you accept the bonuses or whatever else like the advantages, if you like, of being an OAP, because I mean wherever you go there's concessions. The travel agents, the business people, the insurance, they all target in on the over 50s, the over 60s, etc., and that's an advantage in many ways if you use the system. You have to decide just where you pitch your own particular view. But, in fact, I mean let's be honest about this, it's one of these things about... it's the ego trip. I'm not an old guy but, on the other hand, I can use the advantages, the bits that come your way for being a person over a certain age. So you can straddle that line if you like, at the same time take advantage either way.

Similarly, although Ivy Clough's hearing was faltering a little, she resisted wearing the hearing aid with which she had been issued arguing that she was not ready for this yet.

2.3.2 Economic aspects

Sometimes the initial response to a retirement income can be a strong one, especially where it was relatively sudden and unexpected.

Muriel Cifonelli: Of course Jack was still working then. I think in the first few weeks I felt I oughtn't to spend money. You know, I just felt guilty about spending money on, I wouldn't say luxuries exactly, sort of semi-luxuries like drawing paper. But it wore off. It didn't last.

In the same household, Jack was able to plan his gradual retirement, and echoed the sentiments of many interviewees on occupational pensions, that as long as they were careful they could afford most of the things they wanted.

Jack Cifonelli: On balance, I think we're relatively comfortable. I think you have to produce your own yardstick. I think we've got a standard of living

whereby if we wanted to go somewhere, we could do it. A little bit of pre-planning, shuffling around the finances, it could be done. I think we could do most things actually.

Nevertheless, most were cautious about larger expenditures, given that they had a fixed income and savings.

Dorothy Williams: We realise that younger people in our club, for example, spend money much more easily than we ever do. You know, their attitude towards to money is different now. I'm not saying they're wasting money on this, that and the other.

George Williams: Yes. You see, in a way, if you want to spend a couple of thousand or a thousand - you're virtually taking money out of your capital, aren't you?

Dorothy Williams: That's right. You can never put it back.

LH: Whereas when you're working, you can always at least hope...

Dorothy Williams: To put it back, that's right, yes.

And following her recent and unexpected redundancy, Vera Welman commented on their fixed income:

Vera Welman: Now that is frightening. That is really frightening. You suddenly think "Oh I'd like a new so and so" and you can't do it without tucking into [savings].

While the occupational pensions of our working class households may have been lower, given that their incomes in the past had often been lower, they did not feel impoverished in retirement since their lifestyles had never been extravagant. Eddy Evans talked first about his early retirement:

Eddy Evans: Actually for them two years, from 63 to 65, on the job release I got more money than if I was at work. I mean when I was at work and retired at 63, with a 25% bonus or a 33% bonus, I used to come home with about seventy-three, seventy-four quid... and I was getting that on the job release until I became 65! And now I get more money now than ever in my life because I get a pension from the hospitals and I also get my old age pension. So I'm on about over a hundred quid a week and I've never earned a hundred quid working.

And the Griffiths commented on their lifestyle:

Lucy Griffith: We're careful but we don't skimp.

Bernie Griffith: We're not stingy, you know, or anything like that.

Lucy Griffith: We're not stingy, no, no. But we don't waste it, do we?

Bernie Griffith: We look at something and we say "Oh no, that's too dear. I'm not having that, no." We leave it and she does search around for bargains in supermarkets so we get by and then you got ... your daughter gives you something for your birthday and Christmas and my niece gives me something. So it all helps like that, don't it.

Apart from being careful spenders, a number of those on more limited incomes also coped by a considerable degree of self-servicing managing their own DIY, sewing and cooking practices. The Digbys noted this, and added how they had made a virtue out of necessity, becoming bargain hunters as a hobby.

Bert Digby: As soon as I retired, we started to shop together. Previously Mavis had that burden on her own. We now do it together and we are mean. We have a look to see whether it's 51.1p per litre or whatever it is. It's a bit of a hobby really. We do look for the best bargains.

Mavis Digby: Our son must think we're mad, you know.

Bert Digby: Well no, it's a nice little exercise.

Mavis Digby: Well to them, you know, 30p is nothing. To us, you know, we could spend it on something else, you see.

Bert Digby: Then we.... they put all these prices on the labels, in Sainsbury's, for instance, you can see how much per pound it is and you can compare it with another product. This is a bit of game, isn't it, and it's super. We've got our shopping bill down considerably. We see other people going round... well, we see our sons going round and saying "I'll have that and that and that" and...

Mavis Digby: And we say "But why don't you get that? It's much cheaper." Can't be bothered.

Bert Digby: Only costs another tenner on the shopping bill.

Mavis Digby: I don't think we were like that when we were young.

Bert Digby: No, I think we were a little bit more prudent but now...

Mavis Digby: It's going through the war, you see, we... you know, our generation's different.

Turning to the poorest, with occupational pensions, like the Cloughs on a joint income of £91 a week plus Income Support:

LH: Do you have to be a bit careful how you spend things or what is it like?

Ivy Clough: Well, no. I do but I can manage. You know, being that I lived on army pay at the beginning, I know how to manage money.

LH: So does that mean there are things that you would like to buy but can't or would like to do but can't afford it?

Ivy Clough: No, I've never ever... not had a craving to go out and buy anything. See, like if I want it, I'll go out and get it but I don't have no craving for anything.

Again, their horizons were limited - they made few major purchases and after years on a low income continued to live quite frugally. Meanwhile, Rosie Aldridge, who received about £80 a week, felt that this was quite enough given her few overheads and extra benefits.

LH: So does money feel a bit tight then or what?'

Rosie Aldridge: Well, we're fortunate. We get a lunch over there for £1 a day. So when I come home I have to cook a tea and, as I say, I don't stay in that long. We're always off out somewhere.

LH: Right. So you haven't got that many expenses then?

Rosie Aldridge: Not really, no.

LH: Does your pension have to cover rent or is that paid up?

Rosie Aldridge: Yeah, well I get a rent rebate for here and, as I say, we've got the bus pass, haven't we. We can go miles on that bus pass for nothing, which it really is a godsend. It really is.

She had few aspirations to acquire extra items for the new flat - she now felt that she had everything she needed. The other reasons why the income was enough was - as with the Griffiths - some financial help from her children. They would always support her if she needed something (like buying her a new VCR when the old one broke down).

Rosie Aldridge: Well I manage. If I want anything the kids buy me, sort of thing, you know.

2.3.3 Being at home

More of our males had been wary of retirement since their life had revolved around work.

Nathan Solomon : I dreaded it because I felt that "What am I going to do with myself?" you know.

Some also took a while to adjust to the new circumstances.

George Williams: Well I did miss it dreadfully really first of all. I didn't like being at home all the time one little bit. It took me a long time to get used to it. I would say it was a couple of years at least, yeah. As Dorothy Williams said, you know, you do miss the companionship, the people that you work with.

Dorothy Williams: And I think what you missed too was the technical talk.

George Williams: That's right, yeah. Yeah, the discussion about what's going on and what might be going on and what the current plans are and things like that, you know. You do miss all that sort of thing.

Albert Welman's response to retirement was dramatic. When he was working he used to be around the house for half an hour in the morning and four-and-a-half to five hours every evening. So it was a shock to become home-based, although he had learnt to feel less cooped up now. He described his initial strategy to cope.

Albert Welman: I retired, I put on my rucksack and my walking boots and walked for a thousand miles. I spaced that over three months, so that sort of gave me a hiatus, if you like, between being a nine to five person commuting up on the train every morning and coming back in the evening and then sort of staying at home.

Later Vera Welman commented on the experience:

Vera Welman: When Albert Welman retired, he announced six months beforehand that he was retiring and going off the following Monday on a thousand mile walk. That was a shock because, you know, one has these sort of nice ideas about holidays and all sorts of things. It wasn't a bit like that. Instead I was sort of... well, I was a widow. I realise now that he needed that time but I didn't understand it then and it hurt.

Several interviewees observed how some couples could get on each others' nerves when the husband retired and was based at home. Sam Waters, for example, observed that in some households, the couple had never known each other very well because of being out at work so much. Certainly, after retirement, he thought that he had had to learn to talk to Janice, to discuss things, which he had not done when working.

The women in our particular households had less to say about their own retirement - this had never been quite so problematic as for the men, although sudden and unexpected retirement could be traumatic as noted earlier in the case of Muriel Cifonelli. However, more than one woman had mentioned that being at home with young children was not strictly comparable with being at home when retired. Joanne Englefield observed how the transition to being at home

had been easier for her than husband Ray Summers - ultimately she could occupy herself more easily in the home.

Joanne Englefield: If I was sitting down and I thought "Oh dear, I'm a bit fed up" I'd go out and make a batch of cakes for the freezer, you see. If my daughter comes, she takes them home if we don't want them. I think there are a lot more things for a woman to occupy herself with if she likes the domestic scene.

The women had more to say about the transition in the household when their partner retired.

Muriel Cifonelli: Well, he doesn't know this, but I felt crowded out, yeah. But I guess we've worked it out now. I mean it takes a bit of sorting out. I mean, he had to settle as well, so...

Daphne Summers described the process by which she and Roger decided they had to find their own space and interests:

Daphne Summers: Well I think everyone is really, because you jog along for about 30 or 40 years and it's a complete change of routine, isn't it? And you forget what it was really like just being two of you because you've been six for so many years. But it was fine. It was OK. He's always busy anyway and there are lots of times when I join a class or something which takes me down there and he's got interests up here so we sometimes meet in passing. So we've got our own space.

LH: Well that was an issue some people raised. If you've been at home and controlled the home for all those years and then having someone around can feel a bit difficult. I don't know whether you...?

Daphne Summers: Yes, yes. I mean, we have actually discussed it but it's sort of fallen into place where we've each got different interests and we pursue them. I think that makes it more interesting because you've got more news to tell then. You know, you swap notes. I like things historic and I go to the National Portrait Gallery. They have lectures and things which I enjoy. Roger's got his club and his airforce thing which is not quite my scene.

And a discussion of maintaining separate lives also emerged in the Shepard household.

Hilda Shepard: It was different once Chris Shepard retired, you know. I would see probably more friends for coffee [before], which I don't now.

Chris Shepard: But I say you should do. I like my own company to a certain extent. I'm happy to go up to my little office. When you said you were giving up that voluntary work at the school I was a little disappointed.. I

need time to myself and we do do our own things anyway... it's important to be independent and not have to do the same thing all the time.

Joanne Englefield explained her tactics in making sure she retired before Ray in order to set the pattern for later home life.

Joanne Englefield: That was one of the reasons why I finished at 62. That gave me a spot of time at home on my own to settle in and determine who was going to run the show. I think otherwise he would have been at home, wouldn't he, first if I'd have gone on to 65. That's how my evil mind worked I expect...

LH: Do you mean, if the other way round, he'd have set the pattern?

Joanne Englefield: Well, I could see that that might be. Yes, that's right. I mean that's not the whole story but it's all sort of that did occur to me, yeah. Plus the fact that he's not domesticated. He belonged to the era of women were women in the home until it was useful to them to go out to work and bring in some extra money. But they were still at the same time the one that did all the domestic things. Well, I suppose, I just got a little bit tired of doing all that and I thought I could see me coming home from work and we'd probably have an endless row because he hadn't done all those things that I had thought he should do while I was out at work.

His gradual retirement gave her time to adjust, but even so his final full retirement created extra work for her.

Joanne Englefield: He went from five days a week to four days to begin with. Well that didn't make a lot of difference because it was quite pleasant having a day at home, wasn't it. Part-time was quite pleasant. It gave a structure to the week. I think he was doing two days come the end and that was quite useful. Those two days I could plan around. I mean, it's quite useful to have the house to yourself, to open the windows and give a good clean through without having to consider somebody else, you see. But once he was home full-time that made a lot of difference.

LH: In what ways?

Joanne Englefield: Well I have to get a lunch.

LH: Well didn't you used to get lunch for yourself then?

Joanne Englefield: Well I would sit with an apple and a lump of cheese and watch Neighbours, you know. And if I had it half past one, I had it half past one. I could do it as I pleased couldn't I? But I certainly didn't cook an egg or do beans on toast or anything like that, no. I think most women when their husbands retire find that it's the lunch-time thing. Because he likes you to set the table and have a knife and fork and sit down properly, like.

There was limited change in the division of domestic labour. Exceptions included Sam Waters who wanted his wife to 'retire' to some extent when he did, Jack Cifonelli who took on more of the cooking having worked for many years in a restaurant, Greg McLean and Bert Digby who shared more of the general chores. A more common response was to help out just a little more or to do only traditional male jobs like DIY - which was sometimes a sore point (e.g. with the Evans). In the Shepard household, Chris now made the dinner once a week. Hilda argued that they had decided to do this since it meant that if anything happened to her, he would be better able to cope. However, she also observed a difference nowadays: she was working 'for the house' while Chris was working 'for himself' through '*doing his own thing*' in terms of attending and organising his various University of the Third Age and other classes. So every so often she had to '*put her foot down*' about this.

George Williams replied to the question of involvement in chores:

George Williams: Not if I can avoid it.

Dorothy Williams: But you do do the shopping. You never... I mean, until my mother died you never came and did a big shop with me because I used to take my mother.

George Williams: I tend to do as I'm told, you know. I don't... you know, I wash the kitchen floor or I occasionally put the Hoover on and I've been known to iron a shirt occasionally but...

Dorothy Williams: Very occasionally. You don't really do much of the chores around the house.

George Williams: No, I don't really. I feel guilty about it but...

Dorothy Williams: You don't like doing chores. You don't like doing chores. He's busy pushing his bits of paper around.

A number of households had undergone changes in terms of the overall amount done as some of the women had managed to reduce domestic chores. For instance, Daphne Summers had wanted to move to a smaller house partly to reduce the housework she had to do. For some of the women, though, chores had not diminished and kept them occupied during the day.

Lucy Griffith: Yeah, we still have our dinner of a night like we used to when we were at work. Haven't altered it that way. And the routine's just about the same. I do me washing Monday and the bedrooms, up... I mean, it's a big house this house, you know. It keeps me going.

Dorothy Williams showed another change in pattern whereby the timing of chores changed: she no longer had to '*blitz*' the house on her day-off but could

spread the work more evenly over the week. A similar point was raised by Gwen Evans:

Gwen Evans: As you get older it takes you that much longer to do it all anyway, you know. I find now I don't go to work it's seems to take up my day. I don't know why really. I mean the day never drags... the day doesn't drag to me ever, no.

Eddy Evans: Because she's always busy, sort of thing.

Gwen Evans: I find the cooking takes me a lot longer as I get older, you know. I seem to be from about three o'clock to five sort of preparing and cooking it. Well I mean when you're 72 I suppose you do slow up a... you must do, mustn't you? And it isn't only me. There's lots of people my age really that I don't think do the cooking that I do. I don't buy ready made meals or anything. I cook a proper dinner and a sweet every day.

Finally, there are the somewhat different circumstances of those living alone. Rosie Aldridge explained how widowhood had changed the meaning of 'home'. Her flat was less of a 'home' now that her husband was dead. Previously they had done the chores as part of their joint routine, as part of the way they spent time together. Nowadays she did less because such chores were not invested with the same value.

Rosie Aldridge: To be really honest, I was more houseproud than I am now, believe me. I don't do half as much. It's true enough, there's only me making the mess but there was a time that if we were going out on the weekend, we used to do everything together. I'd do all the cooking and he'd wash up and everything else we did together, even the housework.. But, as I say, I will admit I do feel guilty on a lot of them now because I do go out and leave things nowadays.

LH: Is that because not many people are going to see the place?

Rosie Aldridge: Well mainly I suppose yeah, but another time like I haven't got the heart, I suppose, in the place as I would have had, you know, when he was there. I mean, I always make sure the bed's clean and the place is clean. I don't let nothing go filthy but, you know, it isn't a thing that I must do as it would have been before.

LH: If you're on your own here does this feel less like a home compared to where you were when you were a couple, when you were together?

Rosie Aldridge: Well, as I say, it's different. It's definitely different. I would have said it was more home then, naturally enough, because, by the time we got home we had our meal, he'd wash all up and if I had any bits... but I used to do mainly lots of things in the mornings then. And we'd sit and watch the telly or I used to knit then. I think it was home then but I don't know somehow. I don't remember, you know, thinking about them things.

It's just there. You come home. As I say, I don't like coming home on me own. I really don't. I definitely haven't got used to it.

2.3.4 Orientations

Different research on the elderly (including those in the process of making the transition into retirement) have drawn up various typologies of strategies used to come to terms with their new status (e.g. Long, 1989: 66-70; McGoldrick, 1989: 254-9). It is not surprising that some of the same strategies were found in our research, although they are summarised here in terms of a number of orientations which were distinctive but not necessarily mutually exclusive.

a) A number of the young elderly led an 'active' retirement in terms of finding activities which replaced their jobs - especially the males. In effect, they created their own 'jobs' which gave them a constructive role and structured their time but did not have the pressure of their previous work. For many, but not all, their involvement was more controllable.

One variation of this approach involved taking on organisational roles in the community. George Williams was treasurer of the badminton club, captain of the bowls club and liaised between the Sports Council and local sports clubs.

LH: So, by the sound of it, over the years your involvement and the amount of work you have to do has gone up?

George Williams: It certainly has, yes. Hasn't it?

LH: Now with all these involvements, is this because you're seen by others as having time on your hands that you've retired now, therefore they ask...?

Dorothy Williams: Yes, partly, yes.

George Williams: I think it's a willing horse really.

LH: Because it looked from the timesheets as though you were doing some admin, phoning, letter-writing, meetings; virtually something every day.

Dorothy Williams: Oh yes. He might just as well be at work. He's got his little office upstairs in the little bedroom and he spends hours up there.

George Williams: I don't think I'd like not to have some of these things to do really because they are an interest and you feel as if you're - what's the word?

Dorothy Williams: Part of the world.

George Williams: You're helping... you're assisting, if you like, rather than just hanging about hoping people will assist you, as it were.

Frank Payne organised a luncheon club, was treasurer of the local community centre and ran three Bingo sessions for elderly people. Sam Waters had become more involved in running Masonic activities. Chris Shepard ran the local recorded music appreciation society. Joanne Englefield was on the committee of the Women's Institute while Ray Englefield was secretary of the local Civil Service Retirement Club. Muriel Cifonelli was a governor on the board of a local primary school. Fred Clough ran the tenants' association and was the informal caretaker. Both the Cloughs had been involved in voluntary work until recently, Dorothy Williams helped out in a clinic once a week and Frank Payne manned the phone at Age Concern once a week. Several households had, albeit limited, involvement in Church activities, such as Albert Welman's work arranging a rota of church service readers. Many on committees or helping with voluntary work were in the same age group. They were much in demand, as they often had skills and spare time.

In addition to administrative and supporting roles, the young elderly could sometimes be involved in getting resources or fighting campaigns: for example the Cloughs had fought to get the flats new garden facilities, and Ivy rang the council to pressure them into action whenever something went amiss in the flats.

Another variation of active retirement was the adoption of various personal or household projects. Many, more so the males, were involved in some form of DIY.

George Williams: I think when you're working, you haven't got the time to do a lot of these things, have you, so things tend to fall a bit in disrepair. The garden looks a bit sort of scruffy at times and so do you and you've got to try and fit these things in to some extent. So, when you retire you've probably got to do a bit of catching up. That's what it amounted to, didn't it?

LH: Well that would keep you occupied for a certain time but then you'd caught up...

George Williams: Well I don't know. It's a bit like the Forth Bridge, you know, when you own a house. You spend your life trying to prevent it falling into a heap of ruin, you know.

A more extreme example was Roger Summers, who not only maintained his own flat, but organised the maintenance of the whole block, maintained their second home and their boat. He also still maintained his old house and that of his parents, which were now rented out.

Roger Summers: Oh I treat it as a bit of employment. I don't think I could be completely retired. I've got to be doing something all the time and if it's leisure all of the time, that can become boring. I wouldn't want leisure all the time. So if the roof's leaking, I go up on the roof and if the electrics want doing, I do that.

Some of our households had interests dating from their working lives which they had looked forward to expanding on retirement. For instance, Sam Waters had looked forward to more golf, and Greg McLean to more involvement in his wife's folk dance groups. Then there were educational and self-improvement activities, such as going to local and university study classes (Albert Welman, Eva Solomon, Penny Hawkins), University of the Third Age (Chris Shepard, Albert Welman) keep fit (Joanne Englefield, Penny Hawkins), craft classes (Maureen McLean, Dorothy Williams, Muriel Cifonelli), attending local groups (e.g. Sam Waters and George Williams in a Probus group for retired professional, Penny Hawkins in the Old Feminists Network) or simply following up long-standing interests through reading (e.g. Sam Waters).

Sometimes the elderly sought new interests to fill the gap left by work, as when Dorothy Williams in practice made the decision that her husband needed a new activity.

Dorothy Williams: We decided then that we ought to take up something when you retired, didn't we, as an interest and some people talked us into it.

However, this form of active retirement bordered on a kind of time-filling sociability which was not always totally satisfactory.

Ray Englefield: I'm in a routine but it's not a very stimulating routine. My main stimulation now comes from reading and bridge. I've taken up playing bridge which I find quite stimulating. Quite a good card game.

Boredom was one danger, but many were also conscious of the need for a certain amount of stimulation in retirement to prevent deterioration of the faculties as well as to fill the time and provide some structure to their lives. Frank Payne expressed a common concern:

Frank Payne: At first I did [find retirement difficult] until I got more involved in this voluntary work where I was still keeping my mind active. I did it because different people at my firm who retired... I mean, the shortest period was about two months before the man passed away and then there was six months, twelve months, where they seemed to sit and vegetate. I was frightened of that, to be honest with you because I didn't want to vegetate. I wanted to be active mentally.

The theme of wanting to keep intellectually alert emerged again with Ray Englefield who became secretary of the local civil service club and organised their visiting speakers.

Ray Englefield: Well, I wanted to fill some time. It's quite interesting talking to the different speakers. I have to arrange a little programme of speakers so I phone people up and chat to them and see if they can come along and what they'll talk about and that sort of thing. So it's quite interesting. My wife's on the committee of the Women's Institute. She sort of comes along

and she'll talk about activities. It's all retirement activities but it's stimulating. You don't get so thick that you're sort of...[trails off]

Ray's and the Solomons' bridge-playing provided an - albeit it slightly - challenging middle-class example of a pastime which also meant they met others and had something to talk about. Amongst our working-class sub-sample, Eddy Evans spent a few hours in the betting shop each day, not so much gambling as seeing if he could pick winners while having a chat with his friends there. If we take the case of Rosie Aldridge, her daily life revolved around the day centre, the church, bingo and her soap operas. But while she enjoyed these activities and being with peers, she still talked about them as time-fillers, things to occupy her life now that her world had crumbled with the death of her husband.

b) A second orientation was towards family. Again, this could occur in a number of ways. We have already noted caring roles, which, for example, dominated the lives of the Evans for some years after retirement as they had looked after their mothers who lived nearby. Edith Robbie's senile mother kept Stuart busy for the first year of his retirement before she was persuaded to go into a home. When Dorothy Williams gave up part-time work when aged 55 because her firm relocated, she found herself preoccupied for years with her relatives:

Dorothy Williams: My mother and father had moved away from Stoke Newington... moved down to the coast where my father retired, which is something he'd longed to do. But when they got there, after about five years, they were a bit unhappy down there. They felt lonely and a bit isolated so they came back again but instead of going back to Stoke Newington, they moved round the corner here. [About the time when I gave up work] my father was taken ill. He went into Alzheimer's, you know, and we lost him for a whole day and it was all very worrying. Because they were round the corner from me then, I became very responsible for them and so I spent a lot of time really, you know, helping them out and driving them anywhere because they didn't have any transport and so I would take them shopping and, you know, just generally helping out. And then when my father died, it went on just looking after my mother, who died four years ago this year. And at the time, I also had a widowed aunt who lived across the road here in this close, who also had a lot of problems. She had a lot of falls and broke her arm and leg and I was always called in to help out there, you know, down to the hospital and various things with her. So I suppose really there was enough going on without me going out to do another job. I've always felt I'd got plenty to do.

For others, being a carer felt more burdensome. For example, Mavis Digby's mother had a 'granny flat' in their garden. For some years she had had Alzheimer's disease and although the social services provided day-care on weekdays, they still had to prepare her for bed and generally be around in the evenings. The Evans had also experienced the burden of one of their elderly parents.

Gwen Evans: When I first retired, it was very stressful really. My mother-in-law had had an accident - broke her femur and... although Eddy's here, she was a very, very difficult, demanding lady to look after. Because my mother-in-law wouldn't have 'Meals on Wheels', I was back and forwards with dinners and the phone never stopped. Well I got bad alopecia... I hadn't been retired all that long and people say you get alopecia from stress. But it was very stressful. It caused a big rift in the family because Eddy's brother was 17 years younger and when you're that much younger you can cope with it more than at our age. So it was a very difficult period for about three or four years when I first retired. Very.

Eddy Evans: I'll give you an instance. My mother called us on the phone one Saturday seven times. And I went over to her and I said "Look, this has got to stop. I mean me and Gwen is having a relay race here. She's over here, she's back. I'm over here, she's back. She's over here, I'm back, you know." And we tried to get her into a sheltered accommodation like her mother and she was trying to think that we was putting her in a home.

For some, retirement provided opportunities for more contact with children, especially when it coincided with the arrival or presence of grandchildren. Several of the women, in particular, had found new roles as back-up childminders, giving their own children a break.

Daphne Summers: I usually get roped in. "Well how long are you staying down for?" I say "We're going back Wednesday". "Oh, well what are you doing Tuesday?", you know. I don't mind.

And often childminding was not simply a chore. For instance, Bert Digby observed:

Bert Digby: Well, I have an idea that they probably do it deliberately because they know how we like to have her. So they...I have an idea that they would probably find excuses.

Support, though, worked in the other direction as well. In the case of both Kitty Tarrant and Rosie Aldridge, their children kept in touch regularly and helped out now that both women had lost their partners, while Frank Payne's nephew sometimes came round to sort out things for him, such as setting up his VCR. However, relations were not always quite so positive; Ivy Clough complained that her grandsons, who lived in the same block, were no longer interested in seeing them, nor did she see her daughter on a daily basis, as she would have liked.

Ivy Clough: I phoned her last night about something but, you know, time she comes home and cooks for three men and does their washing and ironing, she hasn't got no time for her mother.

c) A third orientation was towards neighbours and friends. Even those who would not have dreamt of committing themselves to formal voluntary work

would often 'look out for the old lady up the road' (reflecting the much higher percentage of women amongst the older elderly). Many interviewees had more time since retirement to check up on elderly neighbours, do some shopping for them or do other odd jobs, or else just have time to talk. While generally this did not take up a huge proportion of disposable time, it could be extremely time-consuming for some people, like the Cloughs. They lived in a block of flats containing mostly elderly people who were continually making demands on them.

Meanwhile, for some retirement meant more time for meeting up with old friends, going to visit them, going out for the day or developing new social circles - as with the bridge and dinner parties enjoyed by the Solomons and the Englefields.

d) A last orientation was that of household isolation. In the case of couples, this does not imply that they were lonely or craved outside company. It meant that the majority of time was spent just in each other's company, with limited contact with the outside world. It usually also meant a more home-centred existence (e.g. the Evans, the Cloughs). Sometimes this orientation was slightly forced on them in that mobility and other considerations may have reduced contact with others. But in other cases, couples were reasonably happy with the idea of going their own way, spending a large amount of time alone together.

Mavis Digby: We just like being at home. We've got a big house and a big garden and we just have to, you know, keep doing things otherwise it just gets too much.

Bert Digby: And friends of ours say "Why don't you move into a smaller place?" and we think "No fear!" There wouldn't be anything to play with.

Mavis Digby: No way.

Of course, the downside of this was when one of the couple died, and the survivor was not integrated in other social networks. Previous research has noted the greater degree of loneliness experienced by those living alone (Long and Wimbush, 1979:2). In our own sample, as noted earlier, this feeling was discussed by those who had been widowed such as Rosie Aldridge and Frank Payne. Another example was provided by Kitty Tarrant. After a few years of contented retirement together with her husband, his death prompted her to seek part-time work again to fill the void in her life.

2.3.5 Activities and time away from home

Before looking in a little more detail at the activities of this age cohort, it is useful to appreciate some of the constraints on their choices. One issue is safety, where women especially but not exclusively can be worried about going out at night. For some, this ruled out evening classes as an option (e.g. Joanne Englefield) and was one factor leading others to give up evening social clubs

(e.g. the Evans). We have already seen examples of limitations imposed by physical deterioration such as mobility and hearing difficulties. Finally, there are the financial constraints, which were not experienced solely by the working class elderly:

Ray Englefield: Unless you have a fantastic amount of money, there isn't a great deal one can do when you retire. I mean, you can't take up sailing unless you happen to live near the coast. You can't take up flying unless you're qualified as an air pilot. You can't travel around the world unless you've got quite a big income. It's a bit... You see, moving around so much when I was younger, I wasn't on a pension scheme. They didn't have pension schemes in those days so my pension was fairly small. So I don't have a great income now I've retired. I haven't enough money to indulge in some of the more fanciful aspects of retirement. So basically it's odd jobs, reading, occasional holidays, visiting people.

Many of the activities have already been touched upon: roles and involvement in formal classes and clubs, and for those more able, playing sports. The informal ones we saw included spending time with family who lived reasonably locally, helping neighbours and in forms of self-servicing (e.g. Maureen McLean making her own clothes). In addition to these, mundane but, time-wise, significant activities were shopping, gardening, going for walks, reading and media consumption (newspaper, TV and radio). In some households all of these activities had increased with retirement.

Then we have the events which are not typically weekly routines but nevertheless can be important: spending time away from the home. Some had sufficient income to substantially increase their holidays (the middle-class McLeans with several holidays a year including 5 weeks in Barbados each year with their daughter's family, the working-class Evans taking a month's holiday abroad). The Solomons noted that even since their retirement, flying had still been getting relatively cheaper which had encouraged them to go abroad more. In addition, some households did manage more weekends away, including visiting friends and relatives (e.g. the Cifonellis, the Englefields) or spending time at second homes (the Daveys, the Summers). And some had some more days out compared to when they were working (e.g. the Griffiths, Rosie Aldridge).

It would be misleading, however, to convey the impression that the young elderly spend all their time away from home. For most people much of their time is still spent either in the home or being involved in more locally based activities - indeed, some find travelling costly, tiring and a hassle (e.g. Frank Payne). With leisure time on their hands, some no longer felt the need for a specific holiday.

Bernie Griffith: After we retired, we said well we don't have to worry about holidays so much now because we can go out for days and if we want to go anywhere, we can.

Lucy Griffith: If you're retired, it is like a holiday, isn't it? You don't have to do..., to get up to work at certain times and you've got to go in and come home at a certain time; nine to four or whatever it is.

On the other hand, many people had got used to the break from home that they had had during their working lives. For those leading a more active lifestyle, it could still be break, while for others it was simply a welcome change in routine.

2.3.6 Social networks

For some of the males who had been deeply involved in their work, retirement entailed a certain "de-masculinisation" as they developed a much greater sociability.

Ray Englefield: I mix with a lot of new people now. My personal social life in Barnet wasn't much before I retired. I was living in London all the time before that. But my wife had an awful lot of people that she met and got introduced to but I didn't have much of a social life here in Barnet while I was working.

Chris Shepard noted that he had far more friends now through his various activities than he had had when he worked and Eva Solomon and her daughter had both noticed that Nathan had also started to develop more social contacts since retirement.

Eva Solomon: You're very self-sufficient really. You don't need company except that... I mean, you completely changed through bridge. Much more sociable. Any time somebody asks you for a game of bridge, you will go.

The pattern of contact with children was affected by a number of factors. Geographical dispersal was one. Amongst some of the working-class, inner-city sub-sample, children still did live nearby (e.g. the Griffiths and the Cloughs). In the case of the Summers, their second home was in the small town where their two married daughters lived. As might be expected, contact in terms of meeting was higher when there was greater proximity. Nevertheless, there was a fair amount of regular two way traffic between more distant children. A second factor here was having a car, and this also had a bearing on contact with other relatives. Mostly visiting was done by car, and where these elderly did not drive, as in the case of Rosie Aldridge and Frank Payne, the hassle and cost of travel by train was cited as a major barrier to having more contact. Mobility in other senses was also a hurdle with Gwen Evans noting that she saw less of people face-to-face as she was less able to get out of the home. The other noticeable factor affecting contact was their children's position in their life course and attendant circumstances. In cases where grandchildren had just made an appearance, or female children were still at home with young grandchildren, there was often more contact. Where the children were busy out at work during the week, contact was less frequent.

Some similar considerations applied to other relatives. Face-to-face contact varied with geographical dispersal and the car was an important enabling mechanism. This was sometimes more significant for the elderly living alone. For example, Rosie Aldridge's world had mainly revolved around family, and as well as her husband dying, they were becoming progressively dispersed, leaving her isolated.

Rosie Aldridge: My sister used to have a shop up Hampstead. After my husband died, I used to go up there all weekend because I couldn't stay home on me own. So I used to go with her. I must have done that for over a year. But, as I say, they didn't mind because my brother-in-law was in the shop. He had a car accessories and things, you know, and she used to make me company and I used to do that Monday to Friday and come home Monday morning. Get a mini cab and come home ready for a Friday. But of course as soon as my husband died it really shook my brother-in-law because they was older than us, about 18 months older than us. And they realised that if they didn't retire then it could happen to them. So they got out because they didn't own the shop. They only leased it. So they didn't have enough money to buy anything. So they ended up at Lincolnshire in a mobile home because that's all they could afford to buy. So that was another bang for me. I lost her.

As for the life course factor, Maureen McLean talked about how she used to meet up with her cousins much more when they all had children of similar young ages. Now that the children had grown up and no longer bound them together, contact had diminished. And both Greg McLean and Frank Payne noted how they had limited contact with slightly younger siblings who were still working and were often very busy in the later stages of their careers. One last point which emerged a few times, for example with Frank Payne and Rosie Aldridge, is that contact with siblings used to be maintained by meeting up at their parents place - for instance, at Christmas. When their parents died some years ago, this rationale for meeting up disappeared. On the other hand, frequency of deaths in the family increased over the years as relatives of comparable age died - which was itself an occasion for a re-union of the shrinking family members of that generation.

The picture of contact with friends was mixed. Some interviewees kept in contact and continued friendships with ex-neighbours who had now moved away. Quite a few of our interviewees kept up some contact with one or two ex-work colleagues, with contact being fostered by annual re-unions organised by ex-employers. As the years went on, this diminished in some cases. This was true for ex-hospital porter Eddy Evans and for Joanne Englefield who talked about the early years of retirement from the Social Security office.

Joanne Englefield: We were quite next door to the Queen's Arms so of course it was always somebody's birthday or somebody's leaving or somebody had had a baby or whatever. So for quite a long while after, I used to be invited back for those things and the Christmas do's and that but then you gradually lose touch. But I still am in contact with other people that have left.

Most, though not all, of our sample moved predominantly in social circles consisting of their peers - apart from family. Sometimes this was because they joined groups specifically consisting of other elderly people, like the Probus Groups, or classes like bridge clubs which were frequented by this age group. Such classes or meeting places were attended precisely because this age group had free time and was looking for something of interest. And those taking on administrative jobs were also likely to do so alongside people of their own age who were looking for a constructive role to play. Then there were the clubs and events specifically geared to the early experiences of this age cohort - like the war related ones. Finally, the young elderly had met many of their current friends, neighbours and acquaintances of a similar age at the same point in their life course: when they all had young children.

Sam Waters: All the children became friends. All the children went to school. We all got to know each other in that way and you make a group... The children make friends for you.

2.4 Space and Time Issues

2.4.1 Space issues

Spatial issues could include the time spent away from home, discussed above. Sometimes people re-organised their home with, or towards, the end of work, as in the case of the McLeans who converted their children's bedrooms to a study for Greg and craft room for Maureen. But the biggest issue was whether to move house and re-locate elsewhere. Earlier we had examples of those who did make the move, but far more considered it.

For example, the Williams had been one of those thinking about a bungalow because of the absence of steps (allowing for some mobility problems later in life) and the fact that they were easier to maintain.

Dorothy Williams: [But moving] would be a big upheaval to leave all our friends and would we be happy doing that? You might be in your ideal sort of bungalow in an ideal sort of little situation but then you... would you be happy just stopping in there or would you rather go out and see your acquaintances and your clubs and things you belong to? You'd have to start all that again and at our time of life, you know, is it a good idea?

The Griffiths raised a similar point, thinking especially about what would happen when one of them died.

Lucy Griffith: It's all right [to move] when you're younger but when you're older, if anything was to happen to one of you, that person's going to be on their own, ain't they? And they might be in a strange surroundings whereas...

you know everyone round here, you see. This is the point. You know where you are. You know who the people are and that. That's the only thing. When we go down to Leicester, they've got some nice little bungalows there where his niece lives and she says "Well you've only got to sell up and come down here." But I'm not a Leicester person. I'm a Londoner, you see.

2.4.2 Time issues: pace

The first time issue concerns the change of pace which comes with retirement from work. Muriel Cifonelli observed that when she retired from teaching, even though there was less pressure on her the change itself affected her.

Muriel Cifonelli: I think you suddenly realise you've got time to do things you want to do. But in the beginning, of course, everything makes you very tired because the timing is all so different.

LH: What, you mean when you are into a routine at school, you're used to that pace?

Muriel Cifonelli: You're used to that pace, yes, and slowing down actually makes you very tired because you do... I mean, our days are very full but they're not full like they were.

Meanwhile, Dorothy Williams was one of many who mentioned 'slowing down' with retirement.

Dorothy Williams: I'm aware that I've slowed. I take longer to do things than I used to. We'd whiz around the house. It's partly because you've, you know, physically slowed down but it's partly mental too because you realise you have got more time.

In other words, 'slowing down' was only in part brought about by physical change - in part it related to their whole new situation and reduction of time pressures.

2.4.3 Temporal flexibility and routines

There were differences in the degrees to which the young elderly maintained some flexibility in routines. Most chose quickly to install a new temporal structure to replace that provided by work.

Ray Englefield: We plan a few days ahead. But we have got into a pattern. I mean, we tend to do shopping Thursday afternoon and of course we go swimming Friday mornings and the wife has her activities Friday afternoon. I play bridge a couple of times in the afternoon. We've usually got Tuesday completely free so, not necessarily in the winter, but in the summer we use that for going out somewhere. We have structured our life

to fit the abundant hours that are there to fill. I don't think we've ever reached a point where we've got... we've both got up in the morning and said "What have we got for today? Nothing planned?", you know.

The importance of having something familiar to anticipate was shared by his wife.

Joanne Englefield: Well no, this is the odd thing. It sounds stupid but I couldn't bear to get up in the morning and think "By Jove! What am I going to do today?" So however simple an arrangement there is, I like to feel there's something ahead that I'm going to do, you see.

The most common pattern was to have routines for the majority of the week, but with the odd days or shorter time slots for doing on-going jobs, seeing family or friends etc. Also routines were not so rigid that they could not be re-arranged if something came up. Only one couple, the Summers, preferred to have extremely flexible arrangements with only a few time spots pre-planned - and to the extent that Roger Summers' old job managing a practice of consulting engineers had allowed it, the Summers had always preferred some flexibility and spontaneity even before he retired.

Routines could be more or less flexible and amongst our sample were based on a range of options such as taking on new formal commitments such as voluntary work or church related ones, going to classes, to clubs or day centres, to betting shops, setting up regular shopping patterns, regular patterns of domestic chores and regular patterns for seeing or speaking to family - and co-ordinating daily life with broadcast schedules.

2.4.4 Public time and synchronising time

A number of the interviewees noted that one of the benefits of retirement was that they could do various activities at off-peak times - for instance shopping at less busy times when many people were working.

Eva Solomon: [It was] wonderful to be able to go when not everybody else goes. I mean that was the first thing I noticed when I first retired. You don't have to shop when everybody else goes and, having been teaching, you don't have to go on holiday when everybody else goes and when it's at its most expensive.

Shopping was frequently cited, as was travel, in the sense of missing congestion on the roads or rail.

Ray Englefield: It's so much more convenient to do shopping when everyone else is at work than to go out on a Saturday. It also applies to travelling. I mean, if we go by car or if we go by train anywhere, we try to go on a Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday. We try not to go on a Saturday. Oh Sunday's all right, yes. But we try not to travel on a Monday when it's

usually a bit crowded on the train or come back on a Friday if we're coming back by train and not travel at all on a Saturday. So we are conscious of the fact that we've got a lot more opportunity to move around other than on a Saturday or Sunday which we did not have when I was at work.

To some extent socialising with friends had become more flexible.

Eva Solomon: Of course I see them during the daytimes sometimes when it used to be only... while you were working, it was only weekends because there definitely wasn't enough energy, on any of our parts, to go and do anything except weekends. And [now] I'm having a few friends to dinner in the middle of this week - something I wouldn't have done when I was working, not mid-week. Only had to be weekends because I couldn't cope with working and ... unless in very exceptional circumstances, I wouldn't have had people in the mid-week for dinner.

However, it was not always possible to avoid the busy 'public time'. For instance, for the church-going Waters, Sunday was still the key day for services. Institutions like luncheon clubs for the elderly, bingo, classes, day centres etc. only took place on certain days. Greg McLean noted that they could only play tennis at the weekends because this was when their opponents were free to play, because some of them still worked during the week. Likewise, they sometimes had to synchronise time with their working children and some friends who still worked- i.e. they were still locked into time institutions. Sometimes there was also some inertia, with social events and visits taking place at the weekend because they always had done. To the extent that some elderly had more freedom from public timetables, weekdays and weekends became blurred since there were less fixed temporal markers. Others had found new institutional timetables to replace those of work.

2.4.5 The meaning of time

The fact that some young elderly find themselves 'filling' time has already been noted. But others, with family or other commitments, find themselves under new time pressures, trying to keep control of the demands made on them.

Sam Waters: Oh lord yes. You have to be very, very careful. You see, if you're a handy bloke, you can be involved 24 hours a day doing other people's work. If you're not careful you can get too deeply involved and what you've got to do is get a balance in your life of how much you offer out and how much you do for yourself.

Jack Cifonelli was another example of the active retired, who still occasionally did some work for the probation service. Again and again he referred to the need to control his time.

Jack Cifonelli: I was also asked to be available if they needed anybody in emergencies... and since that time, I've done consultancy work for them. So I've left, but not left. There's still a link. I still meet the people but I can actually manage my own time, say yes or no to work. I was able to distance myself from the work, the people, friends and focus on other things; friends locally, things I wanted to do locally.

Later he described his involvements in more detail, including the intricate management of time and the need to co-ordinate with his wife who followed up her own interests:

Jack Cifonelli: I've retired from full-time work but I think I've worked as hard in the last two years in all sorts of different ways. In other words, my final headline is: 'Retirement is hard work'. But interesting because there's all sorts of things... I'm active in parish events, on the local scout executive, [as I said] I'm a divorce counsellor and I still do consultancy work for the Divorce Court Welfare Unit. We've got four youngsters, therefore, there's people to visit ... we have an extended family so there's lots of places to go, lots of people to visit, apart from our own friends locally.

LH: If you've ended up being busier, since this retirement, was this the intention or did this just creep up on you, so to speak?

Jack Cifonelli: I think it was intended that the days should be quite full. The difficulty is managing the time as to when there are calls upon you. Scout-wise for example - "Oh you've retired. Well perhaps you could do A, B and C. And D as well now". It is part of the current philosophy, if you like, that when you're retired you must... you know, there's lots of things you can do elsewhere. And I think it does, to some extent, creep up on you. Therefore you have to be disciplined. For example, sitting on here is my diary. That's an important item. That's an important piece of technology, if you like, in the widest sense. Because Muriel's very much involved in things... she's developed her own life and leisures, if you like...we have to be aware of what the other person's doing.

Lastly we have the case of the Cloughs who were very conscious of losing control. Fred had taken on the role of informal caretaker, and the demands of other tenants were starting to take over their lives.

Ivy Clough: Everybody knocks at the door. If there's anything wrong in the flats, someone will knock here. Well in fact, you'll find that I've got him to move my street doorbell round the corner a bit because I've been woken up at half past two in the morning, because he can't hear, but I could hear. I've been woken up at three o'clock in the morning. I've been woken up at five o'clock in the morning and six o'clock in the morning where people have come to ask for him. But I told him he's got to give it up so we can get out a bit.

Ivy was now having to assert herself:

Ivy Clough: If you walk out of the block... if you walk out to go say a bit of shopping and someone stops you, if something's wrong in their flat. So in the end I said "Fred, I know I'm going to be nasty but...look, we're going shopping. We haven't got time to stand and talk to you." And I've had to tell them, you know. I've had to tell them straight.

While they could in principle go out, Ivy's sense of responsibility was acting as a constraint on their ability to do other things.

Ivy Clough: Actually, we started going out quite a bit but then my husband took this Tenants' Association thing on and he's always so involved, like he is now, that I'm frightened to go anywhere in case he's wanted. I mean like now I said to him "Oh, you've got so and so coming. Can't go there." "Why not?" I said "Well, we might not be back in time". This is how I worry in case we're not back in time with the transport if we're going to go... if we've made arrangements to go anywhere. And I think I've been out three times since Christmas.

LH: This is apart from shopping?

Ivy Clough: Just, you know, apart from shopping. I've been out three times. Once to Canvey, where I used to go regular down there to the middle daughter. We went over to Ilford one day. There was another place I went. I can't think where it was. But there's only three times I've been out. Other than that, it's shopping. It's so boring.

Fred also acknowledged the constraints:

Fred Clough: You can't plan nothing. When we plan something, something's cropped up. As you see just now, now that man's supposed to have been here at half past ten. That's what I was told yesterday. Now I was told that they would come and do these lights... It would be done in three weeks. Now I've just been told it's going to be a month. You'll get your other meeting arranged and... the last one, it should have been on the Monday. At the last minute, it was cancelled 'til the Tuesday. So you get tied down a lot really.

2.5 Conclusion

Though without absolute precision (the age range of our respondents lies between 58 and 75) the cohort in our study can be considered as distinct. It is distinct with respect to its experience of depression, war and affluence. It is also distinct, as we shall see in the following chapters, with respect to its experience of technology and especially communication and information technologies. While this observation is accurate, it is also obvious. It does, however have singular importance methodologically, since it identifies both the importance of understanding the social dynamics of technology as historically specific and serves to restrain the natural desire to generalise from one

particular generation to another. It also offers a challenge, which can only partially be met in this report, to be able effectively to separate the generality from the particularity in the relationship between increasing age and retirement and technology.

Our argument in this chapter implicitly has been that we need to attend to the specificity of economic, political and social experience (and not just the context of experience) if we are to understand the specific character of the experience of media and information technology. This argument will become increasingly explicit in the chapters that follow. Our discussion of the life histories of the newly retired so far provides the basis for understanding how the character - the meaning as well as the affects and implications - of technological change has to be seen as being constructed and shaped through the historically and socially specific experiences of generations (in this case) and gender.

Given that specificity, a number of things can be said. The cohort has, as a whole, lived through dramatic and intense periods of economic and political conflict and change. Their lives - profoundly but not permanently or uniformly distinguished with respect to class and occupation - have been shaped, perhaps above all, by both the relative and absolute deprivation of the depression (when many of them were children), war and post-war austerity. For most, their own child rearing took place during the fifties and sixties when both economics and culture, as well as media and technology, were rapidly changing. Their own values, as many of them admit, were forged in another age. Their economic expectations were limited and their demands on an increasingly consumer oriented society were also and as a consequence limited. They have constructed, though obviously with distinct variations, their own moral economies relative to the increasing consumerism of the late twentieth century.

As would be expected, many look back on their childhood nostalgically and romantically. The metaphors of worthy poverty and of genuine community are part at least of the discourse of those in our study who were brought up in the East End of London and found themselves, with mixed feelings, in the suburbs of north London - though for many even this early experience of suburbia is valued when measured against what they see as the more recent decay of both the physical and symbolic environment. These experiences, differently inflected once again through class and moderated by the extent and speed of the move to affluence, define the particular quality of the experience of retirement.

That experience of course varies too with respect to economic circumstances, especially with respect to access to occupational pensions or savings to supplement State provision, domestic circumstances (not just a matter of whether they were living still with their spouse, but how far the wider social or family networks that had been built up over the years were still intact), and physical health. While none of our sample were physically disabled, many were beginning to suffer, especially, from the effects of declining personal mobility and loss of hearing.

The routes into and through retirement also vary enormously. They vary with respect to occupation and gender, but they also vary, as the experience of work itself is becoming more varied, with respect to the suddenness and completeness of the transition. The ability to wind down from a professional occupation into a part time

job or semi-retirement on the one hand, the formal but conclusive rite of passage to mark the ending of a lifetime spent as a hospital porter or storeman on the other, as well as which member of the household - husband or wife - retires first, all have a potentially profound impact on the meaning of, and the ability to manage, retirement both inside and outside the home.

Once at home, of course, the daily routines that have constantly had to adjust to the changing circumstances of the life-cycle - childrearing and children's departure (but also in some cases their return too) as well as the need to care for elderly parents - are nevertheless threatened by the need to adjust once again. How far existing patterns in the division of labour, or the gendered control of consumption decisions, household space or technology use, actually do change will depend. One factor, apart from the capacity of the principal housekeeper to gain or maintain control once her territory is invaded on a permanent basis, is the degree to which one or both members of the household is active, either through some kind of relationship to work, or more likely through voluntary activities. Retirement for many, if not for most, in our study was not a period for passive consumption and social isolation. The retired from both middle and working classes have found opportunities both to be busy and to extend their horizons. Many, indeed, complain about the strains of overcommitment, commitments which are based in the community as well as in DIY to their own home. Clearly there is a period, predictable but quite vulnerable perhaps, and varied in length and quality, when there is sufficient energy and opportunity, once formal commitments to work have ceased, for many newly retired to remain occupied.

Family commitments and relationships also change. The loss of their own parents, for many in our study quite recently, has led to the loss for some of extremely burdensome responsibilities but for others, the loss of the figurehead around which their siblings and extended family revolved. Relationships with their own children and grandchildren are attenuated, and increasingly dependent on telephonic rather than face-to-face contact.

Underlying all of these changes are the changing experiences of, and relationships to, space and time. The quality of space shifts with retirement, as the private spaces of domesticity become more cluttered, often, and contested, while public spaces become more threatening and less accessible. Physical travel becomes less easy and too expensive - though bus passes have both symbolic and material significance. The prospect of moving house is not welcome, with the threat to familiar places and to familiar routines. The experience of time is even more paradoxical. Mortality on the one hand - increasing freedom and lack of constraint in the daily management of time on the other. To shop when no one else shops and to have the time to watch morning television - these are some of the benefits of the release from work. But many talk of the need to structure the week, to fill and to use time, and to use it well. The transition from a structured week to a relatively or absolutely unstructured one that comes with retirement, is a major challenge which many in our study remarked upon.

It is with these senses both of the general and the particular in the life histories and circumstances of the newly retired in our study that we move to a consideration of their relationship to the information and communication technologies they have at their disposal, and to the culture that has been generated around them.

3. The Phone and Computer

3.1 The Phone

The young elderly were the first phone generation. Most did not have a telephone when they were young, but all of our sample had acquired one by this point in their life, and most had done so in their earlier adult life. The telephone was still a relatively new innovation. In fact, one of our sample, Sam Waters, recalled first encountering the phone in school science experiments. Others, like Ray Englefield and Bert Digby, first worked with telephones and wireless signalling in the armed services during the war. But for the majority, familiarity with the phone came first through work. Sam Waters and George Williams were actually telephone engineers, the counterparts in their day of the later computer programmers at the leading edge of a technology. More generally, the phone became ubiquitous in the world of work, with greater and lesser degrees of centrality in many of the new white collar jobs that expanded the middle classes. Joanne Englefield, Kitty Tarrant and Hilda Shepard had to learn how to cope with it in their clerical work. Using the phone was part of the Jim Grant's insurance job and Chris Shepard's editorial work. While for Frank Payne working in telesales and Edith Robbie as a fleet car controller, the phone was at the essence of the job.

For many, use at work provided the kind of familiarity that using the computer in the office would provide for a later generation. They had to get used to the phone. Most had few problems but some experienced difficulty, especially if the phone was less central to their particular work. And both through work and domestic use, becoming familiar with the phone meant that this generation had not only had to develop competency in speaking, but had also to discover in what circumstances the telephone was useful and how to regulate its presence, how to control it. It is these issues which are of particular interest as regards the phone in the home.

3.1.1 Early memories

Most of our participants did not have a phone at home when they were younger. Many asserted that 'nobody' did, meaning no-one in their social circles. Those who were at the younger end of this cohort, such as Chris and Hilda Shepard, could just remember their parents getting phones as they became teenagers after the war. But a few had had access to phones in their childhood. Both the Welmans' middle-class parents had had phones, Vera's father being a bank official and Albert's a technical journalist who worked from home most days and needed to be contactable. Jack Cifonelli's family had always had a telephone for their restaurant, so it was really only in part a domestic phone - and it was strictly regulated.

Jack Cifonelli: I don't remember using it very much because it was part of the business appliances technology bit. It was there for the business use. It was also in quite a public place in the whole household so it wasn't one you

could go up into your bedroom and sit on your bed or in a corner and chat away for an hour or so, which may be available to young people now. So it was obviously used for important calls, business calls, and for domestic calls as when needed. There were some strict rules about that.

LH: Right. What, you mean not for chatting but for...?

Jack Cifonelli: Yes, that's right. Chatting wasn't on; a quick call and a quick reply to something was OK. That was the family rules. But for long chats, not on.

Yet even at this stage, the phone was not always treated with such formality by children. Edith Robbie recalled the early phone of her grandfather in Scotland, and the jokes she and her brothers and sisters used to play:

Edith Robbie: He had one of these wonderful phones, because he was in the building trade for years, he had one of these ones that you actually lifted off and turned the handle.

Stuart Robbie: To get the exchange.

Edith Robbie: Yeah, and we kids couldn't get at it because it was up high but the only way you could do it is when everybody went out, was get hold of a chair and stand in front of it with the chair to get to it.

LH: So who would you ring when you did this?

Edith Robbie: Well the operator, you see. When we did that, the operator answered and said "What do you want?", and we said "Nothing" and put the phone down.

The minority of middle-class origins were the ones more likely to have had access in the early years and for these, patterns of social use were not necessarily so dissimilar to those of a later generation. For example, Penny Hawkins recalled:

Penny Hawkins: When I was about seven, we had an ordinary sort of the old-fashioned black bakelite (phone). It was used purely for social purposes.

LH: So did you ever use the phone when you were young and still at home?

Penny Hawkins: Oh well, yeah. Not sort of ten year old but certainly as a teenager. I was never off it.

LH: Because that would have still been at the time when most people didn't have phones.

Penny Hawkins: Probably yeah, but we were quite well off by that time. Yeah, a lot of my friends had phones.

She later reflected on her changing attitude to and use of the phone now as she had changed life stages. In her case, the phone had become less of a socialising tool.

Penny Hawkins: When I was a teenager I used it quite a bit, ringing up mates and getting calls from boyfriends and things like that. And it wasn't at all formal. I used to sit on the stairs. It was in the hall. Phones were always in the hall in those days. So I used to sit on the stairs for hours, you know, talking on the phone when I was sort of about 15, 16, 17, that sort of age.

LH: You mentioned that nowadays you don't think of yourself as a phone person.

Penny Hawkins: No I don't. I mean I'm not a teenager now. I don't have the same social needs. That was very much... girls talking to other girls and mostly about boys and so, you know, it just doesn't apply now. And I really I quite actively don't like talking at length on the phone now. I think, you know, it's a bit of a waste of time.

Eva Solomon, whose parents were both doctors, had grown up with the phone in Germany.

Eva Solomon: As child I used to phone to ring up all my friends like all children do, you know - as a ten year old.

During the war years, when her Jewish family had fled to England to avoid persecution, they had no money to re-acquire one, but as soon as the war was over they went on the phone again. She recalled becoming aware that outside of her social circles the phone was still less common.

Eva Solomon: I can remember being absolutely shocked by a college friend of mine here when she... by the time she'd taken her degree, she had never used the phone and I just couldn't believe that.

3.1.2 Entry into the home

For a proportion of this cohort, use for work purposes provided a justification for acquiring domestic phones. The Summers got their phone in 1950 for Roger Summers to contact and be contactable by the engineering consultancy in which he was a partner. Company secretary Stuart Robbie also had to be contactable from work. The Waters first acquired a phone in the 1950s, as soon as it was possible to have one in his street, because of Sam's on-call and shift work at BT, and the Welmans got theirs because of Albert's on-call work at the hospital. The Cifonellis got their own phone in 1955 partly to contact the restaurant business they had taken over from Jack's parents.

But even at that period, some of this cohort were also installing the phonenumber primarily or entirely for social purposes. This was the case with the McLeans who first got a phone when they were married in 1952. Although phones were still

uncommon then, a number of people in their particular Civil Service social circles were on the phone. Since they led active social lives even at that stage in their life, it was mainly used for organising activities. The Daveys got their phonenumber in 1954. Although rarer in working class circles, a few of their friends had already got one by then. Elsie remembered the handset:

Elsie Davey: One of them great big heavy black ones so it wasn't very sociable. I was only too glad to put it down. The bakelite, wasn't it Ken? Cor, it wasn't 'alf heavy.

Both the Grants and Englefields first got their own phone at home in 1958. The Englefields, like the Daveys, noted how there was an element of fashion about acquiring a phone, as well as the ever greater advantages of having a phone was more and more people subscribed.

Joanne Englefield: Well, the phone's jolly useful and as soon as we could afford one, I suppose, we had it. My mother didn't have one even still at that time. It seems funny now but nowadays people say "What's your phone number?" Nobody ever says to you "Are you on the phone?", do they? But there was a time when it wasn't quite like that.

Ray Englefield: I think as more and more people had the phone and you wanted to communicate with them, then you suddenly found it was necessary to have a phone yourself. When no one had one it didn't matter but when a lot of people had them, you sort of had to feel...

Joanne Englefield: You didn't keep up with the Jones. It was just a natural evolution as it were.

Ray Englefield: It was a natural thing. Someone says "Well, you know, I'll give you a buzz or something". And you say "Oh, I'm not on the phone". "Oh aren't you? I've just got one." It was like televisions, wasn't it?

But apart from fashion, people also had very specific reasons for getting a phone line at particular stages in their life, a point also noted in German qualitative research on the elderly (Kordey, 1993: 8). For example, for Hilda Shepard the phone provided both security and also helped overcome isolation due to her husband's shift work at the newspaper.

Hilda Shepard: Well Chris Shepard was working at nights and I was on my own with the children. I seem to remember saying "There's one thing I'd love when we can afford it and that's a telephone."

In fact, German research found that financial limitations had proved the main factor delaying the phone's entry into the home, and similar themes emerged in our study (Kordey, 1993: 9).

The Williams first acquired their phone in the late 1950s in order that their own ageing parents should be able to contact them (at that time, from a phone box).

The influence of changing circumstances over the life course is shown most clearly in the case of later adopters, since here the phone at last had a significant role even when it had been not worthwhile for many years. Rosie Aldridge acquired hers for a similar reason to the Williams'.

Rosie Aldridge: I only had a phone in 1967 because I took a council house and my mother and father had the bottom and poor mum died. We was only in it a couple of months and she died. So I just had dad. I only worked round the corner and there wasn't many phones, although there was one right across facing us, near the Arsenal. But he could never get over to it and as a matter of fact, it was I and my two children who bought the phone between us. By that time they'd both gone out to work. We got it in case he fell or needed me and all he had to do was ring up as I only worked round the corner.

Kitty Tarrant got her line in 1971 to keep in touch with her sons when they moved away from home. The Evans acquired theirs in 1975, making them the last ones in their extended families to have a phone.

Gwen Evans: I think we got it mainly because it was so difficult to phone from downstairs. That call box was forever broken. And we were getting on a bit and felt we could well afford it. Because I think at our age you're of the old school there; we didn't start off with all those things. At your age like everybody has them, don't they? But we didn't grow up with that sort of technology so I think you're a bit slower to get it than a younger person.

Even a few years before retirement, they had started to think ahead, anticipating possible emergencies in later years as their health declined.

Gwen Evans: Especially in a block like this. I mean... you've got to get dressed. You've got to get out and you've got to get down[stairs]. It's not like in a house, is it? I think it's more difficult as you get older to get out to a phone. As you get older you're real handicapped, I should think, without the phone.

Finally, although Frank Payne had had access to the landlord's phone in his previous flat for emergencies in his previous flat, he had, for many years, mostly used call boxes. It would have been expensive to install a phone at that time because there was no socket in the flat - whereas a telephone socket was already installed when he moved into his current rented flat. He first got a telephone in 1984 because of his wife's health problems - problems which eventually resulted in her death.

Frank Payne: When I had it put in, it was for my wife's sake and it was an absolute lifeline and this is why I would never give it up.

3.1.3 Getting used to the phone

A number of the participants in the study referred to their earlier nervousness about the phone, including the work phone. Joanne Englefield was among those able to recall their first experiences.

Joanne Englefield: It sounds stupid now, doesn't it. Three year olds answer the phone. But I mean not having been used to one, yeah... for a little while you felt a bit conscious of it, yeah. But I soon outgrew that actually.

Both the Shepards recalled being apprehensive when they were first forced to use the phone at work.

Hilda Shepard: Yes, I would have at 15 when I was working. Yes, I had to answer the phone then. The switchboard had about four extensions. That quite frightened me but I did cope. Oh, it was only just, you know, until I got used to it.

Chris Shepard: I didn't like to use it because it was new technology, shall we say. I didn't get comfortable with using a telephone until I had to at the office and then it took a while to get used to it. I still sometimes hesitate before... "Oh, shall I phone them? No, I'll put it off a bit."

Although Frank Payne had himself quickly adapted to the phone, his wife had remained nervous of it for some time.

Frank Payne: I never found it difficult. My good lady did but she got used to it after a while.

LH: What did she find difficult about the phone?

Frank Payne: Scared of the phone, which a lot of older people are. I know that might sound strange but that is fact. Until I got her used to talking and when I used to get to the office, I used to telephone her straight away and let her know that I'd arrived and joke with her and suchlike and of course she got used to it and began to expect it and then she got over this nervousness.

A few had never learnt to be totally at ease with phones. For example, even though Daphne Summers regularly phoned her children, she found phoning could be difficult. She felt that she was only marginally better at speaking on the phone compared to when she was younger - she was still sometimes tongue-tied and found it difficult to be articulate.

Daphne Summers: I prefer to write. I only phone if I haven't got enough time for a letter to get there. If I want to make an arrangement, I prefer to do it by post. I can hear what I'm thinking better than when I phone. I put the phone down and I think "Oh, I meant to..." I'm not very good at collecting my

thoughts on the phone. Maybe because we didn't have very much practice at it when I was younger with not having a phone.

Her husband Roger recalled his early formality when using the phone. Although this had slowly changed, some habits persisted.

Roger Summers: I suppose one didn't sort of use it as sort of freely. You know, you thought about it a lot before you used it.

Daphne Summers: I suppose there weren't that number of people on the other end, were there?

Roger Summers: No, there weren't many people to ring. It wasn't used all that frequently and one gave it a bit of thought and even to the extent of what one was going to say. Whereas now you just pick it up and you think about what you're going to say after you've got the answer, don't you?

LH: Did you used to write things down then before you talked?

Roger Summers: I still do that now because otherwise when I ring off I've remembered a couple of things I've forgot about. But yes, I should say more preparation...[and] I don't think there was much social chatter because the people that we would have wanted to have chatted with didn't have a phone anyway.

Getting used to the phone also means knowing how the phone can be used. Eddy Evans had rarely had to use the phone when he worked as a hospital porter and had never developed a phone manner. As a late adopter, his wife Gwen was not totally confident with it either, but at least she could cope with it - in fact, she increasingly had to rely on the phone as knee problems reduced her mobility. She also knew how to go about achieving goals using the phone.

Gwen Evans: You're not very good on the phone, are you Ed? It doesn't come...

Eddy Evans: I can't hold a conversation. My sister gets on there [and I say], "Oh you want Gwen", and that's it.

Gwen Evans: Like if there's anybody to be phoned it's me that does it.

Eddy Evans: Well you're used to it. You was used to a phone at work.

Gwen Evans: Like, for instance, if I want a number for the council and I don't know it, I would phone the Town Hall and get it from there. Where that wouldn't come easy to Eddy. You know, he wouldn't have the number and that was it. He wouldn't go much further than that, would you Ed? In fact he's not a telephone person at all. Well I'm not really. I used it more now because I don't get out so much, but I can't say as... I'd far rather see the person visually than hold a conversation. But I do do it because, as I say, it's quite difficult for me now that I don't get out so much.

LH: Do you find it easier then to have conversations which are just to make arrangements or to find things out, to get information, as opposed to chatting?

Gwen Evans: Yes, I would say yes. I'm all right with my own relatives, you know, but if a stranger rings me, I'm not terribly good. No, I... I feel we use it more mainly for the sheer convenience of it.

But while it is possible to find these residual signs of hesitancy about the phone amongst this cohort, most had developed a familiarity with it fairly easily. They were more likely to contrast their experience with that of their own parents. Gwen continued by discussing her mother who had died only a few years previously.

Gwen Evans: My mother never had a phone. No, my mother wouldn't have been able to cope with a phone. Although she was more brighter than my mother-in-law, it would just... it irritated her.

LH: What, because she hadn't grown up with it?

Gwen Evans: Yes, that's right. She couldn't be bothered with it all.

Edith Robbie's mother, who had lived with them for years before going into a home after developing Alzheimer's disease, provided another example.

Edith Robbie: She wouldn't use it. I used to say to her "Phone your sisters." But the sisters wouldn't keep in touch with one another at all. They came from an era where they didn't have... my mother didn't have a telephone in her home when she was young. Eventually we had one at home but my mother was not a great user of the telephone.

Apart from developing their own use of the phone, this was the first generation that frequently had to deal with the issue of how to regulate the phone's use, especially by their children. In the Welman household, the children had clearly developed their own strategies for achieving telephone privacy, although Vera could remember intervening on one occasion.

Vera Welman: I remember they used to take the phone into the pantry and call that the telephone box and if anyone was in the telephone box you didn't disturb them. I think I did once, after an hour and a half, but apart from that...

On the one hand, many of the young elderly would contrast their own children's reasonable phone behaviour when they were adolescents with the teenagers of today who seem to be always on the phone. While there may be differences, some caution is needed here. Our participants' knowledge of current teenage phone behaviour is often second-hand, and may partially reflect current public images of children running up phone bills. In fact, this cohort had attempted to regulate

phone use. For instance, the Cifonelli's children always had access to the phone, but there were rules.

Jack Cifonelli: They used it a lot more than I did.

Muriel Cifonelli: They used it more than we used to as young people but we did restrict how long they could use it for.

Jack Cifonelli: There were the usual rules and conditions. I think basically and honestly from the point of finance. Phone calls, you know...

Muriel Cifonelli: Cost money.

Jack Cifonelli: So by all means have a phone call. Please keep it as brief as you can. Don't stay on there two hours type of thing.

Muriel Cifonelli: I don't think it was the fashion for young children to stay on the phone for hours, was it? I mean, they'd just say "Hello Carlos, how are you? Yes, I've finished my homework but I couldn't do number seven. Could you do number...?" and that was more or less it, wasn't it?

Jack Cifonelli: Well I know there were some children... as I hear - I mean, it's all hearsay - who were on the phone a long time and there was problems between them and their parents. I can't say we know of anybody particularly.

Muriel Cifonelli: No, we never really had that problem.

Maureen McLean was another of those who referred to 'what you read about teenagers today'. While her children had always been free to use the phone without having to ask for permission, there were pressures to cut out unnecessary talk.

Maureen McLean: I don't think it was as bad as it is now. On the other hand, we would say, "Look, you're going to see that female in half an hour and she only lives round the corner - talk then!"

Greg McLean: Yes, you would say that.

Maureen McLean: And Adrian was just as bad... organising to go out somewhere and then they talk about what they're going to do. I said "Well, talk about that when you meet them".

Even the taking of incoming calls followed certain rules - the children were usually sent elsewhere to speak on the extension.

Greg McLean: If they happened to be downstairs and the phone went, we'd say "Right, upstairs and you can chat as long as you like up there but you're not

disturbing the rest of the house". And then that phone went down and the other one was for use. It was very useful.

Maureen McLean: We did get a bit sick of answering the phone because it was nearly always for them. We had notes all over the place.

Jim and Pauline Grant now laughed about phone issues which had involved a little more conflict at the time.

Pauline Grant: The children took to [the phone] straight away. It was hard to keep them off. They thought it was a lovely toy. I always remember Maureen, she would be with her special friend at school when she was about 14...they cycled to school together and they would cycle home...Christine would go off and Maureen'd walk in through the door and say "I must phone Christine"...(laughs) and I would hit the roof.

The Robbie's noted the occasional tension along the same lines.

Edith Robbie: As teenagers they were never that bad. I mean, we could say to them now enough's enough. Or you could say "You've never been off that damn phone. Now you're not using it again tonight."

Stuart Robbie: I don't think we... I don't remember them using it... over-using it. I really don't.

Edith Robbie: Not very often. Sally, when she came home from school, used to get on the phone. That's typical girls at 15. The minute you come in the door you had to speak to a friend because you hadn't seen her for five minutes.

Fred Clough described more the conflicts over and resistance to his rules by the children of his first marriage. He had originally got the phone for emergency contact when his first wife started to develop what was to become a terminal illness.

Fred Clough: Sometimes I used to have a chat and sometimes I used to phone my wife's friends. And on the quiet, my daughters used to get on the phone to their boyfriends when I wasn't about and run me up some bills.

LH: Did you try to ration their calls and make them make less calls?

Fred Clough: I tried to make them make less calls because when they used to get on the phone I used to have two hefty great bills and they always used to say they never used the phone. I knew flipping well they did.

LH: Did they ask permission to use the phone if you were around?

Fred Clough: Did they heck! They'd get on the stairs, because we had one in the hall at first - just the one in the hall - and they used to sit on the stairs. You

couldn't see them because it had no rails. It was like a wall coming down the stairs so they could hide behind there and just whisper and I wouldn't even know they was on the phone.

The Williams' sons had had access to the phone when they were still at home, although during the later years George and Dorothy had unsuccessfully tried to regulate their use of it.

George Williams: In their sort of teenage years, they used to use the phone more than we did, I think.

LH: Did they have to pay for that?

George Williams: No. Well we did have a money box at one time, didn't we, and we insisted on them putting some coins in there.

Dorothy Williams: Well yes, but it sort of fell by the wayside.

George Williams: It lapsed. They saw you waving a big stick and then it lapsed again, you know, so we didn't get much out of that.

Regulation of use does not only apply to children: it can be an issue between partners, even after spending years together. When talking about their children's past use, it became clear that Joanne Englefield's chatting on the phone was still an issue - even if it was handled in a joking way.

Ray Englefield: If we found our daughter was particularly long... talking to some boyfriend for a particularly long length of time, we used to sort of say "Well, it does cost money, you know".

LH: Why, was she the one most likely to talk for a long time then?

Joanne Englefield: Yes, yes, she talked but I think girls do. Lawrence would only use it if he wanted to make a definite arrangement to go to fishing or to this or to that but Christine was a bit like me. If she felt fed up and thought "What can I do?" She picked up the telephone, yeah.

Ray Englefield: Have a waffle on the phone, yeah.

Joanne Englefield: I mean you still come in and look daggers... well not daggers at me but you...

Ray Englefield: After an hour goes by, I take to sort of thinking it would be cheaper to go and visit them.

Joanne Englefield: Yeah, but it's cheap on Sundays for that. Well, I mean you must admit you're not a real chatty type, are you?

Ray Englefield: Actually [my friend] Tony's wife is the same. He said the other day he was having a game of cards and his wife said "Oh, I'll just phone up somebody while you're finishing up". He said they'd finished the game. They'd had a drink of coffee and she was still on the phone, he said, while they were doing everything. It's a habit that ladies get into.

Joanne Englefield: There's always something else to say, isn't there?

Finally, the use of the phone over the years has been influenced by a number of changes in the circumstances experienced by this cohort. This includes family related changes, such as when their children move out of the home or when their own elderly parents require more attention - both of which can generate new patterns of phone calls. Sometimes such changes occur before retirement, sometimes after: the latter cases will be discussed below. Apart from such changes in personal circumstances, new phone technologies have appeared, tariffs have changed and new services and options have been developed. For example, the Williams' reflected on how they had gradually become more accustomed to ordering items such as theatre tickets over the phone once these could be purchased by credit card. And Eva Solomon pointed out how she was now more willing to phone abroad as this service had become cheaper and easier.

Eva Solomon: I think years ago you didn't phone the States... except for very rarely. It used to be a palaver too. I mean now you just dial the number.

LH: Yeah, and that's it. Straight through.

Eva Solomon: And it's not that expensive. Letter writing has gone down like anything. We write far less letters now.

LH: Is that simply because it's so much easier to phone?

Eva Solomon: I think so.

3.1.4 Experience of the phone with retirement

So far, we have focused on the historical experience of this cohort. Now we turn to the specificities of their transition to retirement and the organisation of their current life. In doing so, it is necessary to refer back to some of the different lifestyle orientations adopted by these young elderly.

To start with a link to the last section, there is sometimes a coincidence between wider changes in the potential use of the phone and changes in personal social circumstances. For example, Gwen Evans' retirement, a very housebound one because of mobility problems, meant that she had far more time to listen to radio and take an interest in some of the discussions. Over the same period, the genre of the radio phone-in had become more common, and so she had attempted to phone radio stations as a participant several times - to date with no success. Dorothy Williams, started by noting how her phoning patterns had changed

because of the very ubiquity of the phone. Then she added a very specific example of how changes in her shopping patterns, to do with her stage in the life course, had coincided with the rise of distant, large shopping centres and thus influenced her use of the phone for shopping.

Dorothy Williams: I suppose all you can say is that everybody has a phone now so you use it perhaps in a slightly different way because it's so easy to contact people. Even shops, you know, at times I tend to phone a shop to make sure they've got something in if it's a distance away before I go, which at one time you wouldn't have thought of doing.

LH: But most shops have had phones for a long time. They had them before people had them at home.

Dorothy Williams: Yes, that's right. But I didn't use it quite so much. I'm conscious now that if you've got to go any journey to the shops... I think perhaps I don't do so much local shopping and lots of other people don't do that now, do they? The local shops start to close down and you go farther afield to a bigger shop to a centre like Brent Cross or somewhere.

LH: What, would you phone Brent Cross up then or what?

Dorothy Williams: Oh I would, yes. If I wanted something specific, I wouldn't go all the way to Brent Cross and then find when I got there they hadn't got it, you know.

George Williams: Well we did this only the other day, didn't we? We wanted something from Argos. And we phoned up their shop at Wood Green, didn't we, to make sure they'd got it. Well I think that if you're going to Wood Green for a general shopping situation you wouldn't bother, would you? But if you were just going there for that one specific thing, yes.

LH: Do you find yourself going for one specific thing that you wanted?'

Dorothy Williams: Yes, I do. I suppose because the family's not at home, you know... we've just had a whole load of birthdays, haven't we? March is a bad time for birthdays in our family. So I've been buying specific presents, you know. Having five grandchildren and, you know, sons and daughters-in-law, there seems to be a lot going on at the moment. And so that I've been sorting out specific things so I've, you know, definitely noticed that I've been using the phone from that angle.

One factor which leads to more use of the phone is, of course, the fact that there is no longer access to a work phone. For example, Jim Grant and Ray Englefield were amongst those who noted that they used to make some social calls from the office - more often for organisational purposes rather than chatting - and now they had to make them from home. Elsie Davey noted that because she has lost this 'perk, she now had higher phone bills to pay.

Elsie Davey: When I was at work, we used to do all my phone calls at work, and of course I wasn't using this one much. If I had a call to make I'd think "I'll do that tomorrow when I get to work". That was the only perk I had was to get my phone calls. [So] I'm using it more now because obviously I've packed up work and I still make the same amount of phone calls.

In addition, many of our participants noted that they made more calls nowadays than before retirement. In explaining this, the Williams referred both to changes in family circumstances and to George's very active retirement with roles on committees and in sports clubs:

Dorothy Williams: You've used it more because of the arrangements where you've been bowls, or any of your other things.

George Williams: I think really that coincident with retirement, our family have moved away from home really so that you tend to use it more anyway, don't you?

Dorothy Williams: Yes, and also what commitments you've got that you've taken on which you wouldn't have done if you hadn't been retired.

Joanne Englefield referred both to the increase in her own social networking after retirement and Ray's new hobbies and organisational roles.

Joanne Englefield: Like this afternoon, if you hadn't been coming, I would have just phoned across the road and said "It's a snowy afternoon. Would you like to come for a cup of tea?" Well if I'd still been at work, I wouldn't have done that, would I? So in a sense I expect one is using it a lot more often. And (speaking to Ray Englefield) you arrange the speakers for the Civil Service and that so you use it more often than you used, don't you? Because you've got more socially involved around here. And your bridge bits and... So, yes, the only change is that since we retired we use it more frequently.

The Robbies had taken early retirement from their careers but still continued in part-time jobs, partly for financial reasons while they awaited the state pension. For them, the phone remained essential for work purposes. In the case of Frank Payne the phone was important for the various voluntary work tasks with which he had filled his life, as well as for co-ordinating social meetings with friends who had also retired.

Then there are family changes that coincide with or follow retirement. Sometimes these increase the number of phone calls, as when our participants' own elderly parents and relatives, perhaps living alone or becoming increasingly frail, lead the young elderly to make more supportive and social calls. On the other hand, the death of those elderly relatives can then remove the need for such calls. Either way, the pattern of phoning after retirement is clearly not a static one. And then there are the many cases where children leaving home might lead to new patterns of phoning. Some continue to live nearby, which generates local phoning, often to organise meetings. Others move further afield reflecting generally greater

geographical mobility compared to a generation earlier and hence the dispersal of families, including dispersal abroad. For instance, even though money was a little 'tight' the Robbies also found themselves with a considerably higher phone bill now because of international calls to their children.

Stuart Robbie: It did change because I think we spend a lot more on the phone, now simply because they're not in this country. They're both abroad and we feel, because they're struggling like many of their contemporaries, that - which is not to say we're not struggling as well - but we are inclined to phone them rather than them phoning us. So we're getting the brunt of the costs...[phoning] is rationed to that extent. But unfortunately once the call starts it's apt to go on a bit. You know, you get 25 minute calls to ruddy Bermuda, you know. That gets a bit expensive really.

There were often even more phone calls to adult children once any grandchildren arrived. With the death of her mother, Joanne Englefield in London had found herself losing one whole pattern of calling, but that event more or less coincided with her son and daughter-in-law in Newcastle having their first child. This generated both numerous visits and complementary phone calls. The other example of how phone calls could supplement face-to-face contact came from the Summers. Daphne often phoned her daughters even after she had recently seen them, leading her husband to complain:

Roger Summers: Yes, she's been on [the phone] most of the morning. We were only down at Worthing yesterday and saw them, I don't know why it has to be like this.

But Daphne later clarified that these calls were made because it had proved difficult to talk about everything when she was with her daughter because of interruption by the grandchildren.

Daphne Summers: They've got a couple of children and you can't hear what you're thinking. You think of all the things you should have said when you get home. So you have to fill in the gaps.

LH: Oh right. Right so the conversations you might have on the phone are a bit different from the conversations you've had when you were there?

Daphne Summers: Hmmm, those are the adult ones.

Daphne also observed that she phoned her children more than they did her because she had more free time.

Daphne Summers: I suppose I perhaps phone a little bit more because they're always so busy, you find you're the one perhaps who's chasing them up more. Well, they've both got small children so they're indoors quite a lot in the evening... more in the evenings and I suppose it's no use calling them sort of times when they're going out to fetch children from school or taking

them to playgroups and things like that. Not a lot during the day too much because they're not there.

However, despite this logic, the direction of calls was not always from parents to children. For the Englefields, the situation was the reverse.

Joanne Englefield: To be honest, I don't actually phone her terribly often. She phones me because I always pick the wrong moment. I mean, by the time she gets home from work and then she socialises quite a lot and all that so... I suppose we're in touch about once a week, I would say, on average. But we're not worried if it goes over like. My son phones once a week, usually on Sundays. It's odd actually. You wouldn't think with your own son or daughter that you'd feel a bit nervous about phoning them. I don't mean nervous. That's not the right word but "Oh dear, should I phone now, should I phone then?" But now it's like with my son, especially with the baby, is it going to be an awkward time or whatever so I find it easier really to leave them to phone us.

LH: But is that something they said...that it's inconvenient?

Joanne Englefield: No, no, that's just me wanting to be a good mother and mother-in-law.

As well as serving to complement and facilitate meetings, the phone could start to substitute for them. Joanne Englefield and Eva Solomon noted how some of their phone calls had now replaced face-to-face contact, more so for friends who had moved away

Eva Solomon: I phone just to chat... Like, for instance, I've got a friend down in Wimbledon and it's a palaver now to meet but we might have a long chat, over the phone.

This 'occasional' networking was important, sometimes remaining the only way in which old friends kept in touch once or a few times a year. Even when friends or relatives lived relatively near, the onset of mobility problems could mean increasing reliance on the phone. For instance, all that remained of the Evans' extended family was Gwen's brother's wife and Eddy's sister. Although they did not live that far away, they only saw Gwen's brother's wife about once a month. However, Gwen phoned her two or three times a week.

Gwen Evans: 'Well as you get older the phone's the answer isn't it because I'm not very mobile. I mean I'm OK here but I can't get on and off a bus by myself. I can with Eddy but... So, therefore, a lot of it now is done by phone.

Eddy's sister, also retired, saw them once a week - she was also a bus ride away. In addition, she phoned Gwen nearly every day.

Gwen Evans: Yeah and she has a lot of problems with a son of hers and I do help her in general.

LH: What, calm her down?

Gwen Evans: Yes, it's... You know, if she's got a problem, it's me she phones and I try to sort it out for her.

For various reasons, whether maintaining a 'distant' community and extended family ties, through or with the help of the phone, or organising an active retired lifestyle, a certain dependency on the phone can often emerge: the telephone becomes integrated into these different lifestyles and patterns of social contact, even where infrequently used. The Shepards did not make that many calls, but acknowledged that even for the few they do make it would be '*difficult to give up the phone*'. Elsie Davey was one of those echoing similar sentiments:

Elsie Davey: Well, I don't use the phone a lot now. It's there as a necessity more than anything else now.

While Lucy Griffith added:

Lucy Griffith: I often say to Bernie Griffith that it's a lot of money but we couldn't very well give it up, because it's very handy.

Reliance on the phone is often most clearly demonstrated when it breaks down. For Dorothy Williams, the failure of all the phones in her street brought home the extent to which she had become more dependent on the phone for social contact, (especially considering the Williams' frequent liaisons with family and friends).

Dorothy Williams: We had a lot of trouble, didn't we? We were cut off a couple of weeks ago for three days. And I must say that having been cut off for three days, I felt completely isolated. It was a horrible feeling. I didn't like it all. It seemed, you know, you can sort of manage for a little while but when it went on for three days, it seemed such a long time.

LH: Would you have felt like that in the past or do you feel you're more sort of dependent on the phone now?

Dorothy Williams: Yes, I think we're perhaps more dependent on the phone now; incoming and outgoing.

George Williams: I think we've got more people away from us at the moment, haven't we, than we had then. We had children at home. Your parents weren't far away, were they? It was only your sister and my sister that we needed to contact.

Dorothy Williams: Hmm, but friends before have phoned too, don't they? And various arrangements are made on the phone and... I felt... I didn't like it at all. Really, I was quite... it surprised me how isolated I felt when suddenly the phone wasn't there for three days and it wasn't even next door, you know, because it was out all along this road. And you go in next door and

you say, you know, "Well I haven't got the phone either". You think "Oh, help!" You become lazy about that, don't you? It shows how dependent.... We were expecting my son... one of the sons and family were coming over here because they were going to the dentist and they didn't come and... you know, I thought "Well, why didn't they phone if they're not coming?". And I started to get quite anxious about that and George went over to phone them and the dentist's mother had died and the dentist had cancelled all their appointments, you see. But they'd been trying to phone us and couldn't get through. So it was... a bit... it seemed, you know, most odd to me. So I hadn't realised how dependent I was on it at that stage.

Like the Williams, the Englefields had experienced being cut off and realised how much they relied on the phone.

Joanne Englefield: We couldn't make a phone call a fortnight ago, could we? That was just before I went to Newcastle. I thought "Oh golly. That's going to be awkward". That particular day I was taking my granddaughter to Newcastle the following week, somebody had to collect her from up in Shefford and it was all getting a little bit... because we hadn't made the arrangements because we'd relied on the telephone, whereas if you'd had to write letters, we'd have arranged it all about two or three weeks before, exactly what we were going to do.

She noted another incident.

Joanne Englefield: We were without it for 11 days once and I did come to the conclusion that I really think if I had to choose, I'd go without the car before the phone. Terrible cut off feeling. I mean, I hope I haven't got to go without either but...

Ray Englefield: Well, we build our social life around the phone really, don't we?

While some young elderly couples might be considered to be living fairly socially isolated lives as they become more home-based, they can still be quite happy with each other's company. There is a far greater risk of loneliness for those living alone. This can be less true for those who had lead a single, independent life for some time before retirement, such as divorcee Penny Hawkins. But it was more true for those who had recently lost their partner and with it their way of life. Widower Kitty Tarrant saw her son at the weekend because he and his family lived near her in Kent. She was alone weekday evenings after finishing her part-time job, and weekly telephone contact with her grandchildren in Nottingham had helped to overcome her loneliness.

Kitty Tarrant: She's ten and we have a lovely conversation together and then her... the next one down is a boy, he's six, he has a few words with me and then I have to speak to my son and my daughter-in-law and so it usually goes on quite a long while. An hour sometimes.

She continued, looking ahead to when she would have to give up her part-time job:

Kitty Tarrant: I wouldn't ever give the phone up because it's a life line, isn't it. Somehow I would afford it. Socially, you know, being in contact with people, especially if you're not going to work and you're not meeting so many people.

We saw in the last chapter how because widower Rosie Aldridge lived at some distance from her children, twice weekly calls from her daughter were one of the highlights of the week. In addition, the phone meant that she was contactable by others. She had given her number out to various old people's clubs, so that they could phone her in case places for excursions become available at short notice. Finally, there was the security role of the phone. German researchers have already noted how the elderly have sometimes formed telephone 'rings' to phone round to each other regularly and check that everyone is all right (Wald and Stöckler, 1991: 39-41). Rosie Aldridge and several other women from her local day centre operated their own form of security arrangement - not unique to those living alone, but more common to them - which involved checking up to see that the others were OK.

Rosie Aldridge: I always tell them, providing I know, that the next day, like such as today, I knew my son was coming in. So I told them.

LH: That you weren't coming in?

Rosie Aldridge: Yeah. And I also said to them I had to wait for the people to do the windows as well. So they knew that I wouldn't be in today. And that's how we more or less do it. So we say "Oh we haven't seen so and so." So then we ask "Oh has so and so phoned in?"

Frank Payne and his new 'ladyfriend' had also developed a signalling system so that they could communicate without incurring the cost of a call.

Frank Payne: I telephone her every evening to see that she's all right and if she's coming here, which she does a couple of times a week - we've got it down to a bit of a fine art - she rings me, I let it ring three times and then she hangs up. So I know that a) she's coming, b) she's OK. And when she leaves here, she does the same; she gets home and the first thing she does is rings me three times and then I know that she's home.

3.1.5 Issues

While the phone was clearly important in the lives of the young elderly, it could also pose problems. The first issue was cost, worries about the expense of phoning being more acute in the poorer households. For example, the Cloughs had joint income of £91 a week from their state pensions. Because both were registered as handicapped they did not have to pay a phone rental. Even so they

pointed out that their bills were "as much as" £20-25 a quarter. Ivy described her inhibitions about phoning when she lived alone before meeting Fred.

Ivy Clough: I never used to phone me brothers and sisters much because they were too far out. And they wanted me to phone all the time and I mean...

LH: Well, was that getting expensive for you?

Ivy Clough: Yeah, it got too expensive so I was only living on me pension. So I couldn't do it.'

Because of the informal caretaker role that her husband had taken on in their block of flats, the bulk of her phoning was now to the Council, campaigning, complaining or generally trying to get them to make repairs for the other tenants. She did not feel she had enough money to then phone relatives and so only heard from them when there was a death in the family - which was getting rarer since most of the relatives of her generation were now already dead. Ivy commented on the Council calls:

Ivy Clough: Well, being that he is on the tenants' thing, I mean you can't ring them in the cheap period, can you? So he'll ring them during the day. Well, it's got [to the stage] now that if I know people are on the phone and if they come and make a complaint about... ask him to do something... I say "Well would you mind if he uses your phone?" Because, I mean, the bills are getting too high.

We saw earlier how for widow Rosie Aldridge the phone was a very important social link to her family nowadays - whereas in the past when her parents lived with her and other relatives were close by or seen regularly, it was more for emergencies. The only problem now was the bill could get out of hand, and although her children helped her, the expense was clearly an issue and emerged several times in the interview.

Rosie Aldridge: I've got my sister up in Lincolnshire and my daughter's at Clacton. My son lives at Chelmsford and I've got another sister up in Hinckley, Nuneaton, so by the time I phone all them sort of thing, I was getting really out of hand. My son had to come to the rescue before because I'd had... about £90 I think the phone bill was. But then I suppose I do it for someone to talk to, don't you really.

Later she added:

Rosie Aldridge: I may phone for my daughter about an hour, hour and a half. Some of the phone bills are about £4 or £5, aren't they. But then again, if you think about it, I don't go and visit. It would cost me far more in fare, wouldn't it? So I think it's a cheaper... I mean, I know what goes on with her every week because we talk every week.

LH: But does it make a difference that you're not seeing each other face-to-face or can you convey as much on the phone as you want to?

Rosie Aldridge: Well yeah because, as I say, we're on the phone such a long time... Her husband sometimes creates when she pays the bill and, as I say, it's my money that I spend. But, we can't see each other, can we. I mean, my daughter don't drive and it would cost you more in a fare, wouldn't it, than talking over the phone.

And

Rosie Aldridge: I wouldn't do without me phone. They keep on telling me to cut it down but once you start talking you don't realise how long you've been on it, do you, really?

In fact, when asked whether she would want a device which showed how much she was spending, she definitely would not: that would 'frighten' her.

Both of the above examples were of the young elderly who had a low income by virtue of having no occupational pension. Others, like the Robbies, felt, more temporary, financial constraint because of taking early retirement: their income was limited because they only had an occupational pension and had not yet reached the age where they could claim a state one. Yet others, like the Englefields, received both pensions, but because of not having been in occupational schemes for many years, their income was still limited and so they had to be careful about expenses such as the phone. In other words, there is no simple dichotomy between the young elderly based on whether there is an occupational pension or not, and hence no simple dichotomy as regards what phone costs mean to them. But in addition to the influence of their current economic circumstances, we also see an historical legacy. This cohort of people, and especially those of working-class origins whether upwardly mobile or not, have a generally greater sensitivity to spending money because of the experience of austerity in their earlier years. Even those who regard themselves as 'comfortable' now are often careful with money, which includes being careful about phone bills.

For instance, although the Englefields did not consciously ration their phoning, for longer chatting Joanne would phone in the cheap rate period - like most others. Nevertheless, the cost of Joanne's phoning was an issue to which Ray, as organiser of home finances, was more sensitive.

Joanne Englefield: I must say although Ray is good about it - he really is. I notice that other wives don't perhaps phone. It is me that tends to do it all. I've got a feeling they think "Oh well, Ray won't mind". Whereas perhaps...

LH: What, in terms of organising something or what, that you'll phone rather than someone else?

Joanne Englefield: Well when you've got women friends...like the one that lives at St Albans, sometimes you might just feel you want to phone and say "Yeah, I couldn't get that wool I was going to get." So you might not really want to be phoning to make arrangements to meet, might you....you might just phone to tell them something they don't want to know anyway. (laughs)

Ray Englefield: Just like conversation, isn't it. It's just like conversation if you were here.

Joanne Englefield: Yeah. But usually it is arranging and then saying "Well, shall we see you next week?" or whatever.

LH: So do you make more outgoing calls than you receive incoming ones?

Ray Englefield: I think we seem to pay for everybody else, yes.

When Frank Payne's wife was alive, it was she who was more sensitive to cost. Frank Payne had tried to assure his wife that it was important to use the phone to stay in touch.

LH: When your wife got used to the phone, did she used to speak to her relatives on the phone?

Frank Payne: Oh yes, yes. Yes, once she got used to it she used to. At one time she was worried about the expense of it but I said "Well don't worry about it. If you're keeping in touch with people that's alright with me."

Currently Frank Payne's bills were low, about £43 a quarter - about £12 of which was for the actual calls. Although he was cost conscious when phoning, he was aware of the importance of the phone for older people who were more isolated - he had even made more calls at the weekend sometimes if he was feeling a bit lonely.

LH: You said you try and keep it down, are you conscious of trying to avoid big telephone bills?

Frank Payne: Oh yes, yes. But mind you, I find that when I do speak to somebody you tend to go on and on and forget. I mean, a friend of mind telephoned me last evening. She's got an answer machine and I telephoned her and she answered me eventually last evening after a fortnight. I think she was on to me from Hoddesdon nearly three quarters of an hour catching up with all the news and suchlike. I suppose it's just because it's like old people when they come to go to the door and there's somebody at the door, "Come inside," they're so pleased to see them. It's the same thing when you're getting a lot off your mind, kind of thing.

A majority of the participants, whatever their economic circumstances, adapted some of their calls to the cheaper rates. When there used to be three tariffs, many, like Elsie Davey and the Digbys, avoided the dearest tariffs in the morning. Elsie

Davey had even tried making some calls on Saturday, for instance to sort out insurance, taking a chance that the office might be open. And when phoning long distance to make enquiries, she would normally inform the person she was speaking to that the call was expensive and ask them to be brief. Both the Daveys and Penny Hawkins had taken up a low cost option tariff because they made relatively few calls and others had responded to BT special offers such as being able to phone long distance or abroad for cheaper rates for a limited period.

Even while saying they were 'economically comfortable', the Waters still exercised some caution concerning telephone use. They were aware that it was possible to run up bills easily, and observed that that sensitivity was even stronger in some of their more elderly neighbours.

Sam Waters: What would encourage us to use the phone more? I would say reduce the cost of telephone calls. If they reduced the cost of telephone calls, we would make more. We would probably make more than we do now and we would pay more.

LH: Why do you think you'd make more? Who would you call extra that you're not calling now?

Sam Waters: You see, sometimes you find that you don't call people now. You say, "Oh well, it doesn't matter really". [These are] what I call 'calls on the spur of the moment'; "Oh I'll call somebody. I'll give them a quick call and get the answer to a question". It's like my neighbour next door was ill yesterday, the other day. She said "Oh well, you wouldn't have known I was ill". I said "Well you've got a telephone dear. Just ring us. We're only 7 digits away from you. That's all". "Oh I didn't want to..." I said "Well you can worry us. That's what you can do". Maybe we would get more calls. People would freely use it more and I think with old people, and I'm only thinking of old people, I think the overlying cost of things affects them. Behind the back of their mind, I mean we were brought up in an age where you had to save a few pence. We are still a little bit reserved in the way we use things and we think "money". It's like a dishwasher; I would particularly like to have a dishwasher. I've got to think very shortly [about one] if they're going to meter our water. It's going to be an added annual cost to our cost of living.

The Sunday cheap rate which BT had introduced had influenced their pattern of phoning.

Sam Waters: If we're calling our friend up in Yorkshire, we will make it at the weekend. It's more affordable... it's better to make the call at weekends, particularly now when they're charging 10p for a three minute call.

LH: Well has that made any difference?

Sam Waters: Well I think it makes it easier to make the call, yes. You know, you would make it now rather than think about it, especially when you've got a

lot to say to them. The telephone generates conversation. Whereas writing, you can read... you know, you make a small few items in the writing, a call generates different...what someone says generates another thought and the call gets longer and people never realise how long the call is. You know, I've often said to Joan "You know you've been on that half an hour already?"

Finance was not the only issue. The young elderly were often as sensitive to the phone's potential intrusiveness as any other group, and hence of the need to control this technology. For instance, Stuart Robbie had been in a position of considerable responsibility and so had had to be contactable by work in the past, while Edith Robbie's job had required her constantly to deal with phone enquiries. Now they had retired they felt more in charge of their own life, which included being free from being 'controlled' by the phone. While their odd jobs required them to phone in to get details occasionally, they steered clear of work where the phone might once again threaten to control their lives. Meanwhile Jack Cifonelli had avoided having an answerphone when he had worked full-time as a social worker, and continued to do so now when in retirement he only did occasional jobs for his old department.

Jack Cifonelli: The point is that if I'm not available, I'm not available. If people know you've got an answerphone, they will then leave a message. My argument is that when I'm away from work, I'm away from work and I do not wish to be contacted. I mean, I've got to the point where even the police have not been able to find me... way back when I was dealing with offenders, quite deliberately. Now that's perhaps a little bit unprofessional but it's survival kit, mate. [Now I've retired] they know at the office if they can't get me then I'm out. And I'm not a full-time officer, therefore I'm not committed to being, as part of the contract, available. My time is my own.

Fred Clough's role as informal caretaker meant that he received many calls, which always seemed to be at awkward times, for instance, during meals. Hence Ivy was now considering taking the phone off the hook. Gwen Evans was amongst those who had a less drastic solution, making arrangements with relatives to avoid phoning at certain times.

Gwen Evans: Well I do ask them not to phone between about half past four and six because I'm cooking the dinner then and I find that a bit of a strain if I'm getting dinner ready and I've got to go to the phone. I never used to but somehow as you get older, you know, you get nervous of cooking, if you're frying fish or... Only my relatives know that, you know. I wouldn't tell anybody else not to but they know me enough to know that I have my dinner about that time.

The same strategy was followed by Joanne Englefield.

Joanne Englefield: I told [my son] Michael that I like to watch the Antiques Roadshow at half past five. Otherwise he jolly well phones always at about 5.35, didn't he? And so he postpones that.

However:

Joanne Englefield: There's an Indian friend that I worked with who - she gets in touch sometimes [during the week] and she persists in phoning about 5.30 because she uses the office phone, you see. That's not always a very convenient time [because of cooking] but I think well, she's kind enough to phone. So I don't say anything. At least I'm there.

The third concern raised about the phone was also one shared with other social groups: the insecurity caused either by obscene and threatening phone calls or by the fear the phone being used to assist break-ins. Muriel Cifonelli noted:

Muriel Cifonelli: [We have what might be called] a feeling of insecurity about telephones because in our other house, when we were a lot younger, I had a whole series of obscene calls that were very objectionable and very difficult to cope with. In the end I threatened to call the police and they stopped. But, you know, I think in a way it's left a kind of a fear of the phone...

Jack Cifonelli: A wariness.

Muriel Cifonelli: A wariness. Not a fear really, but a wariness. It's like having an answerphone; we feel we wouldn't want people to know we weren't here. It's just something from the past. Because Jack's been on the other side of the coin, he does also know how certain people tick on those sort of things, you know - that house might be worth watching. They're never in on such and such a time. So, yes, I mean that is always there. It doesn't bother me but I think Jack's more aware of it than I am.

The Cloughs had received threatening phone calls after Fred's complaints about Council workers, while obscene calls to Ivy had at one stage lead to a police phone tap. Meanwhile, the Englefields had recently gone ex-directory because of their experiences.

Ray Englefield: We've gone ex-directory, you see, because we were burgled 18 months ago. Then we get pestered by people that have picked up our telephone number from the phone directory presumably.

Joanne Englefield: The reason that I linked it with the burglary was because we did have a little spate of the phone going and we picked it up and there was nobody at the other end and all that. So it was probably nothing to do with it but I felt happier going for the ex-directory.

Ray Englefield: Yes, I think it was significant that we had all those calls and there was no one at the other end for about a fortnight before we went on holiday and then we were burgled while we were on holiday.

3.1.6 Beyond the basic phone

Since some of the young elderly were starting to experience a deterioration in their hearing, some phones had special features such as bells to help them hear the phone ringing or amplifiers in the phone. Even so, hearing problems led some people to let their partners deal with the phone more. But even for those without recognised hearing difficulties, less than perfect hearing could affect the introduction of other innovations. For example, several households, such as the Daveys, had acquired and then given up push button phones, reverting to older style dial phones. The problem was that the volume of the ringer on newer phones was too low for them - and so could not be heard from another room. Elsie Davey explained her decision:

Elsie Davey: 'The [handset] upstairs is still a dial one. We bought a push button one to make calls on but they don't ring up in the bedroom. And if you're in bed and you're sound asleep and these [living room] doors are shut, you don't always hear these funny little phones. So we've gone back to the dialling one [up there]. That goes against the grain but there you are. And me push button one is in the cupboard.'

More generally, while the basic phone itself is very significant for the young elderly, many telecom innovations were simply beyond their conceptual horizons. Additional functions or services cost money and were usually not seen as being 'necessary'. Vera Welman summed up sentiments which a number of this sample could have applied to a range of more recent ICT innovations.

Vera Welman: 'I'm sure, you know, that these things are wonderful for people of 20 who are coming up but quite honestly we've lived all our lives without them and I don't find they're necessary at all. I find they're irritating.'

While Rosie Aldridge was not quite so negative, anything beyond the basic phone was an irrelevance:

Rosie Aldridge: 'I like the phone, you know,...if I am in and lonely I have to get on the phone to someone...but other than that I wouldn't want to really go into anything more than just the phone.'

Some of this reaction related both to the economic constraints described above and to their common values established by growing up in periods of austerity. On the whole they were not impulse buyers, and acquisitions had to be justified. Hence the argument phrased in terms of not 'needing' any more facilities rather than not desiring them. They would often point out that they had been without various facilities for all their lives so far and managed. They clearly did not want to experiment too much at this stage. The more common exceptions related to straightforward, minor additions to the basic phone, such as having extra extensions and handsets.

Less than half of the participants used phone memories and features such as redial even if they were present in the handset: many said they could not be bothered to find out how they worked. In some cases, however, there were practical reasons why older forms of design were preferred.

Hilda Shepard: I just don't. I much prefer the dial. (To Chris Shepard) Your one upstairs, I can't use. Well, I can use but I hate using that. I just find I can't...

Chris Shepard: ...can't feel.

Hilda Shepard: No, I've got trouble with my hands and I haven't got a lot of feeling and I really do feel if you could dial, it was so definite, wasn't it.

A few had used BT services very occasionally such as weather or road information, the talking clock, directory enquiries or wake-up calls. Bert Digby, a general technology enthusiast all his life, had used services which told him the cost of calls and one where he could ring back the last person who called - when they left no message on his answerphone. But this was very exceptional. The majority had not used any services.

However, most did possess extensions and second and third handsets in different parts of the house, and usually these had been installed before retirement. They were viewed as 'useful'. For instance, the Williams had fitted their extension 10 years ago when Dorothy took on more responsibility for her parents.

Dorothy Williams: That was when my father was ill, wasn't it? It was mainly because then my mother or somebody could contact me in the night if necessary. It's right by my ear, that one. And, you know, my father wasn't well first of all and then my mother went on for some time like that. So it was an easy contact if necessary during the night. That was mainly why that was put in really because the house isn't that big. We don't need phones all over it. On the other hand, it's useful to have it upstairs if we're upstairs.

When she was alive, the deteriorating health of Frank Payne's wife had led him to install his bedroom extension.

Frank Payne: I had it put in in about '88, just before my wife died, for the simple reason when my wife was in hospital on one occasion the telephone was in here and I went to bed. My wife was taken very bad in hospital and they tried to contact me and I hadn't heard the telephone ring. I was out to the world and the police came and knocked me up and said that the hospital couldn't contact me and that my wife was taking a turn for worse. So I thought to myself "Well I can't have this again." So I had an extension put in. But I had it put in by my nephew who is a Post Office engineer.

Sam Waters had the extension installed in the early 1980s when BT liberalised. This was before jack plugs became common, so a BT service engineer was called

in to hard-wire the extensions and he bought 2 new phones. The motivation for having the extra handsets was that Janice's mobility problems meant that she could not get down the stairs quickly enough to answer the hall phone. More recently, 6 months prior to the interview, the Evans had acquired an extension in the bedroom for similar reasons.

Gwen Evans: Because I'm not terribly mobile now and I thought I'd be safer with another phone. As I say, they're things you look into a bit when you're not very good on your legs.

In fact, if her knees got any worse, Gwen foresaw the day when she might well move to a cordless phone since it would give her even more flexibility. Elsie Davey also felt that she would probably get a cordless as getting up and down from her seat to get to the phone was becoming more difficult. More usually, young elderly such as the Englefields thought that the cordless was still too much of an extravagance.

Ray Englefield: We don't really need a cordless in this house. We've got the three plugs in three convenient spots.

Joanne Englefield: It wouldn't be a bad idea down the garden, would it, a cordless one.

Ray Englefield: That would stop me gardening that would, yeah.

Joanne Englefield: Imagine sitting in the deck chair and having a phone. That would be all right.

Ray Englefield: That's an idea. Yeah, you're talking to your cousin in Australia... "What's the sun like out there?", you know... "It's sunny here too".

The exceptions to the general pattern were usually those who had more familiarity with phone technology and were generally willing to consider a range of new telephonic innovations. For example, Jack Cifonelli had been used to having the phone around since his childhood and they had had a cordless phone for a few years before retirement.

Jack Cifonelli: It was a present from the children 5 or 6 years ago. We thought "Great! Great fun. Lovely!"

Muriel Cifonelli: Well I suppose partly because in this house, which is open plan, you could have (used it to) get away from perhaps the television or...

Jack Cifonelli: You could go upstairs or downstairs or perhaps in the garden or whatever.

Muriel Cifonelli: If conversation was going on, you know, I think this is really what it was for.

Jack Cifonelli: Because there were five adults here so the house was a busy place. If you wanted to have a private conversation it was a bit difficult and that was difficult for all the adults.

In fact, they only reverted to a wired phone because of technical problems with reception and interference from neighbours' phones. Technology enthusiast Bert Digby, and Roger Summers had both been fairly early adopters of the cordless, since 1986 and 1984 respectively. They found it useful when they were working in the garden or garage. However, Bert finally gave his up because of a combination of poor reception and the fact that he had too many extensions on his system. Roger persevered, although the signals to the phone from the base still affected other audio equipment operating in the same room.

Roger Summers: The only problem is when you're recording a play and the phone ringing and the conversation comes out on the radio player on the tape. You know, so you can't record... that's the main disadvantage.

Daphne Summers: If I'm recording it ruins the play if somebody phones halfway through.

Eva Solomon had been brought up with the phone at home. They were the only participants who had considered exploring whether a Mercury line might be cheaper. And they bought their cordless when they retired and found themselves spending more time in the garden.

Eva Solomon: Because I garden a lot and by the time we realise that it's been ringing...I decided it's so easy to trip when you run in and you run in and it just stops ringing, you know.

Nathan Solomon: We did at one stage have a cable but of course it wasn't long enough. It was about, what, 30 feet of cable?

Eva Solomon: But again, it's a difficult... and you can trip. It's a question of security. It's for security so that we don't trip really. Because we spend a fair amount of time in the garden in the summer.

The Solomons were also one of the two households in our study who had an answerphone which they had acquired 3 years ago, after retirement and when the pattern of their lives changed because of the arrival the grandchildren.

Nathan Solomon: Because we had been going to our daughter's and then sometimes our friends would be saying "Well, we rang you but...", you know. And so we thought that it was a good idea to have an answerphone.

Eva Solomon: Everybody else seemed to be having one.

LH: But this was when you were going out more because of your grandchildren, was it?

Eva Solomon: That's right. That's right. I suppose after the last little one was born we were sort of needed more then, you know, when the second child was born.

So apart from their particular circumstances, the fact that the machines had become commonplace in their social circles made it easier for them to contemplate getting one.

The Digbys were the other household to have an answerphone. Something needs to be added about this particular household which was exceptional in that it was very receptive to most new ICTs. Bert Digby had built radios when at school and after the war had run his own radio shop for a while. For many years he was a trade representative selling electronic technology and after retiring from his main job, he helped out in a store selling communication equipment. So he had always had easy access to new technologies at a discount and was familiar with them. He had had CB radio equipment. He had worked on electronics projects with his sons when they were younger, and one worked in the telecommunication business for some time, which gave him access to even more equipment. Now both sons worked with computers, which had opened up that whole field to him, as we shall see later. So his interest in ICTs at this stage of life was simply a continuation of earlier interests, facilitated by his own connections and the support of his children. While not such an enthusiast herself, his wife Mavis was willing to use some of it. For instance, she had a sister in the US who had a fax and was urging them to get one too. Both she and Bert liked the idea of being able to fax letters and baby photos of their new granddaughter, while Bert also saw some use for faxing orders to firms, so they were likely to acquire this technology in the near future. As regards the answerphone, this had been an obvious technology to acquire, Bert's main observation being that amongst his peers there was still some considerable resistance to leaving messages.

Lastly, the Robbies were planning to get an answerphone. While Edith Robbie's mother had lived with them she could take messages. But she had now gone to a home for the elderly. Meanwhile, they had taken on part-time jobs that took them out every day and they needed to be contactable for work messages. But at their stage of life they wanted a very basic machine with few features.

Edith Robbie: So we want [it to be] idiot-proof, you see.

Stuart Robbie: We just want something simple. Something the dog could work, you know.

The more common response to the idea of answerphones was that they were unnecessary because people would ring back if they really wanted to make contact. Others pointed to the cost of having to phone someone back, and many, like Dorothy Williams, supported Bert Digby's observations: she did not like dealing with answering machines when she phoned other people, and for that reason did not like the idea of having one in the house.

Daphne Summers: Oh I don't like them at all really, no. I spoke to one this morning to my friend. It's her birthday today and I phoned her up down at Thorpe Bay and quite expected to sort of say "Oh hello. Happy Birthday" and one thing and another, you know, and I got her answerphone and I was going "Oh!", you know, sort of thing. No, I like a person to person relationship. I don't like answerphones.

The Williams household illustrated the impediments to innovations even amongst those young elderly predisposed to telecoms. George Williams used to be an engineer with BT and was unusual amongst this group in the extent to which he liked the idea of having certain technologies - he was more open to experimentation. For instance, he was interested in having a handsfree phone.

George Williams: I'm thinking I'd like one with a loudspeaker, with, you know, an amplifier so that if you're talking on the phone, if two of you want to hear what the other one's saying, it's possible, isn't it?

LH: Would that be useful for something specific like talking to the children or something like that?

George Williams: No, just a gimmick that I would like.

Dorothy Williams: I'm not bothered about that at all. But also you're going a bit deaf so you seem to think it might help as well. I don't know how loud it goes.

George Williams: I don't think so. It's just a question of being able to hear what the other one is saying virtually.

Dorothy Williams: That doesn't bother me. If I want to, if you're hearing the conversation this end, you can usually get the gist of what's going on anyway.

And on the cordless phone:

Dorothy Williams: We talk about things but we don't bother very much about getting all the latest things, I must admit. Again we've talked about cordless, haven't we?

George Williams: Both my sons have got these things and they're very useful. I mean, if you're working in the garden or something like that, you can just have it handy, can't you?

Dorothy Williams: The only thing about those, I find that... when we're at Peter's, for instance, there seem to be phones all over the place over there, I never know which one to answer. There's sort of a phone here and a phone there and which one's ringing, sort of thing. He's a GP that one so I suppose he needs, when he's on call and that, he has to have phones at the ready. But I

would have to get that sorted out over there. They always seem to know which ones to go for.

As with other age groups, there were some particularly negative critical responses to the mobile phone, as expressed by Vera Welman.

Vera Welman: I hate it. I'm dead against it. I think it's an intrusion not only into your life but into other people's lives. I think it's awful when you see people standing in the middle of the street having a conversation. I don't like it on trains and [my son] Trevor even had somebody have a personal call during a lecture one day. You know, I think it's dreadful.

However, the most common reaction to the idea of a mobile phone was that it had never been considered and would be irrelevant. Although the mobile might have been more useful for some, like the Daveys who spent some time each week travelling to their second home in the country, it was still far too expensive for them to even consider. The cost of rental and usage even deterred enthusiast Bert Digby from getting one, although he was critical of the reception as well.

Although no-one had a mobile phone, a few had thought about them, more so the women. Ray Englefield resisted the mobile on the grounds of cost, but Joanne saw its safety, emergency role.

Joanne Englefield: [It would be useful] especially if you broke down or like these awful things you read in the paper, people doing all these things.

Edith Robbie had made enquiries to the AA about mobiles while working as a fleet car controller. While positive about them, especially for women driving alone, the cost was a deterrent to purchase.

Edith Robbie: Yes, a mobile would be very good. I'm not sure that we'll have one but I think it is a good idea.

Stuart Robbie: [But we have to] watch cost to the extent of saying "Do I really need this?", you know.

Muriel Cifonelli was also sensitive to the mobile phones emergency role, although it was clear that she had never talked to Jack about this before - arguing that there was no point discussing it since she could not foresee them actually getting a mobile.

Muriel Cifonelli: I'd like a phone in my van actually. I'm never likely to have one but I'd like one.

LH: Why would you like one?

Jack Cifonelli: Would you like one?

Muriel Cifonelli: Oh because we camp in it and it would be very convenient. It's not convenient always when you're camping to find a telephone to phone family.

LH: One of the reasons why people have mobile phones is travelling-related; you know, breakdowns or being somewhere on time and getting stuck in traffic.

Muriel Cifonelli: Oh yes, oh yes, I've definitely thought of that. I've broken down a couple of times recently on my own on motorways, yes. I've been lucky enough to be reasonably near a phone but I think it would be a brilliant idea, yeah. Yes, I do agree with that. I tell you where I think it would be acceptable; when I drive home from Hitchin to here, when I'm on the A1(M), that's lovely because there's telephones every mile along the motorway, but when you come off of that at Welham, Welham Green, and you drive from there home...

Jack Cifonelli: It's all country roads.

Muriel Cifonelli: ... if you think about it, there is absolutely no way of contacting anyone if you broke down except for breaking into somebody's house but there's not houses all the way along either. You know, I often think about it. I often think, you know, supposing I did break down. What would I do? I've often thought of it when I've been driving. I mean, that's just an example but... particularly when I've been on my own. Not so much when you're with someone else because, I don't know, you can give each other courage. But by yourself it's quite a frightening thing to be broken down, not knowing how to contact anyone.

Jack Cifonelli: Food for thought.

Muriel Cifonelli: [We're] rolling in money. You can buy one for me tomorrow. (laughs)

Jack Cifonelli: No promises but it's worth... I mean, if that's how you feel about it, it's worth... it's time we thought about it. I really mean that.

Frank Payne noted that he would have bought a mobile phone when his wife was ill had they been more available - since being contactable was important then. In his current circumstances it was no longer necessary.

Frank Payne: I don't think so. It's more vanity I think... for me anyway. I don't say that they're not essential with business people or people that lead a much more active life than me but it's keeping up with the Jones's, kind of thing - that's all it would be [for me].

Finally, although Bert Digby would not consider mobile phones because they were too expensive to run, on retiring from his main occupation and helping out in an electronic shop, he had used CB in part as if it was a mobile phone.

Bert Digby: If I went on a long journey it was nice to just CB the band as you went along and the CB would be picked up. You'd pick up a local, chat to him for a little while until he got out of range. I also used to contact the shop and if I went anywhere, I could tell Mavis to leave the base station on and, you know, when I was coming back home I'd say, you know, "leaving the office now, dear", you know on the CB.

Bert had also got used to operating the fax in the shop and was one of the few to foresee social uses for this technology.

Bert Digby: Because Mavis's sister is all rigged [up with a fax] in the States and it would be nice to send pictures of the baby and fax letters rather than send them. Well, I could also fax an order to a mail order firm and what have you. Yeah, I'd have a fax.

3.2 The Computer

3.2.1 Experience of computers at work

On the whole, the young elderly were not of the computer generation: office automation came into their work too late in their lives or not at all. Since work use of computers can have a bearing upon the meaning of, familiarity with, and interest in, this technology it is worth developing a more detailed picture of the prior work experiences of this group. In fact, there are differences depending on age and the nature of past work. Since the age range of the young elderly covers a spectrum, office automation came at slightly different points in their life.

First there were those who had had no contact with computers, either because they had been involved in manual, working class jobs, like the Griffiths or Cloughs, or had held positions, such as Company Secretary Stuart Robbie, in a firm where only junior staff dealt with the machines. For the older ones in this cohort, now nearing 75, such as Sam Waters and George Williams who had worked for BT or Gwen Evans who had worked in hospital administration, office automation did not arrive until after they retired.

Then there were those who had actively tried to avoid computers because they were very near retirement age and did not want to have to take on new ways of working and learn computing skills at this stage. This had been the response of Jim Grant working in insurance and of Roger Summers, a consulting engineer.

Roger Summers: The firm was [getting computerised] but I wasn't. I was still using my slide rule. I couldn't at that age assimilate it. It was completely foreign and quite beyond me. I wouldn't have known the first thing about them.

Joanne Englefield had also decided to leave the social security office work in order to avoid taking computer courses at work:

Joanne Englefield: Well I suppose if I had been that much younger and therefore thinking in terms of staying out at work that much longer and I really put my thoughts to it, I probably would [have managed to cope]. But I thought that people used to say that if you were over 40 it was jolly difficult picking it all up, wasn't it?... When that was all brought in, people were sent on... I mean, even if you were 64 and going to retire the following year, you were still sent on the course. You couldn't get out of it at all in the Civil Service. What one did they all had to do. No... It's bad enough as you get older and find out all the things you can't do without trying to do new things and finding out you can't do those as well.

For others, computerisation generated an interest in the technology, but not much practice at using it. Both Eva Solomon and Muriel Cifonelli were teachers in their mid-50s when computers first started coming into schools in early 1980s. At that time they had expected to continue working for some years and so went on computer training courses. In practice, there were delays in introducing computers into their schools and both ended up taking unexpected early retirement. Ray Englefield had taken up a computer course late in his career but found keeping pace with the new technology to be difficult.

Ray Englefield: Because we were installing them in the office and I wanted to know what was going on, you know. I was responsible for the administration of quite a large office.

LH: Couldn't you rely on your technical advisers?

Ray Englefield: Yes, but I was interested in the technicalities. I was quite intrigued as to how the thing worked and programming and that sort of thing. I didn't become an expert on computers. I understood them. I could do a little bit of programming. I knew what they all meant but towards the end the pace of computerisation was quite fast and I was then in my 60's and I just couldn't be bothered to keep up with it. But I didn't need to, you see, in my position.

Meanwhile, as telesales staff, Frank Payne first became interested in computers when they were introduced at work - although he himself never had the chance to use one.

Frank Payne: When they got individual PCs on the desks, that's when I got interested. One reason why I lost a bit of interest because at the time the printing used to be a bit small and with my eyes, I couldn't I still find it with my television, you get some printing come up and I can't read it, you know, because it's a bit small.

Finally, there were those who had used computers at work. Penny Hawkins had been a mainframe programmer since the 1960s, while Nathan Solomon, a

polytechnic lecturer in engineering, took up mainframe programming much later in his career. Neither, though, had ever dealt with PCs. As a chartered surveyor working in the Civil Service, Greg McLean had seen the more gradual introduction of computers 10 years before he retired and so he had had no problem getting used to the machines. Those at the younger end of this cohort, in their mid-60s, were the ones most likely to have become familiar with computers at work, such as Edith Robbie who controlled a fleet of cars, Elsie Davey working in administration, Albert Welman who used computers in the hospital laboratory and Chris Shepard who had first encountered computers in his late 50s when working as a newspaper editor. Both Elsie Davey and Chris Shepard took unexpected early retirement, so when they were learning computer skills they had expected to work more years than they did in practice. Meanwhile, technology enthusiast Bert Digby had got his first opportunity to deal with computers when an Amstrad word-processor was used in the shop where he worked after retiring from his main full-time career at 60.

Kitty Tarrant was the main exception, returning to part-time work after being retired for a few years once her husband died. Only then, in her late 60s, did she learn word-processing.

Kitty Tarrant: Someone said to me the other day, you know, you don't expect someone of my age to be using a word processor, you know. I think it's that I've always been a typist and after my husband died, after a while, I wanted some work and that's the only work I know - typing. And I was going temping and the work for ordinary typists was getting less and less and less and everyone was wanting WP operators, you know, so I did this course... that was WordPerfect. But it did give me an insight into computers, you know. Then I went to this firm and I got moved onto this DW4 and I've sort of picked that up really.

LH: Did it get you interested in computers more generally?

Kitty Tarrant: Yes, it did because I didn't know anything about them before because when I stopped work, the firm that I was with, they just had typewriters. There was a computer but that was just for the marketing manager to use. So I'd been at home for three years, you know, and I was right out of it really. I didn't know anything about computers. They'd come in more and more...

3.2.2 Home computers

As might be expected, those who had not come into contact with computers at work or had actively avoided them had least interest in acquiring a home machine. Often they had never considered getting one and doubted whether they would be able to master a PC. Even those who had had some training, such as ex-teacher Elsie Solomon, did not feel they could operate a PC now. Nathan Solomon had used the mainframe when he was still working but at that time PCs were still too expensive to buy for the home. Although he now had access to his son's

microcomputer, he thought that learning how to use the new machine would involve so much effort that it was not worthwhile.

Where some interest in computers had been sparked by work, there were still barriers to acquiring a home machine. Sam Waters had been a project manager at BT responsible for introducing more computing into his section, although he had not used the machines himself. Since then, he had shown some interest in them as technologies but thought that having missed out on the early years of PCs it now might be difficult to make a start finding out about them.

Sam Waters: It does interest me. Yes, I would like to know more about but I just haven't got round to doing it, that's all. I would like to have a computer but when I go to the library there's so many books about it, one gets befuddled by exactly which book to start me off from basics, because I've got to start off from basics.

Even if people had experience of computers at work, it did not follow that they wanted a home PC. Penny Hawkins noted that in the 1980s the other younger programmer colleagues had been interested in getting the new home computers, but even at that stage she was older and less interested.

Penny Hawkins: I was quite old in comparison to all the others. I didn't get into computers until I was in my 30s, which is when they were starting... you know, starting the modern sort of computer age in '61. I mean, in '61, when I first started in computers, I was 34. So I mean that's quite old to be starting. So I mean I was in my 50's, when I was working over here in them, so I was like maybe 20 years older than most of the people that were working in it and they were the ones that were so enthusiastic. I don't think us older ones were.

Others, such as the Robbies, had considered getting PCs, but ultimately could not see that they would be useful enough to justify purchase. The Englefields had at one stage been prompted by their son.

Ray Englefield: We looked into it when Lawrence was at university. He was keen for us to have one. I think in the end he wanted one to play around with at home but he couldn't really think... and I couldn't really think of a reason for having it.. I remember my son saying "Well you can keep your bank statements on it, Dad. I said "Well I've got a bank to do that".

Joanne Englefield: And he said "What you put in your diary, you can put on your..." He was trying to get (you to get one).

Ray Englefield: But I don't think I've missed the computer now I've retired. It's obviously very useful at work but I can't think of any use for it when you've retired unless you're going to write a book, I suppose.

Despite his interest in PCs, Sam Waters also failed to find enough useful applications to justify getting one.

Sam Waters: I often say "Now what information do I need for storage and retrieval in my life at this stage? What would I use it for?"

LH: You can't think of anything?

Sam Waters: Not a great deal. Maybe for income tax purposes. But that's about all. There isn't a great deal generally in our life that we would, in general terms, that we would use it for and we're not into playing games. I don't think that we would want to do our shopping by computer. I don't think we would want to be in a bank that does our banking by computer here.

LH: Why's that?

Sam Waters: I don't think we need to because as old people, we know roughly what our income is, we know how much money we've got generating more money...not a great deal. So consequently, our income is not dependent on our skills basically. We're not producing anything as such. So consequently our income is rather steady so it gives almost a plodding fashion. Got a few shares in BT and in one or two others but I mean the amount of money they have produced is negligible really. That's all deducted at source. So apart from doing Income Tax forms once a year or storing information for Income Tax purposes... I don't think there's a great deal except for interest's sake.

Arguably, for those who were more actively involved in the community, for example, serving on committees of various bodies, the computer could have been useful for holding and processing the various administrative data generated. But they did not think this worthwhile, nor even word-processing - most felt that they could cope with such things as correspondence and reports using their old basic typewriters where they did not have to learn new skills. In running their various folk dance groups and keeping track of the details of dances and music, the McLeans maintained a considerable amount of material in notebooks and papers which in principle could be based in a computer, but it was too much hassle to make the transition.

Maureen McLean: It would be an excellent idea but I don't think I could face transferring all the pile of stuff I've got for dances onto a computer.

Nor did work, nor other kinds of voluntary work, necessarily justify getting or using a computer. Edith Robbie used to operate them at work now would not consider turning to word-processing as a part-time job.

Edith Robbie: I couldn't stand it any more. I couldn't stand it any more. I'd worked so long... In fact, I think they're extremely bad for your eyesight. After working on them for a long time, you're staring at these screens all the time. I'm quite happy not to be staring at a screen all the time. Oh no, not any more.

Although Penny Hawkins had volunteered to work in an adult literacy programme, she would not be drawn back into computing.

Penny Hawkins: People were always sort of trying to get me involved with computers but I didn't really want to know. I mean, I knew nothing about personal computers anyway and so, you know, I wouldn't have been much good anyway probably. [They were] so different. Absolutely different. I mean, I didn't know one end of a floppy disc from the other. I still don't because we never had anything to do with floppy discs. [Plus] I sort of made a mental vow to myself when I quit that that was it. I was never going to have anything to do with computers again. It was a bit silly. I was being a bit silly really but I sort of half meant it and I've more or less kept to it.

If we look at the history of home computers, apart from being bought for doing some kind of work at home, telework or extra work brought home from the office, the other common route by which PCs entered the home was as a resource for the children or for all the family. On the whole, the children of this cohort were the wrong age when computers became popular from the early 1980s. They were either already adults or in their late teens when computers arrived in school or else were embraced enthusiastically for games-playing - mostly by slightly younger children. Only Bert Digby's children had shown significant interest in computers while still at school, and noone's children appeared to have been caught up in the games boom.

Now, a few of our participants thought they might acquire a computer sometime in the future. Ex-lecturer Nathan Solomon was a little half-hearted since it would be difficult to learn, but sometimes considered getting a PC for word-processing.

Nathan Solomon: Just the ordinary little letters. I don't know. Just because I feel it's stupid not being able to use the thing.

Following the interest that he had shown at work, Frank Payne would have liked a computer at home some years ago when his wife was still alive.

Frank Payne: Why did it appeal? Because I could see a lot of entertainment [potential]... not so much business but entertainment - learning things and as a centre of learning but entertainment-wise. I wanted one for many years but my good lady was against it. At that time I could see her point. She said "You're using it through the television. It's going to have an effect on the television and I don't want you to have an effect on it." Leaving it on and constantly using it and all that kind of thing, it was her idea that we'd basically burn the tube out at those times. But of course she got her way and I didn't get one so I thought, oh well, leave it as it is.

LH:' But you could have always bought a cheap second-hand TV.

Frank Payne: Oh agreed, but, no, so... and I'm not one to argue or row over a thing like that.

Frank still sometimes thought about buying a computer. He already had ideas about what he would do with a PC if he had one.

Frank Payne: I would like it for ... where I'm involved in different things like my lunch club as well, my tenants association, where you have to a) write notices, b) letters or such like, you could put it all on record. I could do the accounts and put it all on a floppy disc or whatever they call it and you've got it, you know, and enter it each week as you do the accounts and, you know, sort out whatever the coding is and put it on there. You haven't got to do all this writing and ledgers and all that kind of thing.

Lastly, there were those few who had or used to have machines. Although office automation really came in after Dorothy and George Williams had retired, George had bought a Sinclair ZX81 kit in 1981, the year before he retired.

LH: So why did you get it initially?

George Williams: Mainly because my son was anxious to have it. It seemed a good thing at the time, you know. I can't remember how much it was at the time but when it came out it was like the C5, you know, it was something that you wanted to have.

Dorothy Williams: You and Malcolm wanted the challenge of making it together, didn't you?

George Williams: Well this sort of thing didn't exist unless you made it yourself at that time.

Dorothy Williams: Yeah, but it was a challenge to make it as well.

Neither George nor his son actually learned to program the computer. The only time the machine was used was when his son typed in a few games. When the son left home, the computer went into the loft. Now, the Williams' had no interest in computers or games.

Vera Welman had bought Albert an Amstrad 8256 as a 60th birthday present five years earlier. He had bought no additions since, and was not involved in clubs or reading computer magazines. But it proved very functional and he used his machine most days for word-processing. He wrote his essays on it for a diploma course at the university, printed out reading rotas for the local church, produced any formal letters on the machine and played at word-processing stories with his grandson. Vera had nothing to do with the computer.

The Cifonellis first bought their Commodore 64 in 1983 when in their mid-50s because they were exceptional in still having younger teenage children at school.

Muriel Cifonelli: Just one of those things that you do, you know. The sales are put there and you buy and you don't think it through. It was just something

that was around and you bought it and I don't actually think it was very good, to be honest.

Having had some computer training as a teacher, she was willing to receive an Amstrad word-processing computer 4 years ago as a present to replace the old typewriter. This was the only instance where a computer had become integrated into domestic life, where Muriel used it to follow up her various interests, including patchwork and quilting.

Muriel Cifonelli: I think it was simply because it would be so much easier really to store things rather than have to keep re-typing them or taking them somewhere to get them duplicated or... I mean, it's been used a hell of a lot. It's always being used. It's used almost every day...correspondence and lists and I write stories and work out theories on them. All sorts of things it's used for. I have done geometric drawing on them using the letters. It's better than nothing.

The computer was located in the craft room on the floor above the living room:

Muriel Cifonelli: Because it's quiet and peaceful up there and all my books are up there.

Jack Cifonelli: It's part of the craft room equipment, put it that way.

Muriel Cifonelli: I mean they're so noisy when they print off, for example, aren't they? They're irritating really. And I'm quite happy up there on my own.

The adult daughter who lived with them also used Muriel's machine for some of her university essays although that was sufficiently rarely that it did not create many problems of competing for access. Her adult son who lived with them sometimes asked her to put some information on the machine and she was also asked to do the odd thing for the local parish once they knew that she had this facility.

Muriel was quite interested in computer art packages, and sometimes she experimented with her other son's machine when she visited him in Sevenoaks. She would have liked to have a more sophisticated machine, but could not foresee herself actually using her own money to buy one

Muriel Cifonelli: I did lots of courses of doing artwork on computers and I would love to be able to do artwork on a computer. I don't think it's the ultimate. It has lots of restrictions. It's not quite the same as free drawing but I'd still like... love to be able to do it. And to be able to print it in colour of course. I mean, the whole thing. You know, the thousands and thousands of pounds I'd love, I would actually love it. But I'm not going to sell the house and buy one so don't worry about it. But I've loved it when I've done it. I've thoroughly enjoyed it and so many designs and things you could work out which would be less laborious than doing it all by hand and then re-doing them and changing them and adding this colour and adding that colour.

Yeah, I think it would be worth... for me, it would be valuable but I'm never likely to do it, so...

Their son occasionally bought computer magazines and when they went into department stores the Cifonellis would often have a look at developments in the computer section. But to some extent Muriel felt she had lost touch compared to the period when she was learning about computers at school.

Jack Cifonelli: It's trying to work your way through that maze of compatibility.

Muriel Cifonelli: Yes, you see the whole point about the computers is that when I was teaching and doing all these courses then, I knew what I was talking about. I don't any more. It's all died. It's died because I haven't used it. It's died because it's moved on a long way. It's of no value to me. I'd have to start all over again. You know, that's what I feel really. And my other complaint of computers in general is that the workbooks that go with them could be so much more simplified than they are. I mean, they take a page and a half to say 'press button 7', you know, and it's just ridiculous. I mean, people don't want to know how they work. They just want to know what to do.

Finally, technology enthusiast Bert Digby had embraced computers amongst his other ICTs. He too had made up an early ZX81 kit in 1981 and on retiring from his main job, bought the same Amstrad word-processor that was used in the shop where he continued to work for a few years. While one of his sons was still at home, he too had used the machine, mostly for tasks set by his father. In recent years Bert had graduated to an Apricot. He still found learning all the new skills difficult, but both his sons now worked in computing, and one ran a phone helpline - so Bert received a substantial amount of support when he had a problem, which was fairly regularly. He handled all his correspondence on the machine and encouraged his wife Mavis to do the same, and he had his list of outstanding 'jobs to do' which he consulted every day. He experimented with designs to produce covers for his music appreciation society documents, and kept an on-going record of all the music they had heard. Many an evening was spent simply playing with the various features of Word to see what effects could be achieved. And, for this summer when he and Mavis were going to the US to visit her sister, he already had his shopping list of better DTP software, a scanner and modem and a CD-ROM since they were cheaper there. His next ambition was to get on the Internet, which he had heard about. As an ex-sales representative, he had a very particular interest in being able to access firms' catalogues of technology to see what was available and what he might like to buy.

3.2.3 Interactive games

The Englefields actually remembered playing with the early pre-programmed TV games of the 1970s which pre-dated the home computer and video consoles.

Joanne Englefield: I can remember when we bought a new television and were given an electronic game that went on it and we thought that was exciting. Do you remember? It was table tennis. My word, now it seems very silly.

Ray Englefield: We were given one as a gimmick to buy this television set. The bloke said "Oh, well we're giving all the games away" and this was the game. You could play table tennis on it and there was something else.

Joanne Englefield: That's right. I thought they were jolly good. Didn't you?

Ray Englefield: Yes, it was quite amusing, yes.

Joanne Englefield: Yeah, well it was the sort of things in those days, if somebody came we used to say "Shall we play it?" But I suppose it all died a natural death in the end.

Ray Englefield: We went on for quite a long time, didn't we, with visitors and that sort of thing and when the children came.

Most of this cohort, however, showed no interest in games, nor had ever played them. Dorothy Williams expressed a frequently held view:

Dorothy Williams: I don't know what they're doing. I see my grandson messing about with it but I don't know what he's supposed to be doing. They do all these things and I look on but I don't really understand.

A few, like the Englefields, had been invited to play their grandchildren's games.

Joanne Englefield: Well, we used to go up and have a look, didn't we?

Ray Englefield: Yes, well we had one or two games. He says "Can you do that in five minutes?" or something or do a certain score or something like and we would sort of fumble along but, I mean... and Mike would say "Ah, this is how you do it" and brmmm, you know, sort of competition element among themselves.

Kitty Tarrant had also tried them.

Kitty Tarrant: Well I'm not as quick as they are. For one thing, they use them more often than I do. For another thing, I don't pick them up very quick. But they let me play with them now and again.

Since the Cifonelli's own children had played games on the computer when young, Muriel was more familiar with them. She had herself played 'The Hobbit' on the Commodore 64 but had never been interested in the mainstream action games demanding reflexes. She had played some educational hand-held games with her grandson. She could foresee that as their own grandchildren aged they might in future years be asked by them to join in playing the more, in vogue, popular games.

Neither Bert Digby nor his sons had ever shown much interest in the mainstream arcade type of game, although his sons did pass on some simulations which he found more interesting. It may be more appropriate to say that they employed more recognisable and, in that sense, familiar skills and goals.

Bert Digby: I'm not going to say that these arcade games don't need skill but to me it's all pointless shooting bugs off a thingummy, you know. No, anything that needs a bit of skill like this golf game, you've actually got to decide on the position you're going to address the ball, the distance to the hole, how much back-spin you're going to put on and all this sort of thing and so that is a game, in my opinion,... there's some purpose in it. Yeah, I'll go for games like that but I wouldn't spend all my time playing games, no. No, I want to be doing things with the computer, making it do things for me.

Elsie Davey was in an exceptional position because her adult son had the mental age of a child. In many ways, they still had to act as if they were parents to a young child when he came to stay with them at weekends. Last Christmas they had bought him a Nintendo and some games and Elsie had to show him how to play them - which meant that she learnt herself.

Elsie Davey: Oh we did go up there one day and we played one ...what was it called - Street Fighter? Yeah, that had like chains that you see them pick up and swing round. Me and Lynn was up there. And different things, stones and that and of course I've gone "Oh I'll pick this up a treat" and he was still trying to find out and when I run out of all my villains, I had a go at him. And he's saying "Oy, oy..." I'm chasing him on the screen and whacked him, knocked him down and I was... Oh we couldn't stop laughing. Like a pair of kids like, you know. Couldn't stop laughing. He's shouting out "Oy, oy, that's me you're hitting." Yeah I enjoyed that one.

The Cloughs provided another example where the young elderly could take an interest in video games. For Ivy, who spent much of her time at home, did not read much and was often bored, they fulfilled much the same role as the jigsaw puzzles and puzzle books which her husband had recently bought for her.

Fred Clough: It's me that started her off with these puzzle things. I started getting them and she took over so I just dropped them.

Ivy Clough: They're something to do, aren't they? Mind you, I used to do a jigsaw, but it used to get to me so much that I wouldn't go to bed until it was finished. I'd be up all night. I'd done a lot and I thought "No, I can't keep on doing this." I'd stay up all night until the jigsaw was finished.

Later when the conversation touched on computers:

Fred Clough: The only thing she likes in anything like that is them little toy things where you keep pressing the buttons.

Ivy Clough: What the children play with, I wouldn't mind one of them.

Fred Clough: We got on the van the other day and the conductor had one on the journey home and she said "Can I borrow it?"

LH: What appeals about that? Why do you like it?

Ivy Clough: I don't know. I suppose it's fascinating because I can never get it, what they want, can I? The first I see it was when I went down to my daughter at Canvey Island and the grandson had one and I said "Oh, let's have a game." But he could always do it and he could get it but I couldn't. But I used to have to keep on trying.

LH: You don't get frustrated then?

Ivy Clough: No, no, I just like to try more and more.

LH: So are you going to buy yourself one?

Fred Clough: I offered to buy her one and she wouldn't have it.

Ivy Clough: Well they're a bit expensive, aren't they, to sit and play with indoors.

3.3 Conclusion

This cohort had to learn to use the phone in the same way that subsequent generations are now learning to use the computer. The innovation process - always social and always dependent on the capacity of end users to define their own relationship to a new technology - is a familiar one. For many the first experience of the telephone was at work and the skills associated with answering and speaking on it were learnt there. Otherwise the pressures to adopt the telephone came from the increasing unsatisfactory nature of public phones, as well as the increasing numbers of those in their social networks that were already subscribers, together with the need to keep in touch with their own elderly parents. Such a pattern of adoption was both the product of, and of course reinforced by, the creeping privatisation of the post-war period.

Yet the discomforts and uncertainties of those trained in a more literary age remain. The transition to the secondary oral world of personal communication which the telephone initiated is still problematic. While most have accustomed themselves to the kind of communication on which the telephone insists, some still need the time to compose their thoughts and others, whose access to a domestic phone was delayed for one reason or another, still have not developed the socio-technical skills necessary to use it effectively or comfortably.

Some reflect on their own parents' resistance and remember their own, though more manageable, unfamiliarity and anxieties when confronted with such a powerful communication device. They reflect, too, on their own domestic use, beginning with

the establishment of their own households in the fifties, and recall how their own children became entirely, and what seemed naturally, comfortable with a technology that fitted perfectly into the structures and rituals of, especially, adolescence. Their lives with their phones, as indeed their lives with all their information and communication technologies, have altered through the life cycle, dependent on the shifting demands of children at home or away, on the shifting geographies of extended family life and on the decline and increasing dependence of their own parents.

Retirement quite clearly marked a significant moment of transition in the household's use of the phone. The intensification of domestic life, the new demands of home based activities, the decreasing willingness or ability to travel far or undertake local journeys on foot or in the car, the growing isolation and lack of stimulation that follows from decreasing participation in public life - or, for some, the perceived need to resist their effects - have together made the phone a much more important technology than before retirement for most of the households in our study. Whether it is to use the phone to connect with public culture through participation in radio phone-ins, or to use the phone as an aid for shopping, or whether there is a shift in telephone use as a consequence of the withdrawal of work access, retirement brings with it a new set of functional demands for the phone to fulfil, and also a new or intensified set of conflicts around the, mostly still gendered, access to, and use of, the phone at home.

Retirement, as we have noted, is not a static phase in people's lives. Elderly parents and siblings die, children move away or, however briefly, return home. Neighbours, in their turn, move or pass away. Financial as well as physical pressures increasingly limit mobility. The telephone becomes increasingly central, supplementing, reinforcing, replacing other forms of communication, and illustrating in an increasingly intensive way, its contrary duality: the capacity both to connect and disconnect, to integrate and isolate. There is no doubt that with retirement and increasing age the telephone becomes increasingly important and dependence upon it is also increased. One of our respondents would prefer to give up the car before the telephone. Its status as a lifeline is not in doubt.

Yet that status is by no means unproblematic. Relationships to the phone may have to be renegotiated and the character of recognizably gendered use may as a consequence change, as men have come home and occupied a more feminine domestic position in the household culture. Increasing anxiety and insecurities in relation to personal safety, fuelled perhaps by their dependence on media reports of increasingly dangerous public spaces as well as their own gossip networks and their own experience, again push many towards greater dependence on it. Costs are still a factor encouraging many to find out about, and use, cheaper rates, though the overall cost is often set against the greater costs of travel. At the same time use is conservative. Few have access too, or desire, advanced services. Faxes and answerphones are rare, though cordless phones and extra extensions, enabling for those whose mobility around the house is decreasing, are being installed or seriously thought about. On the other hand hardness of hearing is not served by the present generation of beeping phones: equally such deafness provides a source of domestic tension when telephone calls and other media compete for audio space.

It has taken, plausibly, a generation or two for the phone to become a taken-for-granted and essential technology in everyday life. For some in our study their full participation in telephone culture, at least from a home base, only began in the late sixties, and for others only the necessity of keeping in contact with elderly parents or the management of their own frailty forced them, quite late in life, to welcome the technology to their home. But the presence of the phone in the home is only part of the story. Just as significant are the complex social relations that have formed round it, that shift through the life-cycle, and that are still subject to negotiation and resistance.

This is even more the case, of course, with the home computer. This is perhaps the last generation who will have little or no contact or truck with the computer. Very few will have had experience of computing at work, and for some, particularly the professionals in our study, the arrival of the computer was a factor encouraging them to think of retirement in a more deliberate way. For the most part their children were not facilitators, for they grew up before computers entered schools or the culture at large. One or two in our study, involved in engineering as a result of their wartime experiences in communications, did however bring home computer kits in the early eighties, but in only one case did this lead to a continuing interest and competence in what at the time of the study was a desire to get a modem and hook up to the Internet. In the other case, it seemed that the computer could provide something important for retirement, but the cost, the fear of the incomprehensibility of the manual, and general diffidence, mitigated against taking the major step to purchase. This diffidence, what Turkle (1988) describes as computer reticence, is generational not gendered, and, predictably, it is wide-spread. Computer games were not, perhaps equally predictably, significant components of leisure time of the young elderly.

The telephone and the computer both then, arguably, offer a distinct set of technological potentialities for the home. They share a requirement that users develop a distinct competence in relation to them. The difficulties of doing so are historically and culturally relative. The phone was once as perplexing and threatening socially as the computer is now, though of course there are real differences in the range of skills required to make full use of their potential. However, even in relation to the phone other studies have noted how relatively little the full range of features of even a modestly sophisticated handset are actually used, and this under-employment is a familiar story in computing. Perhaps the telephone has not, for this cohort, been fully domesticated. The computer, certainly, barely makes an impression. Radio and television are, however, another story, and it is to their significance in the everyday lives of the young elderly that we now turn.

4. Audio-Visual ICTs and the Young Elderly

4.1 Audio

4.1.1 Early experience: radio and the gramophone

Although the young elderly all experienced some of their childhood before the war, they were of different ages when radios first started to become a mass market product, and so there was some variation in first experiences. In fact, several of our sample, such as Greg McLean and Eddy Evans, had not had access to radios before the war when they were young. Rosie Aldridge only encountered one when in her teens during the war. And while most of the sample who had radios had some memories of them, not all had been interested or listened much. Radio was never significant in Jim Grant's youth since he preferred to be outdoors, and Roger Summers had different tastes from his parents - they were not keen on the comedy programmes he liked - and so he had not paid much attention to their choices.

The majority had some earlier experience of radio, although they met it in different guises: as crystal sets, radios with accumulators, 'relay' radios and, finally, mains-powered ones. These different radio technologies had different properties and while some people progressed through them, others leapfrogged straight to the more advanced forms, as did George Williams whose first radio was a mains-powered set.

Many of the early crystal sets were either made by our participants, such as Bert Digby, or, more often, by their parents. These were for individual listening via earphones. Lucy Griffith recalled the excitement of her first encounter with one.

Lucy Griffith: I remember that's the first time I heard a wireless. Me brother got it and he said "Put that in your ear." So then I put it in me ears and I could hear this music coming over. When you look back and you see and you think of the stuff today. It's marvellous, isn't it?

As Janice Waters noted, this technology was still unreliable:

Janice Waters: Yeah, my grandfather used to sit there and just as there was something you wanted to listen to, you know, if the news came on, he'd... the blessed cats whisker would jump off and he missed it.

That unreliability itself could lead to some rules about noise, as Bert Digby recalled:

Bert Digby: We had to keep quiet whilst the music was on that was for sure but that was mainly because of the quality of the sets. Father listened to the

news on headsets and it was very hit and miss because of the old cat's whisker and when he got it, if you made a noise you'd had it.

The other most common radio was the one driven by a battery, known as an 'accumulator'. In many of our participants' early houses there was no electricity, and lighting was still by gas. Often they recalled that it was the children's job to take the accumulator away to be charged up - and some weeks there was not enough spare money to afford radio. Dorothy Williams remembered how battery technology meant that the radio always threatened to run down while in use.

Doris: Much to my sort of horror, if in the middle of something, it all died on you, you know, and you needed it all re-charging. I can remember going backwards and forwards with these - they used to be in a holder - to where they used to charge the batteries.

Both Penny Hawkins and Rosie Aldridge had relay radios where the music was delivered from outside by wire.

Rosie Aldridge: The first wireless we had was with the accumulators. There was always an argument who was going to go and get the accumulators. So then a relay wireless came out at the time where you just had the two programmes. Was it Light and Home, something like that? You didn't have to do nothing to it. Just push it up for one and down for the other. You couldn't get anything else on it. [We had it] because this particular house never had no electricity in it. It was a relay just bought in by wire, wasn't it...a relay wire. It was a good alarm clock as well for my mum because she used to leave it on - at half past six it'd come on and it used to be her alarm clock. She used to always get up by that.

We turn now to the details of one person's particular experiences which were in some ways atypical, but were well articulated and raised a number of issues. Muriel Cifonelli described her parents as 'upper working class': her father was a gentlemen's outfitter and her mother had been a ladies' draper until she married. Muriel first recalled how her family had been early adopters of various technologies, including audio, so here we see what it meant to be a 'technology-orientated' family of this period.

Muriel Cifonelli: My mum and dad were all up to date. We had battery radios. Electric radios. Record... well they weren't called record players; gramophone. Yeah, we had those. And cats whiskers, my sister and I had a cats whisker set in our bedrooms each played by my father. And we had hoovers and we had washing machines.

LH: Early adopters then.

Muriel Cifonelli: Oh yes, yes. My parents were rather interested in... well, I say modern technology but, you know, they lived in the modern world, if you see what I mean. Well, it was modern for them so as they saved up so they bought these things.

Muriel remembered listening to radio a good deal as a child. She described how the children also had some individualised experiences of radio 50 years before walkmans became popular.

Muriel Cifonelli: We would listen to that on the cat's whisker in bed ... stories like Scrooge which they put on around winter time would be late in the evenings. We'd listen to those in bed as well. Those sort of Dickens stories.

Jack Cifonelli: So with the earphones on in bed. This type thing, yeah.

LH: What, you mean, this was a thing that you weren't supposed to do but you did it?

Muriel Cifonelli: Oh no, no. We were encouraged to do it but we had to be... because it was officially bedtime, we went to bed and listened in bed. Rather like the young do today except you couldn't move around with a cat's whisker. You had to lay there very still.

Jack Cifonelli: In the same way as today you'd have a cassette player and you could have it on your bedside and you could have your earphones sitting in bed listening or not, as the case may be, we would have it's predecessor which were the crystal sets.

Muriel Cifonelli: Yeah - cat's whisker thing. You had to twiddle the little thing to get it just right. My father made ours.

Also anticipating family life in a later generation, as a teenager Muriel had much of her own equipment at a time when her peers probably still only had access to family resources.

Muriel Cifonelli: I had a gramophone and radio in my bedroom as I got older after the war, as well, bought by my father. My sister had one in her room as well so we could be independent, which is... it sounds a bit odd in the 1940s but I'm afraid that's the way it was in our home.

But it was not always possible to retreat to another room, both for social reasons, to be discussed below, and because in the colder weather only some communal rooms were heated.

Muriel Cifonelli: There was a homework time that had to be finished by a certain... well, it didn't have to be finished by a certain time of an evening but there was a certain time in the evening when it was then family time so we'd have the radio on. So if you hadn't finished, you had to finish it against the noise of the radio, if you're with me. Because people didn't do homework with noise, background noise in those days. They did it in silence didn't they, and of course we did it all in the living room because nowhere else was warm; that was obvious.

Penny Hawkins referred to a similar situation:

Penny Hawkins: We had a radio in the kitchen which is where we mostly lived during the war. It was designed to be a sitting room for the non-existent maid and that's where we lived because it was cosy and you could keep it warm easily with coal being rationed and everything. And then in the lounge we had a radiogram and we only really used that in the summer when we didn't have to heat it.

She went on to describe further the experience of radio listening: how sometimes it involved paying attention while at other times radio simply provided background noise.

Penny Hawkins: In the evenings, when the sort of things like ITMA were on, it was absolutely riveting. You had to sit and listen to every word of something like ITMA. But during the day it was more BBC light orchestra, you know, playing selections from the dancing years or something like that.

In contrast, for Eva Solomon's family, radio listening always involved concentration.

Eva Solomon: I remember always listening to the radio play. I think Saturday nights or something and you made... it was a definite activity. You just sat and I suppose you still had to darn your socks, etc., you see. And these serialised things like War and Peace, I remember that being on the radio as well.

LH: But was the radio ever on, just on in the background or was it silence?

Eva Solomon: I think the background music and the background noise is something more modern. Besides, I think things like homework used to be taken very seriously.

LH: Right. And that would be done in silence, would it?

Eva Solomon: Yes.

The Williams also felt that their early radio listening was somewhat like paying attention to TV in later years. Dorothy also pointed out the effect of her change in circumstances from her youth.

Dorothy Williams: As a child, I would definitely listen to Children's Hour, I used to love the stories and things like that. Yeah, I would sit down and listen. As I say, perhaps as a child you're not so busy, are you really? When you're more adult there's always something else that you ought to be doing.

George Williams: You know, before you had a TV, if you were interested in a play or anything, you had to listen and concentrate on it, didn't you, so there was

no alternative really to actually paying, you know, attention to what was being said.

Dorothy Williams: Yeah, but you might be sewing or knitting or doing something else at the same time.

Of course, there may be a certain element of selective memory here: these participants were being asked to recall what happened in daily life many years ago. The example given by Fred Clough highlights how memories of concentrating on the radio may have been the ones most likely to be recalled.

Fred Clough: [It was mainly] music. Sometimes you'd hear a play on there at night. In fact, my mother, if it was a murder play, she used to like sitting there with the light off. It would be pitch black and she'd sit there and listen for hours to a murder play. And we used to listen to Radio Luxembourg - we used to listen to that every Sunday; 'We are the Ovaltinies, happy boys and girls'. Do you remember that?

Ivy Clough: Oh yeah. I got their mugs, yeah. I've got four of their mugs.

The Cloughs also explained how radio fitted into a weekly routine. Both radio and music-playing were more common on Sundays, and even now that is the day when the Cloughs still listen, illustrating a considerable continuity of habits right into retirement.

Ivy Clough: It may be. It may be because we always had it on Sundays at home, you know. We had records and, you know, the old-fashioned records, you know, but you always had the records on Sunday because, you know, you thought of it... it was your relaxing day.

Fred Clough: It's the only time you had to relax, wasn't it? I mean, the hours you used to do then...a normal working day could be from 8 o'clock in the morning 'til half past five, six o'clock at night. Well you don't have much time... and you never had Saturday off. You went in Saturday morning as a normal working day. So I mean Sunday was the only real day you had to relax.

Daphne Summers was another participant for whom radio had been more important on Sundays:

Daphne Summers: Sundays I remember because we were all there then. I think the rest of the week I was probably at school and then you did homework and I wasn't so much aware of the radio at that time. Sundays I can recall mostly. Yeah, we used to have Radio Luxembourg every Sunday. I can remember. That was one of the first stations that had adverts, like Capital. Yeah, and I was an Ovaltinie.

We have already seen how there were some restrictions on radio listening because of the requirement that children do homework. Bedtime placed further limitations, as Albert Welman recalled:

Albert Welman: As far as I was concerned, it was a private watershed at 8 o'clock, I think it was, and I resented this because a lot of the best programmes, things like ITMA, started at 8 o'clock. I can remember trying to listen to ITMA through the floorboards of my bedroom because of the 8 o'clock watershed.

But in addition, in some households the requirement to minimise noise also curtailed use of both radios and gramophones. Frank Payne recalled the limited opportunities for listening when he was young.

Frank Payne: Because we were at school most of the day and the times when you could have the radio on, the parents either wanted a rest, a sleep or whatever. And if it wasn't the parents it was the grandparents who lived down in the same house, or grandfather, and he liked to be quiet.

Rosie Aldridge faced similar restrictions when a child.

Rosie Aldridge: We had a wind up gramophone but because we lived at the top of the house and we had an elderly couple in the middle and after they came home at four, half past four, we couldn't really make any noise. We used to sit and either knit and play round tables and play in the evening.

But when they could play, Albert Welman remembered the salience of recorded music for social life.

Albert Welman: We had quite a lot of gramophone records and we also used to have musical soirées quite regularly for the family and friends and what have you and at which everybody had to do their party piece. In those days a lot of people learnt their party pieces off gramophone records, you know, sort of playing them over and over and over again until they got note and word perfect.

Turning now to the period of the war, those who served in the armed forces, mainly the elder men in our sample, had little access to radio through those years. But for many of those who remained behind, radio listening increased. Joanne Englefield and her mother were evacuated to the countryside at the start of the war where the radio took on a new salience because of their relative isolation.

Joanne Englefield: During the war years we obviously did, you know, Tommy Handley, the Arthur Askey Show and all those sort of thing...Tommy Trinder... Yeah, I can remember them all. Well, there was only the three of us but we made a point of sitting down and listening to it in the same way now you might make a point of sitting down watch and Coronation Street or something. We were a mile away from a village where we lived in Devon and so the radio really was our sort of link with the outside world I

suppose. It was the only entertainment, wasn't it, apart from the cinema. Well, dancing I suppose.

Dorothy Williams remembered staying at home more during much of the war, with the Blitz on, and having just finished school but not started work: hence she had listened to more radio. Others, like Daphne Summers remembered listening to more radio partly because of the war news.

Daphne Summers: We all used to listen to the news on the Home Service, you know, when the war was on because you had updates all the time.

LH: Didn't they also put on programmes to boost morale and things like that?

Daphne Summers: Oh yes. When you hear them now you think 'Cringe'. It's so obviously directed at you but you didn't realise it at the time.

A discussion of this morale boosting role of radio was picked up by the Cifonellis.

Muriel Cifonelli: During the war it played an enormous role.

Jack Cifonelli: Yeah. I mean, my family was bombed out and then when they moved elsewhere we got... having come back from being evacuated, the radio was part of the family's method of communication, I suppose. My father bought that when he bought other furniture to replace what we'd lost. So the radio was very important so we had all sorts of news, information, what was happening, but also programmes - like... one that stands out in my mind was ITMA, the Handley thing. And that kind of programme... I think the radio became an important link with what was happening, worldwide or whatever else. In fact, it became important to very many people as a reassurance...an understanding of where things were, because very often they would only have information...

Muriel Cifonelli: It was a big morale booster as well. I mean, these programmes like ITMA were morale boosters and people needed that.

Jack Cifonelli: I suppose you could argue that it was part of... how could you put it? Military information - not brainwashing so much as the populace was kept happy by being given the right kind of information.

LH: Like propaganda?

Jack Cifonelli: Like propaganda if you like, yeah. And the only way you actually got it was if there were newspapers around subject to them being able to be printed. But you would get it from the radio provided the radio was working. You would get information, whatever information that was going - there it was available. It was very, very widely used.

Not everyone, however, listened more to radio - some listened less. For instance, when Pauline Grant was evacuated with her mother she was not allowed to listen

to radio because her mother tried to protect her from accounts of the war. Lucy Griffith simply did not have so much opportunity to listen to radio during the war.

Lucy Griffith: During the war, I worked all day long and you used to come home and have your tea and go in the shelter, you see, so there wasn't much chance to listen to the news reports.

And Edith Robbie described her changed circumstances because of the war:

Edith Robbie: My cousins were bombed out in the Glasgow blitz so there was four adults and four children all in quite a small area, quite a small house actually. I don't think we had time for radios. I think we were all running about screaming and shouting and jumping because we weren't that old, do you know? I'd be the eldest at ten and then it would be 8, 7, 6 and 5. So, with all these kids, there wasn't anybody listening to radio very much.

The post-war years saw some change in this cohort's experience of radio. Again, we return to the observations of Muriel Cifonelli.

Muriel Cifonelli: By that time you were listening to the radio more and more in the day. It was becoming less of a speciality thing, wasn't it? When we were very much younger and you listened to radio, it was a set piece that the family settled down to listen to it but it did gradually become more of background feature, didn't it?

LH: Hmm. But there were always radio broadcasts during the daytime, weren't there?

Muriel Cifonelli: Oh yes, yes. Yes, but you wouldn't...well, in our family we didn't have it on. We only had it on when we were kind of together really. But then during the war of course, you see, that changed because you would listen to the one o'clock news to get the latest news and I think that's really what broke down this evening set-piece thing.

She later described how family life in general was also changing, which had a bearing on how media were consumed.

LH: Just after the war then, when... did the listening drop off at all with less need to keep in touch with these events?

Muriel Cifonelli: I think it probably did, but not a lot. I mean, you see the whole style of family life was changing, wasn't it. In the 1930s, it was still a certain amount of the Victorian element around and it was gradually changing. I mean, family life was definitely becoming 'freer'... I think is the word I would use. Less formal anyway. I mean, I had a wonderful childhood but it was - and it wasn't a formal childhood - but there were formalities like you sat listening to the radio with your family in the evening round the fire and all that sort of thing. You certainly didn't go off into

your own room and do something quite separate. That would not have been acceptable. But I think that image slowly changed, didn't it?

Yet, even when TV came along while Muriel was still at home with her parents, radio continued to dominate in the daytime:

Muriel Cifonelli: We had TV almost as soon after the war as you could get it. My parents were always very up-market. And we had television, I mean, before the Queen was made Queen and all the rest of it. Yes, I suppose in the evening we would watch more television. But of course in the day it was still radio.

This was a common experience for women, such as Pauline Grant and Penny Hawkins, as they had their children and stayed at home for a time as housewives, mostly in the 1950s. In fact, for some men and women it is from this period that they really developed their interest in, and taste for, radio. Dorothy Williams described herself as a great radio fan, and remembered listening regularly to *Woman's Hour* and *Mrs Dales Diary* when her children were young. Before TV arrived, she recalled listening in the evening to the news and plays and George Williams talked of listening to football commentaries. The Evans got their own radio when they married and used to listen a good deal before TV arrived: in fact, even though radio displaced TV for part of the evening, Gwen still expressed a preference for the old medium. Meanwhile the Summers were very late adopters of television, 'resisting' it until the late 1960s. They had continued to listen to some radio in the evenings for many years after they were married.

Later, when the people of this cohort retired, many returned to the pattern whereby the radio and/or recorded music were more liable to dominate during the day while the TV took over in the evening. However, for some the initial arrival of TV displaced radio entirely. Frank Payne had listened to radio for years, but then like the Griffiths turned to TV totally and hardly listened to radio now.

Lucy Griffith: Yes, [radio] declined. We watched the TV all the time. Well it was something new, wasn't it?

The children of this cohort mostly reached their teenage years in the 1960s and 1970s, when popular music was undergoing a transition and relatively affluent youth could start to afford their own audio hardware. Hence, a number of our participants found themselves in the position of regulating the home's sound regime. For instance, Rosie Aldridge described how the arrival of the record player introduced sound competition with other media in their small accommodation. It was not till years later when they had a bigger house that individuals could easily listen to or create their own sounds without interfering with others.

Rosie Aldridge: I think by the time the boy was getting on for 14 record players started coming out, didn't they? I think the first record player we bought him he was 14. It just had the turnstile and little narrow casing, didn't they, the first one. That must have been, what, about 1960-ish, wasn't it, just

before 1960. And then it went onto records with them, didn't it, then. Mine had a lot of records. We used to say "Oh can we have that turned off?" so we could watch different things then, yeah. And as I say, by that time the girl was getting older and she got into records. But then mainly my boy started trying the guitar so we had him practising as well. I mean really you've got to have a bigger house. You're talking about two or three people listening to things... you couldn't have too many things on, could you, like? We've never had that big enough apartments to have one could have one thing on and [someone else have another thing on]. Although when we did finally move further down the road and got a bigger house and then my boy used to stay in his own room a lot then listening to his records and his guitar.

The Solomons were able to be a little more tolerant in their larger house, although Eva's mother who lived with them had sometimes complained.

Eva Solomon: My son had a sound system upstairs.

Nathan Solomon: And I don't think actually it was so loud, was it?

Eva Solomon: My mother used to occasionally knock on the ceiling. Actually, you don't hear... It's that modern music, it's the vibrations. You can feel... you feel that music if you're underneath even if you couldn't hear it. You can feel it downstairs.

And during the period, children sometimes came to dominate the sounds in the house, as Penny Hawkins observed.

Penny Hawkins: Of course, when the children were older, they very much dictated what's on the radio anyway, and so they would have Radio One. Well I couldn't stand Radio One. So I tended to just tune out from that minute, not listen at all...or go in another room. It's not the music I object to. I mean, in the 60s I loved the music. It was the DJs I couldn't stand.

One final point concerns an alternative use of radio: for point-to-point communication. This had been the early use of the technology before broadcasting determined the meaning of radio for most people. However, the point-to-point application was retained by some: for instance, we noted Bert Digby's use of CB radio in the last chapter. Ray Englefield provided an example of an amateur radio enthusiast. Like Bert Digby and some others of his generation, Ray had learnt to use radio for communication in the war, and 20 years ago, when he was 50, he had built his own set, passed exams and got a licence. For about 10 years he used to go to a club and, most weekends, used to try out his equipment in different locations to test reception.

Ray Englefield: It was quite interesting but it got dominated by... well, they were called amateurs but really they were quasi-professionals - people with huge pieces of equipment and very powerful transmitters and they just dominated

the airwaves and they just squashed everything that wasn't big enough to compete with them.

Ray had enjoyed the friendly conversations with people abroad, learning Morse code and the technical achievement of being able to reach distant radio hams. His wife Joanne thought it was a stupid hobby, but was willing to let him get on with it - at the time she was more pre-occupied with her children. Eventually Ray gave it up partly because of hearing problems.

Ray Englefield: I had trouble with my hearing, you see, and I couldn't quite keep up with it so then... and then, of course, like everything else you've done it for a certain time, you get a bit blasé.

4.1.2 Audio since retirement

We noted earlier how the arrival of TV from the 1950s had in some cases largely displaced radio listening by the time of retirement. For others, such as Stuart Robbie, the habit of listening to recorded music had also been largely eliminated, in his case through the last few years of work.

Stuart Robbie: Well I think why I got out of the habit was, especially in the latter years of my work, I found the pressure so much, I found the long hours so much, that when I came home in the evening, I was coming home late to start with. It was a shorter evening and probably going to bed earlier because I had to be up very early in the morning. So it was come home, eat in front of the television set and go to bed... have a walk and go to bed. Whereas in the days when I used to listen to music, it was probably a much less demanding job.

However, retirement could equally well provide more time both to listen to audio media and to collect, in various ways, audio material. If we start with the example of recorded music, while Chris Shepard was one of those following up a hobbyist interest in music appreciation by buying CDs, Sam Waters found time to increase his collection of music tapes with more limited expenditure:

Sam Waters: I used to buy the odd tape of music which I would like or saw a particular tape I liked and if it was going cheap, I'd buy it. But I used to look round all the old cheap shops down the Edmonton Market and then often there was a tape down for 99p or something or other. It would be a mixture of music, of classical music, of old time sort of music. Mostly without singers. I didn't used to buy singers. Or I'll record it off the radio. There was a good programme of a pianist playing for a quarter of an hour on the radio about 8 o'clock at night and that's all they did; they just played the music for quarter of an hour. Different types of music. I used to record those on a tape then I could put them in the car where I was driving.

LH: This was all after retirement was it?

Sam Waters: Yeah, mostly after retirement, yeah. I didn't have any time before I was retired. It was mostly eat, sleep and work. Didn't have much time.

Most of our sample listened to radio more in retirement than when they had worked, although there are some complexities to add concerning gender. On the whole, the male young elderly had experienced a more sudden transition, paralleled only by women who retired from full-time work. But other women had not worked in paid employment since their children had been born, or else had held a part-time job or been involved in part-time voluntary work. For these who had spent part, or most, of their time in the home, there had been a more continuous experience of radio listening during the day.

Lucy Griffith was one of several who listened to more radio since retiring from her part-time job, while Gwen Evans listened more since leaving her full-time one. Despite the fact that husband was home, for Gwen the radio represented the presence of others:

Gwen Evans: It's great company. As soon as I get up, I put the radio on because it's a voice and I just like it. I couldn't be in a room quiet. I couldn't. It's the company of it.

Pauline Grant was one of those re-discovering radio in retirement, comparing it to the years when they used to be at home with children. She noted how the rescheduling since those days had affected her listening - for example, she used to listen to Woman's Hour at 2pm but now could not since it was on at 10.30 and she was usually doing other things. Penny Hawkins also re-discovered radio.

Penny Hawkins: I just wasn't aware really of what was on in the daytime when I was working. It just never crossed my mind to think about it. And I was quite pleasantly surprised when I did start listening in the daytime. You know, there were some good things on.

Her situation was unusual in that she had lived in the US during the period when she was at home with children, and so was used to American media. Therefore, sorting out long-running British radio soaps was a challenge.

Penny Hawkins: I only recently started listening to The Archers at all and at first it was absolutely baffling because I didn't know who the hell anybody was, you know, and it's been going on so long that they just assume everybody knows that Auntie Rosie Aldridge is so and so's mother by a previous marriage or something, you know, and it's all double Dutch to me. I even started doing a family tree at one time to try to sort everybody out.

As they returned to radio listening, some of the young elderly noted the changes that had taken place over the years. Edith Robbie first compared current radio programmes to those she used to hear when she had been at home with young children, before Stuart went on to make some more general observations about changes in broadcasting - which will be developed further in a later section making comparisons to TV.

Edith Robbie: I found that Woman's Hour had changed dramatically. I thought Woman's Hour was much better than it is now. I thought it was much, much better. It's now in the morning and I don't think it's anything like as good. I think again it's got very, very brash and updated and very, very over-modern, if you like. It was very good before.

*Stuart Robbie: I think the only thing one feels about... I mean, this applies to radio, any kind of media... there is such a wider acceptance of talking about and making public things which once upon a time were sort of forbidden subjects. You didn't talk about these things, certainly not publicly. You know, I listen to Woman's Hour and there was a sort of, a ten minute item which was a medical item which was concerned with bowel movements, and there was a doctor there sort of explaining how you should do it and what like the stools should be and so on and so forth and then there's all the sexual things of course. There's all the bad language which are things I didn't grow up with and things I still find it very difficult to accept in media at large. You know, in the newspapers, I'm happy to say, we still get... instead of spelling the four-letter Anglo-Saxon word out, you get f***, you know, which I suppose I'm quite happy to see. But the way things are going, you know, shortly you'll get it spelled out for you.*

Several of those in our study were also prepared to comment on more recent changes in broadcast policy. For instance, Dorothy Williams had for the first time altered her listening habits because of these:

Dorothy Williams: I never moved the radio from Radio 4 until recently and it has changed remarkably and I don't like a lot of the programmes that are on Radio 4 now, they don't appeal to me. I don't like the plays. I used to listen to the plays if I was making a cake in the kitchen or something like. But the plays are all kitchen sink type dramas now or preaching at you about something. They're not the sort of plays I want to listen to any more. I don't like what's happened to Radio 4 so I'm prepared to go over to LBC or even to Classic FM sometimes. I just don't like what's happened to Radio 4. It's lost some of its...there's such a lot of chat. Not... I don't mean phone-in programmes but people chatting to each other. There's... is it Ned Sherrin comes on on Saturday. I can't stand him. There's one or two people I just don't like. I feel they're all patting each other on the back and very patronising type of people. Very arty in their way which doesn't come across to me very well. So, you know, it's not... I wanted more general interest programmes which is what I used to listen to or a straightforward play. Even I didn't like them shifting Woman's Hour to the morning either. You know, they've changed things. I suppose because I'm... it's perhaps my age. They keep saying they're doing all these changes because they want younger people to listen to it but I don't think younger people listen to the radio all that much, not in my family anyway. They're always out and about doing something else.

LH: Is this the first major change in Radio 4 that's happened then for a long time?

Dorothy Williams: Well it's... there have been little changes but they've been quite negligible compared with what's happened recently. You know, they didn't really affect me as much.

LH: Because when I talk to other people about radio sometimes, and especially because they've listened for years and years and years, they describe it as like losing a friend here.

Dorothy Williams: Yes, yes, it was because, as I say, I am a great listener to the radio so I have had it on a lot so I've listened to radio for... well, I could tell you, it didn't used to get moved from Radio 4 but now I'm prepared to look in the paper and find out where I've got to find another programme, which I never ever used to do.

LH: Oh so you actually... you changed channels looking for programmes now?

Dorothy Williams: Yes because I don't want what's coming up, you know.

LH: Aren't you going to lose LBC soon? They lost their franchise, didn't they?

Dorothy Williams: I think they did, didn't they, yes. You see, now that was quite an interesting sort of programme as well, from time... Again, you could pick and choose with LBC. There was some programmes I didn't like on there but I was prepared to go there where at one time I wouldn't have done.

Daphne Summers added some comments about recent changes in the nature of the plays broadcast on Radio 4:

Daphne Summers: They're not as good as they could have been. I like something with a beginning and an end and a middle, you know, not one of those that leaves you wondering.

She also noted changes in scheduling.

Daphne Summers: Well I'm a bit upset. It's cricket at the moment and they've shifted my play to FM and the reception's not very good. So I'm a bit miffed. I think they ought to have their cricket on channel... on FM.

Penny Hawkins had actually written to the BBC to complain about the Radio 4 changes. As she commented on the timesheets:

Penny Hawkins: They were determined to make Radio 4 trendier to appeal to a younger audience. We told them it wouldn't work.

Finally, Vera and Albert Welman were critical of the way local radio had developed.

Vera Welman: It's different. I must admit I was quite shocked this morning. I haven't listened to morning radio on the local radio for months, I suppose and I was horrified this morning.

Albert Welman: What were you horrified about? The general naff-ness of it?

Vera Welman: Yes, absolutely.

Albert Welman: There seems to be a great deal of more trivialisation of issues. Some current affairs programmes are better because of obviously, you know, sort of discussion has freed up a bit but, against that, there seems to be - and of course this is even more true of television - there seems to be trivialisation of what you might call peripheral issues which probably wouldn't even have been considered to be news at all in the 60s and possibly even in the 70s.

Radio listening could often be an individual activity - in households of couples, partners were not always in at the same time, or they were doing something in different rooms, or one might be out in the garden or a garage. At these times, and when couples have similar tastes, one person's radio listening is not a problem for the other. Alternatively, people like George Williams could ignore any background sounds.

Dorothy Williams: I'm an avid listener to the radio. When I'm in the kitchen, the radio's on. You turn it off but I turn it on.

George Williams: I can switch off from it really, you know.

But sometimes there were difficulties. Sam Waters' retirement had adversely affected Janice's radio listening as he now also wanted to listen to the sounds of his choice.

Janice Waters: I used to listen to the radio before Sam was retired. I used to have the radio on [so that] I could hear it in every room, you know, wherever I was. You can move [the portable radio] from one room to another. I mean you've only got to plug it in and you can take it into the kitchen or you can take it into whichever room you're in and just plug it in, can't you, a portable radio. And I used to walk it around, you see. But then when Sam retired, he [played] that big one which was in the front room. So unless you're in the front room listening to it, you can't hear it, you see. And then he'd turn on things and you can't have two radios on in different rooms at the same time. So, I lost all my programmes. Or [our daughter] Vicky and Sam would walk about with the portable one, you know, that I used to use. You know, it changes things however many of you are in the house.

Sam Waters: I often used to use it to put a tape on so I'd put a tape of music on and of course then she'd be... you can't have the tape and somebody talking on a different station. You can't. It's a clash of personalities there.

Janice Waters: He's got lots of tapes. It's nicer when you're going in the car, you know, to have the music going along. But if he's got something on at home all the time, you see, you can't have anything else on.

There was also an occasional irritation in the Evans' home.

Gwen Evans: I'm not that interested in TV really. I love LBC and I listen to that 'til it falls out of my ears.

Eddy Evans: Yeah, she has the radio on a lot. You've got one in here. You've got one here. One out there. One in the bedroom.

Gwen Evans: When it gets on Eddy's nerves I have to put the Walkman on.

Eddy Evans: When I'm sitting here looking at the paper, she's got this [radio] on. She's [also] got that [radio] on. I turn this one off and I hear one going in there.

Gwen Evans: Yes, yes, then I forget and they're all going and then Eddy moans and a couple go off sort of thing.

As a concession to Eddy's different preferences, especially the fact that advert jingles annoyed him, she sometimes put Melody Radio on for her husband.

Gwen Evans: The radio is inclined to irritate Eddy a bit whereas Melody... the music doesn't. Because I don't know if you've ever had that Melody Radio on but there's not a lot of talking in between. They just play nice numbers.

And in the Davey household the problem was not so much a clash of tastes as an on-going dispute over Ken's tendency to leave the radio on.

Elsie Davey: I've just turned the radio off downstairs. He leaves it on all day long. It plays to itself half the time. It's true! I go down and I switch it off. I'm upstairs, he comes upstairs and I go down again and it's on.

Radio and other audio media were most commonly listened to while the young elderly, both male and female, were engaged in other activities, be it some kind of chore or project. Both music and the spoken word could provide background sounds, listened to with little attentiveness. Alternatively, they could be followed more intensively, as with radio plays or news or music relating to hobbies and projects: for example, when Chris Shepard listened fairly carefully to his classic music in order to decide whether to use pieces at future meetings of the music appreciation society.

Especially for those living alone, radio could provide company. Frank Payne usually preferred recorded music, but listened to radio phone-ins during the night whenever he had problems sleeping.

Frank Payne: You get different fields of advice and you can voice your opinion about whatever, you know, and it's kind of company during the night.

For Rosie Aldridge radio at night was not just company; she used the sound to shut out the potentially threatening outside world.

Rosie Aldridge: I've even got a little radio that I keep on all night. You know, one of them little small ones. When I go to bed, I put it on and I just go to sleep and turn it off when I wake up.

LH: Why is that, because you like to go to sleep with the sound of noise, is it?

Rosie Aldridge: Well yeah. I just don't like to hear nothing, you know. So I don't really know what anything goes on here at any time. Because when I first came here, because naturally I found a lot of them were foreigners. There were some coloured boys and I was a bit frightened first of all but I thought to myself "Well it's no good frightening myself. I've got to live here." And so I used to go in there and put the wireless on and it used to cause me to sleep. LBC, that Talk Back. I don't like music. And I thought to myself well I didn't realise I was asleep and then I wake up in the morning and it was still on. So with that, I just do. I don't like the place quiet. I don't like to know what goes on outside.

The broadcasting schedules of radio, like TV, could help to structure the day - for instance, time might be set aside for the relaxing afternoon play or for ritually listening over breakfast or lunch. In fact, although TV may have displaced radio in the evenings, many of this cohort had never fully got used to TV in the daytime and it was rarer still to find any of them watching morning TV. But although radio often found some place in people's routines, some broadcast offerings were rejected precisely because they did not fit into lifestyles. For instance, the Summers were not keen on serials like the Archers because that implied a weekly commitment which they simply did not want to give.

Roger Summers: I don't think we have any serials or things like this that go on week after week because even if you liked it, which is unlikely, you'd miss the next couple anyway because you wouldn't be in a place where you could listen to it. So there's no point.

Also, like TV, radio was informative, be it as a source of local interest news, via the topics of phone-ins, or through programmes on DIY, gardening or money. For instance, Gwen Evans saw radio as educational and especially important for keeping her in touch with the outside world now that she was more housebound.

Gwen Evans: I learn a lot from it and...I find it's a good topic of conversation as I don't go out a lot. Oh and they have a programme of tips on Tuesday, you know, and...Yeah, it's quite good.

And the Waters added:

Janice Waters: I used to have Jimmy Young before Samuel was retired.

Sam Waters: ... because that gave her a bit of up to date local knowledge, if you like... talking points, if you like. Jimmy Young brought in topical talking points, if you like, interspersed with music and that would give Janice a bit more local interest... you know, you're not lacking in information about current affairs, if you like.

A number of our participants taped material off the radio, be it music, plays or annual events like the Reith Lectures. Sometimes this was saved, but it was also passed on to others both inside and outside the home - and the same exchange occurred with tapes made from records or CDs. For instance, Dorothy Williams normally listened to Radio 4 in the afternoon, while knitting.

Dorothy Williams: I like the afternoon play. I set that aside.

LH: So you make sure you're free then?

Dorothy Williams: Yeah. If the play is on, I record it and then if I have to answer the phone or go out or if I'm doing something that takes me away from it, I can always catch up with it later and then if it's a good play, I can pass it on to one of the children or... I like to collect them, the good ones.

The Summers would sometimes listen to plays on the car cassette when travelling and Roger made use of the play collection which Daphne had built up by listening to them while he was going to sleep at night.

Roger Summers: When I go to bed, I have a read sometimes and I listen to the radio. Sometimes there's nothing much on the radio and so I listen to one of the tapes that she's recorded, a play. I never hear the end but the radio stays on all night and when I wake up in the morning, it's still on and I've got this earpiece and it doesn't stop me going to sleep. I have it playing in my ear all night.

Just as Gwen Evans used their VCR for time-shifting TV programmes, she applied the same principle to the radio, recording programmes for the post-TV evening before going to sleep.

Gwen Evans: I record a cookery programme or something that I think that Eddy will be interested in if he's out and then when we go to bed, I play the tape back. Because we always have the radio on for about an hour in the bedroom, don't we, before we go to bed to sleep. Because I've had enough of the telly by then. About ten o'clock roughly it goes off, don't it Ed, and we don't go to... settle down to bed 'til 11, quarter past.

Nor is it just among younger generations that music could become a component of social events. Penny Hawkins described the regular meetings with a friend:

LH: In the week of the timesheets, when your friend came round to play Scrabble you mentioned that you enjoy actually setting up a programme of music.

Penny Hawkins: Oh, well I do enjoy that, yeah, because it's just a fun thing to do. Sort of every week I try to have a different programme of music. Like yesterday, she came round yesterday, and I had two new country and western tapes that we hadn't heard before because I went over to my daughter's and my grandson gave me one that he'd taped from CDs and my daughter gave me another one that she'd been given by a friend who's also into country and western. So we played those two up there yesterday.

Turning now to the hardware, all those in our sample had radios even if they were rarely used - in fact, most households had several sets that had been accumulated over the years. Most had at some stage in their life had equipment for playing recorded music, but several of the households had disposed of some or all of these items when they decided that they were not using them very much. For instance, the Griffiths had given their record player to Bernie's niece about 3 years ago, and Rosie Aldridge had just recently discarded hers, deciding it was taking up too much room in her small flat. Smaller, cheaper equipment had been acquired in a number of ways: for instance, the Waters had inherited a few radios and bought others in jumbles sales; George Williams won his radio walkman as a prize; Roger Summers, Frank Payne and Bernie Griffith all got their walkmans as either birthday or Christmas presents.

The Englefields provided an example of households where audio equipment was now old and at the end of its 'career' in the home. There was little desire to update. They had bought their hi-fi over 20 years ago, the turntable of which broke down 2 years ago. Joanne commented on their acquisition of the music system and its diminished role in their lives:

Joanne Englefield: Well somehow or other you go through these phases, or we did when we were young and everybody else was doing all the same things. And then when that ends, you don't necessarily go on to what the next thing is, do you? Or we haven't because we've, I suppose, done something else.

LH: You mean you bought a stereo when everyone else was buying a stereo.

Joanne Englefield: Yeah, that's right. But we didn't just buy it because everybody else was. I mean, it was there and we enjoyed it and we had a lot of fun, didn't we? And when Christine was younger [she used it a lot]. But what finishes, finishes.

Although CD appealed to Sam Waters, he felt that they were unlikely to get one. His outlook reflected the non-consumerist orientation of many of this generation. They often resisted up-grading to the latest versions of technology. In this particular instance, Janice was also unhappy with the design of modern ICTs like music centres and TVs which upset the aesthetics of their home.

Sam Waters: It does interest me but it's another bit of equipment... I've got to get rid of one thing and buy another bit. And Janice doesn't like... she doesn't like the modern compact amplifier music centre style of thing. She doesn't like black televisions but you can't buy anything but black televisions or grey televisions. There's no choice. Every television you see is the same colour almost, isn't it? White or grey or black. It's grey or black which is black as far as you're concerned.

LH: What, it doesn't fit in with the colour scheme?

Janice Waters: Well it doesn't, does it? We've mostly got cream and brown so black looks awful against it.

However, it is important to avoid painting too uniform a picture. There were those who had decided that their interest in audio was sufficiently great that they had acquired more modern systems since retirement. Kitty Tarrant lived alone and since she liked her music in the evenings, her children had persuaded her to buy a sound system a few years ago. Penny Hawkins, also living alone, felt a little guilty that she had 'splurged', spending more of her limited income than she should have on a good system, but ultimately it was worthwhile because music was important to her. Eva Solomon had bought the CD for husband Nathan as a retirement present and Gwen Evans was deciding whether it was worthwhile to buy a small stack system given that mobility problems meant she spent so much time in the home.

Gwen Evans: Well I was thinking about it really, a more modern one, yes. You know them small stacking systems? Only I'd have to think about it... but it has gone through my mind, you know, but we're not terribly into the record playing. You know that maybe just the radio is sufficient. But I have thought about it, to be honest.

We already noted that music appreciation was a hobby for people like Chris Shepard and Bert Digby. For them, this hobby justified buying better hardware, as it did for the McLeans because of their folk dance classes. The latter had over the years acquired audio technology to cover a variety of circumstances. They had four tape players and a record player. The cassette player in the kitchen was convenient to listen to if Maureen McLean was cooking and was also small and portable so they could take it on holiday. The best quality set-up was in the dining room. Packed away in the living room was a large Coomber system used for playing in halls and public places - this was the one they used at the dance classes. And upstairs in the bedroom was the dual-deck ghetto blaster which they usually took to weekend dance courses so that they could always make quick copies of music there, or run off copies of their music for someone else. Both the ghetto blaster and Coomber had counters and so all their dance tapes were indexed with two sets of numbers colour coded red and blue: one for each machine.

The McLeans had progressed through different audio technologies over the years. When they first started teaching classes Maureen McLean using a record player and records. Then they moved on to reel-to-reel before ending up with cassettes -

their collection of which was still growing. But that was the limit. They had decided to stop at this technology since they could not copy tapes onto CD. Besides, it would cost a good deal to replace their tapes even if more folk music is now being sold on CD.

While CD was not so common in our sample, the Williams household showed how new competences could be developed around the technology. They had bought their new system the previous year - apart from being old, the previous one had been damaged by the grandchildren messing about with it. On the advice of their children, the new system included CD and Dorothy Williams had just started to build up a CD collection of light opera, ballet and bands. She thought that CD was useful because it '*needed less attention*' and because she could select the tracks she wanted - illustrating that she could come to grips with the new facility. On this subject, she noted how she had developed technical competence with the CD but not as regards programming the VCR - illustrating the processes by which technologies are 'gendered'.

Dorothy Williams: But, I don't know how to do the video. I only know how to put a tape in and play on it if I want to but I don't know how to actually do the video there.

LH: Well did you have more interest in the CD... getting the CD to work?

Dorothy Williams: I think so. Also because I think too... because George Williams... because he's not interested in the music side but he's much more interested in the video than the tapes, I think that's become his and this has become mine, in a way.

There were, however, limits to their technological competence. They had both learnt the time shifting possibilities of the VCR and would have liked to have been able to achieve a similar functionality with their radio - but did not know how to do this when they were out of the house.

Dorothy Williams: Because there's a programme on the radio tonight from the Albert Hall and it's a concert and I thought "Oh that sounds interesting", but we go out Tuesday nights. And so I was thinking "Wouldn't it have been nice to have taped that and listen to that some other time", like you can with the TV but there's no way we'd be able to do that.

Although some saw walkmans as a novelty, a young person's device they did not need, and indeed some objected to other people's use of them, this innovation had managed to find its way in to the homes of a number of our sample - and find a place in their lives. The Waters showed the two very different responses this group had to walkmans. Janice opposed them because other people's use had upset her, whereas Sam would have liked one (and might even get one!) since he had a very specific application in mind and felt that he could manage the technology.

Janice Waters: I don't want one of those. I think they're a bit of a nuisance. They're not silent, are they? You know, you can hear them.. Maybe it's because they have it on too loud but I mean you hear the youngsters along in the tube or anything, you know. They make a terrible row. They sit there and everybody's got to listen to it.

Sam Waters: Yeah' but I'm different from that, you see. The way I would use one would be with a neck loop, you see, and with the hearing aids and with that it is controllable. There are certain things I would like it for but I could make use of a walkman with a neck loop quite comfortably.

LH: What would you use it for?

Sam Waters: Mostly my Masonic stuff because I could record the ritual on it quite comfortably and monitor it as I'm going, particularly the job I do in the lodge. I'm what they call the Director of Ceremonies, so I have to get the men to do their ritual correctly. You're correcting them and guiding them a little bit and sometimes you need to have the information right at your fingertips, what they're doing, and I often wonder whether I could record it with a neck loop, which I could hear through... it's like the TV monitor really and you'd have it rolling in your ear and you could switch it off and on as they're going through it and you could correct them quite comfortably.

Apart from occasional use in the garden, Roger Summers mainly put his walkman on when going to bed to help him to sleep at night - and would wake with it still switched on in the morning. Bernie Griffith sometimes used his walkman to listen to football coverage while we saw how Gwen Evans used hers to avoid disturbing husband Eddy. Since she was having more and more problems sleeping, she might listen to the radio on the walkman at several points during the night, in between falling asleep with the earpiece still in. Bert Digby used the radio in his to listen to the commentary when at cricket matches or motor racing. Penny Hawkins had tried walkmans but sent them back because they broke down too often. She still wanted some of the functionality of a walkman, though, for when she was in the garden and so was looking out for radio headphones. And George Williams had been innovative with the walkman he won by ignoring the manufacturer's intention and converting it into a normal radio.

George Williams: I've not used it necessarily as a walkman really, you know, listening to while I'm walking about, as it were. I obtained some small speakers some years ago, which can be plugged into here so it can be used as a sort of mini radio up there if I wanted.

Lastly, there were some general comments about the design of audio technology which reflected a different mode of listening in the past. The Cloughs objected to the loudness of much of the current day technology.

Ivy Clough: I tell you what they've done with radios... it's them. (pointing)

LH: *The speakers on the top.*

Ivy Clough: *Speakers, because they blare out too much. All right, I know you can tone them down but people won't, will they, especially youngsters. They put them up high. I think speakers were the worst things they ever brought in. I mean, we had a gramophone - my brother made it - and it shut up like a cabinet. All the records were one side and the horn part was the other side and we used to have to open the door to listen to it. And that's how, you know, that's how we listened to it. And it was quite enjoyable. But I can't listen to radios or televisions now... Well, I listen to it but I say to him "Why do they have to have that thumping music all the time at the back?" but you know it's coming from them amplifiers.*

Apart from the technology in their home, they were also concerned about the noise made by some of their neighbours' ICTs. Here Fred Clough recalled how he had recently been willing to fight back against this.

Fred Clough: *I've got a little tape thing to take down in the garden if I'm down there. I tell you why I bought it; there's a merchant down on the corner here, because he couldn't put his kids in the garden, I stopped him, he put two amplifiers outside the garden... outside his door so he could blare the music up to drive us out of the garden. I said "All right. If he wants to play that game, I'll play it. I'll give him some of the old Knees up Mother Brown tapes we've got. The old party songs".*

4.2 TV

Before dealing with how TV technology entered the lives of this cohort, it is worth noting their first experience of picture broadcasting. Now that TV has become so normal in their lives, some could no longer remember the initial impact it made. But Bert Digby's memories were vivid, especially of the subsequent innovation of colour TV.

Bert Digby: *Oh it was incredible. The first thing I ever saw was Jack Dempsey fighting. A boxing match on TV in a TV shop window when I was a kid. I'd got skates on and I went past this window and they'd got this set in the window working and it was during the evening, you know, eight o'clock when it slowly got dark and I was fascinated. Yeah, I found the early days of TV extremely fascinating and when it actually went on to colour I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it! Seeing the test card, I went into a radio shop where they'd got one of the first colour TVs and they'd got it sitting in a back room with the test card on in colour, you know. Unbelievable! I didn't expect it to be so good. It was pretty awe-inspiring. I can remember our neighbour next door had bought a colour set and we hadn't got one and she came and knocked at the door and she said "You must come and watch this Come Dancing". It was being televised and it was on*

colour TV, all these girls had worn the most fantastic coloured dresses and... oh, it was impressive.

4.2.1 Acquiring the first TV

Although the Coronation is recognised as the event for which some bought TVs or else came to really appreciate them for the first time, the adoption of TV by this cohort is actually spread over a period. A few of the younger ones in our sample were still at home when their parents acquired a TV before the Coronation. For instance, Muriel Cifonelli's parents were early adopters of various technologies and the TV was no exception and Edith Robbie's parents got one, although at a period when as a young adult Edith was going out most of the time and so did not see many programmes. Many acquired their sets over the course of the 1950s, although the cost of TVs remained a barrier to purchase: Frank Payne and the Welmans did not get their first set until the 1960s and the Shepards until 1970, largely because of limited income.

The working-class Evans, among the older households within this cohort, had first rented a TV set in 1953. They had seen it earlier and thought TV was 'marvellous'. Gwen recalled how TV became for many a 'must have' product.

Gwen Evans: A relative had one. Just a small one, you know, quite a time before and... oh well, I mean, it was the thing to get a television, wasn't it, all them years ago. The children today are born with them, aren't they, but we weren't born with them and we thought it was lovely to have a television.

The upwardly mobile Englefields had also been fairly early adopters of TV.

Ray Englefield: Well I know we had it for the Queen's coronation. I do remember that particular occasion because, we had a bit of a party because my next two neighbours either side hadn't got television. So that was a bit of one-upmanship.

LH: Did you often have some of the technologies and other things before your immediate neighbours had them?

Ray Englefield: I tended to, yes, because I had a bit... slightly more 'welly' than they had I think being a qualified accountant. They used to pay us a little bit more and... I remember we had a car I think before my next door neighbours.

They discussed in more detail how they had acquired their TV, and their first experience of looking at a set.

Joanne Englefield: I can always remember a colleague of yours had one and you arranged for you, me and Christine to go down and have a look at it. Do you remember we sat there and solemnly looked at this television?

Ray Englefield: I think somebody got it and we sort of liked it and we thought "Well, we'll have one".

Joanne Englefield: We lived in the Forest of Dean then so I mean it was quite possible if we'd lived here, we might have had it that much earlier, mightn't we? But things were a bit late seeping through to the Forest of Dean.

Here we have an example of how diffusion was also geographically uneven, reflecting not just regional variations in income but also the spread of fashion and likelihood of encountering TV first-hand. The Robbies got their set in about 1960 and remarked how few there still were in Scotland at that time. Meanwhile the Grants drew attention to the differences between housing areas. They got their set a few years after the Coronation when it was a little 'upmarket' to have a TV while living in a council flat.

George and Dorothy Williams remember watching the Coronation on her father's TV, and they bought their own set second-hand from a neighbour a few years after that. They explained their decision to get a TV:

Dorothy Williams: Mainly because I think the kids decided they wanted one, didn't they? Everybody else had got one, sort of attitude.

George Williams: And it was becoming a universal thing to some extent in those days. It was one of these things that was going around.

Others also mentioned the influence of children and peer pressure from their friends. Apart from the active lobbying by children, Pauline Grant told of the influence they could have simply by voting with their feet. She remembered vividly how once when they were having a party all the children suddenly left to go next door to watch *Popeye* - and then came back after it had finished. The presence of children also increased the interest of the parents. Many of this cohort had acquired sets at that time because the sheer availability of TV coincided with their family circumstances: they had just started families and were therefore staying in more in the evenings.

For example, the Solomons had not had a set in the early years of their marriage because both had been busy with work.

Eva Solomon: It was a question of time. I remember we didn't have television for a long time because we decided we didn't have time to listen to it.

They finally acquired a TV in 1959 and started watching more regularly from the time when their children arrived.

Eva Solomon: My daughter was born in 1960 and that meant of course we watched more because we couldn't go out.

Fred Clough got his first set in the 1950s, when his family's personal circumstances meant there were few alternative forms of entertainment.

Fred Clough: It would be about 40 year ago when it first started coming out. My first aerial was two pieces of wood tap nailed in a H tap shape with two pieces of rabbit wire attached to it. I got it mostly for the children then so that they could watch it. I was living right in the country area and so we couldn't get out much.

On the other hand, by no means everyone of this generation was pinned to the home. The McLeans had first had a TV when they were in Cyprus from 1953-6. When they returned to the UK they had felt no desire to have one since they had numerous social activities which were important at this point in their life: they paid for baby-sitters so that they could both go out, and removed some of the domestic burden by paying other people to do the cleaning and ironing. They only re-acquired a TV in 1963.

Some were positively opposed to TV. The Summers were late adopters of TV, mainly due to Roger Summers' resistance.

Roger Summers: I didn't have a television until the mid-60s. It was probably a bad move to have done that anyway.

LH: Why was this? Why didn't you want the TV?

Daphne Summers: You didn't want the children to get square eyes.

Roger Summers: Yeah, I thought it might discourage them from doing other things if they had that, although in fact I don't think it did, did it, in the end. I don't think they watched very much on it even when we got it.

In fact, for many years Daphne Summers would have preferred to have had a TV, since not having one excluded her from some peer discussions.

LH: When other people were getting TV and since then talked about TV, didn't you feel left out?

Daphne Summers: I did.

Roger Summers: No, I felt we were at an advantage.

Daphne Summers: It used to be a bone of contention.

LH: What, you would have preferred a TV?

Daphne Summers: Yes. I wanted to know what they were talking about.

Muriel Cifonelli provided, as with radio, a more detailed account of how early TV was experienced which touched upon several of the themes outlined above. First,

she recalled how her parent's set had become a communal resource at the time of the Coronation.

Muriel Cifonelli: We had a television after the war...very early on - long before other people - and we watched the Queen being crowned. We had hundreds of people in our living room watching it. So, yes, we had a little black and white television with a big magnifying screen over the front because they were only 9 inches, weren't they?

She later added:

Muriel Cifonelli: Of course [having a television] made you very much the centre of things. People would come to watch the television. We always had crowds of people in our house anyway. It was that kind of a family house but people would come and things like the Queen's Coronation, there seemed to be crowds of people in the house. The whole living room was stuffed with people watching it because very few people had televisions.

LH: So you mean people dropped in on a regular basis as well?

Muriel Cifonelli: Yes, quite often, yes, just to come and watch things.

However, after they were married, the Cifonellis did not get a TV of their own until 1962.

LH: Did you ever miss it - if you'd lived in a household with TV then to go to one without TV?

Muriel Cifonelli: Yes, to some extent we did but my parents only lived up the road so we had access. We could go and spend an evening with them, no problem.

The Cifonellis explained the decision to get their own set.

Jack Cifonelli: [Earlier] I worked very long hours anyway. So the television set was not that... necessary - that isn't quite the right word.

Muriel Cifonelli: We bought one because by then we had two children so I'd given up work. Jack worked extremely long hours and we bought it because... particularly Saturdays... there were certain types of day when I was home a lot on my own. It was for me and the children really. But basically for me - as a form of entertainment for me being in the house by myself.

4.2.2 Early TV viewing practices

The viewing patterns of the early years of TV were mixed. Some, like the Solomons were more selective in their viewing and although the TV would be on at some time every evening it would be turned off if there were no interesting

programmes to watch. For others, like the Griffiths, TV was still such a novelty and so exciting that it was watched much of the evening. The Englefields, who had quite positive memories of TV in that period, pointed out that watching also had a seasonal dimension.

Joanne Englefield: They used to have some jolly good programmes. I can still remember them now. That was in the time of What's My Line . I mean, [the TV] really arranged our Sundays, didn't it? Gilbert Harding and all those.

Ray Englefield: Yes. The nights we were in, we looked at the programmes quite carefully, didn't we, and said we'll watch that and...

Joanne Englefield: Hmmm. You looked forward to it. I mean, we debated whether to let Christine stay up.

Ray Englefield: It was a different form of entertainment from what else there was around, you see, particularly in the winter, when there wasn't much doing in the winter.

Joanne Englefield: It was super plus stuff out there, yeah.

At this point in time TV habits were formed for some of this cohort which remained with them all the way into retirement. However, changing personal circumstances also shaped TV viewing or lack of it which meant that not all of those habits simply carried over from earlier years. For example, Albert Welman's on-call work at the hospital had disrupted the continuity of his TV watching, and because Chris Shepard had worked into the evening as an editor, he had had little time for TV during his earlier years. His wife, Hilda, also recalled how the demands of looking after children had meant that in the past she had only seen TV later in the evening. Ivy Clough also watched more TV now after retirement. She described how for many years, when married to her first husband, their pattern of activities had meant that she had relatively little time to watch TV.

Ivy Clough: Well, I watch Coronation Street but I've only just started because I've never had time to watch it. See, I was the type of person, when my [first] husband went out to work at six o'clock, then I'd have to do something. And I'd be working indoors all day and on Wednesday I'd spend the whole day baking. Time my husband came home from work... I mean, he used to work sometimes 'til eight o'clock...by the time he come home from work and I'd got his dinner, there was no time to watch television. It was nearly time for bed.

The nature of TV had also altered between those early years and the present day. These changes which were occurring even before retirement affected the viewing experience, as Muriel Cifonelli observed.

Muriel Cifonelli: When we first had television it was a novelty. It was new and it was a bit like theatre-going. It was fairly serious. But television isn't like that any more, is it? It's there if you want it and if you don't want it you

don't bother with it. I think television is much more a thing you simply watch when you're tired more than anything any more. I don't think it's such selective viewing as it used to be.

LH: What, it used to be more serious?

Muriel Cifonelli: More serious - that's the word, yes. Yes, it was serious and I don't think it is any more. If you've had a meal and you've washed up and all the phone calls are finished and whatnot, you say "Oh I wonder what's on? Shall we watch so and so?" But if you've got other things to do, you don't bother.

Meanwhile, the Williams explained their different behaviour in relation to changes in TV options.

Dorothy Williams: It wasn't switched on all the evening then. Not sometimes like it is now. If we're in, mostly the TV's on in the evening. Unless we say "That's a load of rubbish" and switch it off.

LH: So why the change?

Dorothy Williams: Well I suppose because we've grown up with it really. There's been more channels. There's been more choice. At the beginning there wasn't much choice, was there? If you didn't like the programme that was on it went off. Also of course if there's nothing on that we want to see, we play what we've taped. We tend to use our video.

4.2.3 Children and TV

It is worth adding a note about how this cohort assessed their children's relation to TV when they were young, not only because it casts light on debates about children and TV in general but also because some of this cohort had now taken on the role of grandparents. They were now advising their adult children and sometimes child-minding. Hence children's consumption of TV was still an issue for the young elderly.

On the whole, our sample remembered few problems as regards their children watching too much TV. Like children in our other contemporary studies of teleworkers and lone parents (Haddon and Silverstone, 1993 and 1995), TV watching was one activity among many others - the children had often been busy doing other things. However, Fred Clough provided an example of how TV still sometimes presented problems even when he was a young parent.

Fred Clough: We used to have a job to get them to bed because they used to be glued to the flaming television set.

Vera Welman also reflected on her attempts to regulate how much TV her children watched.

Vera Welman: I did when they were small but once they get to teenagers, it gets difficult because, as I say, peer pressure comes into it and it's a continual bickering if you... It was easier to let them watch it and most of the stuff they were quite selective themselves over.

And Hilda Shepard noted how using TV as reward, or its withdrawal as a punishment, was by no means new.

Hilda Shepard: I remember they did something naughty once and I said "No television for the whole week" and I stuck to it. It nearly killed me but...

Chris Shepard: She missed it more than they did, I think.

In addition to any regulation of TV per se, there was the question of controlling what was viewed. In fact, many reported that they had no problems over the censorship of TV, with Rosie Aldridge observing that there had not been so much violence on TV when her children were young. But Bert Digby, one of the younger ones in this age group, could remember where the issue had emerged.

Bert Digby: Well we didn't allow them to watch any rubbish - what we considered rubbish. Even when they got to their teens they used to like to try and buck the system. I remember Michael bringing a video home one evening and half a dozen of his friends and they all sat themselves down and dimmed the lights and stuck this video on and I said "Right, that's off for a start." I mean, just the first few frames!

Some of our young elderly pointed out how both the amount of TV watched by children and controlling content were greater issues today. However, much of their knowledge of contemporary children was of a second-hand nature. A few could refer to their own experiences with their grandchildren, but some caution is also needed in interpreting this evidence. For instance, in the Englefield's case:

Ray Englefield: I think the youngsters of today are so TV oriented that they can't sit down for half an hour in the middle of the morning unless there's something on television to watch. Michael's been to visit us at ten o'clock. He switches on the television and...

Joanne Englefield: Well, there's not much for them to do here, is there. But at home there is.

On the other hand, Muriel Cifonelli noted the real changes in TV which made it more attractive for the current generation of children compared to when their own children were younger.

Muriel Cifonelli: We used to watch the children's programmes a lot then but then they didn't have as many children's programmes as they have today. When my grandson's here, we always have to look them up and see when there's going to be a cartoon on or Sesame Street.

Jack Cifonelli: I think it was less of a built-in thing, if you like, for children then as it is now. There's an expectation that certain programmes will come on and they've heard about them, they've seen them so their expectation is that each day, whenever it's on they will see it.

Meanwhile, the Williams were well aware of changes in the marketing of children's media through the experience of their grandchildren.

Dorothy Williams: They watch the TV a lot more than our children did. Or when I say they do, they would like to. It's often rationed where they are. The little one, Kate, knows more about the videos than I do. She's three and she's got videos of Peter Pan and The Little Mermaid and things like this and she knows how to go and get them and put them in and the right buttons on. At three! She's only just three. And of course there's so much advertising for children on TV these days. They're advertising ahead for the next video that's coming out. So they know what's on the way before it's even out, what films are coming round in the children's holiday.

George Williams: And this is included on header of the tape. They give trailers of other tapes, don't they?

Dorothy Williams: Yes, as I say, a three year old is telling you what other tapes are coming along or are available at the time even if they haven't got that one. I'm not terribly happy about that because... [they say] we've got to have this now, we've got to have that. It's almost as if they're saying "Oh well, in the Easter holidays they're going to have Aladdin on (at the cinema)" or something. So everybody's got to go and see Aladdin. It almost becomes a law.

LH: So it's a mechanism for creating fashion now?

Dorothy Williams: Definitely, yes, with children. And Christmas time's a nightmare with them, with what's available in the shops for Christmas.

4.2.4 Changes in viewing with retirement

Other researchers have noted some of the limitations on media consumption which are faced by many elderly because of economic constraint. Although TV itself is a relatively cheap form of leisure, lack of resources can make VCRs unaffordable (Randall, 1995: 7) and mean that the elderly are less likely to acquire cable or satellite (Cook, 1990: 55). In our own research, the economic picture was mixed. We observed in an earlier chapter that specifically among the young elderly, money was not always so tight even if they had often not developed consumerist attitudes. Some of the poorest, like Rosie Aldridge and Ivy Clough, did indeed complain about the amount of the licence fee, and several others had moved to using free programme listings in newspapers since they found that getting magazines like the Radio Times was a little too expensive (also noted in

research by Tulloch, (1989: 191). The cost of larger items like satellite, cable and camcorders was also mentioned as a barrier to purchase. On the other hand, many had acquired videos without worrying too much about the expense.

The second preliminary point to make is that when we examine changes in TV viewing related to the move to retirement, it is worth noting once again, as in the section on radio, that the transition can be more or less distinct, with gender being a key factor. Hence, for women who had not been in full-time paid employment, the weekly time structure before and after official retirement age, and hence TV consumption, was sometimes not markedly different.

Although the overall trend was for more TV to be watched in retirement, not everyone fitted into this pattern. The Waters watched less TV now because there were fewer and fewer programmes that interested them. The Grants watched less because freedom from work had meant that Jim and Pauline now used their free time to go out more, and to go away on holidays. In fact, in many cases where the young elderly led fairly active lifestyles, TV watching expanded only a little more because their other activities had taken up the time made free from work. (This process has also been noted by other researchers such as Randall, 1995: 5, Willis, 1995: 6 and Bleise, 1986: 574). Those watching considerably more TV included those who were more house-bound or home-centred through such reasons as increasing physical immobility. Also included were those who had lost their partners such as Frank Payne and Rosie Aldridge. In the evenings, TV broke the silence for Rosie Aldridge and provided some company (a theme noted in Bleise, 1986: 580).

Rosie Aldridge: Oh yeah, I have it on. I've always got something on. I am never in here without anything.

Retirement did mean that it was possible to be around the house more and hence to watch TV at times when previously our participants would have been out at work. However, very few watched morning TV. Mavis Digby watched the news while waiting for social services to take her mother to day care, Rosie Aldridge had TV on in the morning as company before going to her day centre, Hilda Shepard watched over breakfast and the McLeans now caught the news and the Kilroy debates.

Greg McLean: It was you either have breakfast in bed or come down here, switch the television on and have breakfast with television. Nice decadent thing to do.

Some had tried watching such programmes and chat shows and not found them so interesting, but most had never even considered watching morning TV: it did not fit into their established routines. For instance, many were busy in the mornings, including doing various chores, because that is when they felt they had more energy. If they did nothing then, they felt they had not achieved anything that day. Often the young elderly felt guilty about watching TV outside the traditional evening slot. For instance, Frank Payne tried to avoid watching morning TV and even listening to morning radio.

Frank Payne: If I turn on the television or the radio first thing in the morning, it tends to make me lazy. I don't do what I should do. So I control it a bit.

LH: Why does it make you lazy, in what sense?

Frank Payne: Well I sit here and... whereas I should be doing housework or whatever.

A little more daytime TV was watched, although some of the guilty feelings about morning TV applied equally here. Sometimes the young elderly were more likely to watch special events on TV, the odd 'good film' or one-off programmes which they particularly wanted to see. Sometimes people turned to the TV when bad weather pinned them to the home, implying that daytime watching can have a seasonal element. The other occasions when daytime TV was watched was when it coincided with pauses in routines, although this was not always 'coincidence' in the sense that such pauses could be arranged to match broadcasting schedules. For example, one common slot was around lunch at 12 noon or 1pm or other snacks at 4pm or 5pm. Whenever people stopped to eat they might catch the news, perhaps one of the soaps or a quiz show. Other breaks arose from fatigue, itself related to age. For example, Mavis Digby was amongst those who came home tired from shopping in the afternoon and would sit down to recover for a while in front of the TV.

Some of our participants retained older habits, not turning the TV on until after dinner at 7 or 8pm, but often evening viewing started earlier from about 5pm. This reflected the fact that some of the young elderly thought children's programmes were rather good. But they had also discovered other mixed age and adult shows at that time such as quizzes like *Countdown*, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. These led into the 6pm news. For women who had been in paid employment, chores had often been shifted to daytime with retirement, meaning that there was additional time for watching in the evening, as Lucy Griffith noted:

Lucy Griffith: We watch it more, because you've got more time. When I used to go to work, I always had something to do in the afternoon or in the evening.

Again, some retained their old habits in terms of when TV was turned off for the night. For instance Gwen Evans stopped watching at about 10pm when she got tired of TV - anything interesting which was on later was recorded on the VCR. But the McLeans provided an example of those who could now stay up later. Before retirement, Greg had had to go to bed reasonably early in preparation for the next working day. After coming home late from folk dancing and their other activities the McLeans could now stay up to watch something which they had recorded earlier in the evening. To sum up, the general underlying pattern was that the temporal boundaries of TV watching might change a little and that most of our young elderly watched more TV after retirement, but not a vast amount more.

We now turn to one household to show some of the complex dynamics of TV watching. The Englefields were a little atypical in the sense that although Ray Englefield had been able to wind down and put off retirement until 70, he was uncomfortable with his recent loss of work and had not yet adjusted. He watched more TV since retirement. In fact, at one point Joanne Englefield joked about him being a 'couch potato'. However, it emerged that she contributed to this, by denying him space in the home to follow up his other potentially space-consuming interests.

Ray Englefield: I suppose I'm not as active as I used to be, you see. It's my old bones are creaking a bit.

Joanne Englefield: The trouble is also in male activities. (For instance), he's got a box that he's re-furbishing and he wants to do a design on top. But that means he occupies the kitchen table. So to be fair, I tend to say "Oh well, you know...I'm not too keen on this" I mean, I use the kitchen table. So...it's not like knitting where you can just sit down and get on and knit and you're not making any difference to anybody else, is it? Everything that you might think up doing occupies the whole of the table, doesn't it?

Ray Englefield: Well my woodwork hobby does, yeah.

Joanne Englefield: Yeah. Well most things really. I know what you've been doing lately; sorting out millions of photographs.

LH: So is the point that you do these activities less because they take up more room and interfere with your work in the kitchen?

Joanne Englefield: No, I think if you really wanted to do something, he'd probably insist but I must confess I don't always encourage things like that. I've got to keep asking him to move or do this or that.

Slightly bored and uneasy with his retirement and turning to TV by default, Ray was at least allowed to determine what they watched on TV.

Joanne Englefield: We mostly watch things that you like watching. That doesn't mean that he says I can't watch something if I want to. But I'm ready to go along with it and then I like to knit or sew while it's on.

TV helped to pass the time. Joanne compared the free time of retirement to the days when she was busier with her family.

Joanne Englefield: It's surprising how many hours there are in the day when you aren't... when you haven't got to go out to work or if you've got young children, you're running up and down taking them to school, meeting them and all that sort of thing.

They did not watch much daytime TV on the whole, but it certainly came on now and again to fill gaps.

Joanne Englefield: And if you sit down and you're waiting for a meal for half an hour, say, and you're tired or whatever with what you've been doing, you might put it on, mightn't you? It's to while away an odd half hour then during the day.

Both agreed that nowadays the fact that they were more easily fatigued also played a part in their decision just to put the TV on.

Joanne Englefield: It's easier, yeah.

Ray Englefield: Yeah, we haven't got the energy we had when we were young.

Joanne Englefield: You're absolutely right. It is very easy just to switch it on.

The Englefields provided a further illustration within one household of how TV watching and schedules integrate with people's routines and time structure. Joanne mentioned her interest in the soap opera, *Neighbours*, which fitted conveniently into a certain time spot and marked a transition in the day.

Joanne Englefield: Sometimes he videos it if I'm not there. Normally I'm not that desperate but it is a half an hour I set aside or 20 minutes for myself. I usually try to watch it at half past one because I find that by the time I've got the lunch and sat down and had it... It started when I went part-time. I found that that was a useful part of the day to sit down and have my lunch and have a break and it just carried on from there. I find it makes a nice division between the morning and the afternoon. And back when I watched it to begin with, it was quite interesting. It's sort of got a bit corny now but, on the other hand, habits die hard.

LH: But at the moment there's no other soaps that have caught your attention in the same way?

Joanne Englefield: No. Well, if I wanted to watch one in the evening at half past seven it becomes a little bit of a hassle, I suppose. Half past one during the day, that's fine. In other words, it's the time factor rather than the content. Sometimes we might not be washing up 'til half past seven or whatever. I don't want to be fussing around thinking "Oh, I must go and watch that".

In attempting to question stereotypes of passive TV watching by older people, a number of other researchers have pointed out how the elderly in general are selective, plan their viewing and, try, as in our own observations, to organise viewing to fit in with their routines (Randall, 1995: 4). Such writers note that the elderly have just as complex a relationship to TV as any other groups in society (Cook, 1990: 49). For example, despite the viewing figures, a number feel guilty about TV watching, rationing it, seeing it as a waste of time and unconstructive leisure (Randall, 1995: 4; Cook, 1990: 49). In fact, it has been suggested that the earlier experiences of this cohort created a stronger work ethic, which includes having to earn for authentic pleasures, (Willis, 1995: 7). Hence, a number of these

writers mention how the elderly strive to keep control of TV and not let it dominate their lives (Willis, 1995: 7). Certainly we can find similar themes in our sample, and have noted some above. For instance, the Summers were another couple who cited their sense of guilt at watching TV:

Daphne Summers: I can't watch unless I knit.

LH: Why is that?

Daphne Summers: Guilty conscience thing. It's not so bad if it's rubbish because I'm still not wasting my time.

And while some tried to fit into media timetables when organising the day, Jim Grant was one example from this age group who definitely did not want to be at all 'controlled' by broadcast schedules since he did 'not like to be a slave to the clock'. He joked that his life in the army in his youth had been too regimented and that he was still recovering from that! Nor were the Williams comfortable with the duration of some media offerings and so regained control when necessary with the VCR - viewing films in ways unintended by producers.

George Williams: You've got to sit still for so long too...

Dorothy Williams: Hmmm, that's why we never hire a film.

George Williams: I'm not one to sit still for long really.

Dorothy Williams: And the odd occasion there might be a film that's caught your eye and you've thought, Oh, I'll look at that. But very rare, isn't it?

George Williams: We tend to record it in that case and then perhaps look at it in two or three sessions.

For some, especially those less active and more home-centred, broadcasting schedules could provide some temporal orientation when there were few other markers to distinguish the days. Bernie Griffiths was made aware of the passing of time by measuring it according to TV time.

Bernie Griffith: The time goes very... the days go very quick. You'd think they wouldn't but you say you're hanging around, not much to do. But we look at the television and we'd say it's A Question of Sport on Monday night and it seems like three days later it's on again. And I'm saying "It's not on twice a week, is it?" "No, it's a week ago." It flies round. I suppose it's because, you know, you don't want to get any older.

The young elderly were like any other age groups in that when the TV was switched on, the amount of attention given to it varied not only between households but over the course of the day. Gwen Evans distinguished between the times when she was half watching and those when giving TV her full attention.

Gwen Evans: Although it goes on at half past four, I'm not... I'm only watching it in and out. But by six o'clock I like to be really finished with my dinner and the clearing up and I am sitting down properly and looking at the television.

And also, as with households at any other life stage, TV watching sometimes led to conflicts. One way or another, Sam Waters' hearing caused problems, as in this example of his habit of reading while watching the TV.

LH: So do you watch a lot of TV together or you watch it separately?

Sam Waters: Well if we're in, we do. But then again I'll read a few books and so forth. If I get a newspaper, I read it from back to front every word in it.

Janice Waters: And that is an irritation when you're sitting watching the television...

Sam Waters: Being deaf, I can't hear the noise I make and...

Janice Waters: And somebody's sitting by the side keep rattling all the pages. I tell you it can cause arguments. I don't whether it's the television or the newspaper.

Sam had had an induction loop fitted by the local council so that now he could hear the TV better - but both before and after this event, his hearing problems created some tensions around TV watching.

Sam Waters: In the other room I have an induction loop for the television which allows me to hear quite comfortably.

Janice Waters: You see, there again, he's in trouble because... because he's got this thing fixed to the television, he tends to turn it down so then I can't hear. But before, you see, everybody used to shout "Oh Dad, turn that down"... it was so high. And now he gets into trouble because we can't hear.

Sam Waters: But it does cause a lot of inconvenience.

In addition, Sam was sometimes banned from the living room because of a clash of tastes.

Sam Waters: Janice doesn't like football. I don't often watch football but if I wanted to I could go upstairs and watch it on black and white.. It doesn't matter.

Janice Waters: I'm not at all interested in sport.

Sam Waters: So we don't have many sports programmes. So that's censored.

Ivy Clough commented on the fact that according to the timesheets she had at some points slept while the TV was on.

Ivy Clough: Well that's a drug to me. Especially when there's something on that's boring. I'm not overkeen on TV. In fact, the rubbish they put on now, I mean, as I say, these quiz games, yes, and that is OK but some of the rubbish they put on bores me to tears if I sit and watch it. I'd rather fall asleep than sit ... than watch television.

On such occasions, her waking up and 'channel hopping' in search of something interesting sometimes annoyed Fred.

Fred Clough: Sometimes I'm sitting here watching it. She's asleep and she'll wake up and just press the button and switch the blooming programme over.

Finally, when there was a special sport event like the Cup Final, Lucy Griffith had to be careful not to distract Bernie while bringing in the odd snack.

Lucy Griffith: Peace and quiet - no one must come in while he's watching that up here, while the Cup Final's on.

Bernie Griffith: Every time she comes in there's a goal scored. I say "Go out!"

Lucy Griffith: I [just] feed him up with tea.

4.2.5 Programme genres watched

The young elderly watch as wide a range of different programme genres as other adult viewers, but some of their choices do relate to their particular circumstances and biographies. For example, previous researchers have already noted the salience of quiz shows which, like crosswords, are not just time-fillers but a source of intellectual stimulation (Willis, 1995: 5; Cook, 1990: 49-51; Bleise, 1986: 578). After losing the stimulation of the workplace, the retired are often starting to look ahead and be concerned about any mental deterioration and hence fight to 'stay alert'. For instance, mysteries and quiz games provided the most interesting and 'challenging' programmes for Fred Clough. As far as other genres were concerned:

Fred Clough: I'd sooner read the paper than watch TV. Unless it's something like a puzzle where you've got a murder investigation or something like that, where you've got to pitch your brainbox with them.

While his wife's ability to answer questions was taken as proof that there was not too much mental decline.

Ivy Clough: I liked listening to the quiz games on there. I used to love to watch Blockbusters but that's not on any more and I used to try and answer with

them and I used to like to answer... to see if I'm still with it like, you know. And if I answer right, I'll say "Oh, I'm not too bad. I beat them to it".

Similarly the Waters.

Sam Waters: I think there's one or two good programmes. Even some of the word programmes, you know... There's a BBC programme on now where they make up words out of three letters, you know. We always have a go at them, you know. It sort of keeps your brain ticking over. We try and follow it through because it makes you think.

And Frank Payne.

Frank Payne: I like watching those, you know, like Mastermind or... or any of the quiz games because I like to match my wits against them.

LH: Is that something you do more now than you used to do?

Frank Payne: Oh yes, much more. Oh yes. Because I'm using my brain in that way. When I was at the office, I was using my brain all the time. And now I'm trying to activate the brain a bit by matching my wits, if you like.

Other researchers have argued that some of the same rationale also lies behind the interest that some elderly show in news and current affairs programmes (Cook, 1990: 51; Willis, 1995: 5). Certainly most of our participants made some effort to see the news. Such an interest also illustrates how the elderly, contrary to some stereotypes, have often not disengaged just because they are no longer involved in the social world of work (Bleise, 1986: 575-6; Willis, 1995: 3). Television enables them to stay in touch with events (Willis, 1995: 11, Cook, 1990: 49). One example from our own study would be the Cloughs who preferred more serious programmes. They always watched the TV news and took a special interest in politics.

Ivy Clough: Yeah, I like to watch the news. I like to know what's going on in the world, although I'm getting... I get a bit huffy about it all.

In fact, the news was the only thing Ivy Clough was likely to discuss outside the home - not her soap operas.

Ivy Clough: I've spoken to my daughter about what was on the news. Not about other programmes. I said "Here did you hear so and so on the news?" And she said "No". So I said "Well, you should."

The Cloughs were among a number of our participants who also liked political discussion programmes like *Question Time*. In their particular case, this related to their own general civic involvement. For instance, Fred Clough sometimes went to local council and other meetings, such as those of Age Concern, and both he and Ivy had quite strong views which they sometimes aired in public when dealing with councillors. *Question Time* also appealed to Gwen Evans.

Gwen Evans: Because it's all real and people. The questions in Question Time are nearly always up to date questions, aren't they? Oh yes, I like that programme.

Penny Hawkins was one of those who explained why she was actually more interested in news and politics compared to when she was younger and living in the US. Then her domestic commitments squeezed out time to take an interest in various issues.

Penny Hawkins: Because I've got more time now. I mean, when you're raising kids and everything... I mean, how I excused myself from not paying more attention to the McCarthy thing was I had small children and they take up so much of your time. And now I've got nothing to take up my time and I can pay much more attention to things that are going on.

Meanwhile Joanne Englefield's emergence from the domestic concerns of a young family had led her to assess the reality of programmes differently. She started by discussing her current, changed tastes in drama, where she was now more sensitised to the issues within programmes.

Joanne Englefield: I like series very much like Love Hurts. I wouldn't miss that if I can help it.

LH: What appeals about things like that?

Joanne Englefield: Escapism. I really don't want things that are telling me all the dreadful things in life all the time... It's the same with films at the cinema. There was a time I would have been rushing to see this new Spielberg on, Schindler's List, but I wouldn't go and see it now.

LH: Why, what's changed? Why not now?

Joanne Englefield: Me, I suppose. I suppose it's all just too sad and there's enough sadness and so forth.

Ray Englefield: It's not light-hearted entertainment.

Joanne Englefield: I suppose when you're younger you can look at a film and it is entertainment but now looking at something like this Spielberg one, it would come home to me too much that that was actually what did happen to real people. I think perhaps when you're [younger] ... I'm going back a few years... one's a bit more superficial. You're more caught up in your own family life and everything and you go and you feel sad and think how awful but I wouldn't have dwelt on it unnecessarily. But perhaps you've got more time. I've got more time now to dwell on things and don't necessarily want to make myself feel sad all the time, do I?

She, like Mavis Digby, sometimes watched *Parliamentary Question Time*. She described how her interest in politics had also changed as she now had fewer domestic and work obligations to take up her time.

Joanne Englefield: Actually I find that I've taken a lot more interest in politics since I've retired. I listen to things and I get all het up. I don't know why. I read the papers sometimes and some of the things... I mean the debate they had yesterday, for instance, I got all het up. Well, if I was rushing off to work, I wouldn't even have known they had the debate, would I?

Other researchers have noted how soap opera characters in particular can provide some company for the elderly in general (Tulloch, 1989: 190). But the significance of this depends on the living situation, and appears to correlate with degrees of isolation and loneliness (Cook, 1990: 51; Tulloch, 1989: 185). Certainly this would fit in with the experience of some of our participants. Rosie Aldridge had by no means recovered from the death of her husband, and now the main things in her life were the local Day Centre, the Church, phone calls from her daughter and her 'soaps' in the evening and at weekends. She watched *Home and Away*, *Neighbours*, *Emmerdale* and *Coronation Street* in the week and the omnibus *Eastenders* at the weekend. In contrast, she had not watched many soaps at all when her husband was alive because she always seemed to be busy: being out at work in the day, then coming home and cooking at the time when the soaps were on, and perhaps ironing in the evening. But now she had more free time to kill. It was convenient that they were nearly all repeated nowadays so she could miss an episode if something else was on and catch it later - or video it. Rosie Aldridge regularly talked about the soaps with both others at the Centre and her daughter. She enjoyed them and was always waiting to see what happened in the next episode, but acknowledged that they were largely time-fillers.

Rosie Aldridge: Well the Home and Away and that... well sometimes they're stupid but you still watch them, don't you. I mean, we talk about it and say "Cor, wasn't it stupid. Aren't they getting... don't they get on your nerves and that,". But we are still watching them. We're still getting home to watch them. As I say, it's probably because we don't have much more to do, have we?

Widower Frank Payne's soap watching had increased, also reflecting his loneliness.

Frank Payne: I've watched them more since I lost my wife. Much more. She used to watch them regularly but I didn't.

LH: Why do you think you watch those more?

Frank Payne: Again, a form of company.

And while Penny Hawkins had divorced years ago and was more used to her own company, soaps were still appreciated:

Penny Hawkins: They become a sort of surrogate family. You know, it's silly but I'm not ashamed of it. I don't know, it's like having neighbours and you're interested in what's going to happen. It just becomes part of your life really.

Since a sub-sample of our participants actually came from or still lived in the East End of London, we asked whether the soap relating to that area had any special meaning for them. It was the only one the Cifonellis watched, partly because it was connected with their past:

Muriel Cifonelli: We do watch EastEnders but we don't care whether we do or don't.

LH: What do you like about EastEnders?

Muriel Cifonelli: [To Jack] You were born there, sort of.

Jack Cifonelli: For example, where our restaurant was, it was actually right on the city limits and there was an open-air market.

Muriel Cifonelli: Yes. That's one of the interests really. Also, it doesn't move too fast. I think that's one of the secrets of it.

Elsie Davey also liked Eastenders because she could relate to it.

Elsie Davey: To me a lot of it is down-to-earth, right cor blimey-type stuff. I know they're not but they're acting that type.

Elsie Davey: Proper Londoners.

But responses to this particular show were just as liable to be negative. The only soap the Griffiths watched was *Coronation Street*. Commenting on *EastEnders*, the Griffiths rejected the authenticity of the programme.

Lucy Griffith: We don't like EastEnders because I don't think it's like the East End at all. Too much shouting at one another and hollering at one another. But we like Coronation Street, the bit of humour in it. You can have a bit of a laugh, you know.

While for Gwen Evans:

Gwen Evans: I think they're unreal really. They get such ridiculous stories attached to them at times, don't they? How anybody can look at that EastEnders, I don't know. A more depressing thing I've ever seen.

One of the television genres not mentioned in some of the previous literature was travel, and this may reflect the fact that this was the first cohort of young elderly to have experienced foreign holidays on a large scale earlier in their life. For instance, the McLeans:

Maureen McLean: There's the odd half hour holiday programme we like watching. [We say] "Oh we've been there, we've been there, we've been there".

The Williams explained why they watched:

Dorothy Williams: Well very often we might have been there or might think of going there or something like.

And the Evans:

Gwen Evans: Partly but I suppose because we've gone abroad quite a lot of times that I still like to look at it.

One role of TV that has been mentioned by other commentators related to how the medium provided a window on the world for the elderly, and how they can feel it has a positive educational value (Willis, 1995: 8). In our own research, Fred Clough was one of those watching the Open University programmes.

Fred Clough: Sometimes I think they're quite interesting but like sometimes I can't get to grips with what they're talking about. But it's still intelligent and it's still pretty interesting to know how the world is going and how it started off and that, the modern technology, how they're improving things. The same as electricity, there's so much they can do with electricity, it's just amazing what they can do and how it works.

But the more general educational role was best articulated by the Waters:

Janice Waters: You get little things of interest on there and you learn quite a lot from the television I think.

Sam Waters: There are some extremely good programmes on during the day. For instance, they were talking about when the meningitis scare was on in the Cotswolds, they started to investigate the Roman baths. They pumped them out dry and went right the way back to the contours of the earth and where the spring came up and they cleared all the soil. They eliminated any connection with meningitis. But they went right back to the source then re-built it. Right down to the wattle in the banks by the spring they got to. And that to me was of great interest. We will never ever see it again.

LH: [To Janice] You said that you also learn a few things off TV. What type of things were you thinking of?

Janice Waters: Well all sorts of things. I mean, I'm always interested in illnesses. You have the hospital programmes and they're quite interesting. Actually, Vicky and I like watching operations but Sam doesn't.

Sam Waters: When they stick a needle in I go ssshhh. I'm windy.

Janice Waters: I tell you what I like too with the soaps. You often find that with the soaps they try to right some wrongs, if you know what I mean.

Sam Waters: They put social problems in them as well. You find that they will bring up [something] about inoculations against this or that or they will... drinking and driving... they will make a programme around that, basically, which they try to make a lesson out of it, I think. It comes out quite obvious with some things.

Janice Waters: Yes. And now in Coronation Street, Deirdre's daughter, she's only sixteen, you know, and she's got this boyfriend and they're sort of living together. They come in the mother's house and then the mother says that the boy's making the place untidy so he's got to go so. Then the girl says "Well, if he goes, I'm going to go". That sort of thing. I mean it's just the attitude of some of the younger kids, isn't it?

Sam Waters: And you wonder whether this is a reflection on the number of children leaving home and going into London, which is a social problem we've got today, isn't it? So they make a programme and write round the social problem in the programme. Maybe they might be able to put a solution in which may affect some people and the behaviour pattern of some people. So it is an educational programme in another way, isn't it?

The educational theme emerged again in relation to travel and wildlife programmes.

Sam Waters: It keeps people informed. The news programmes drive you round the bend a bit if you're constantly watching because every news bulletin comes up, it tells you almost the same news. You don't get a lot of changing news, I find. The morning main items of the news are still at six o'clock or ten o'clock at night. But generally it keeps you informed and at times it keeps you informed about different things in the world as well... it keeps your world interest going. The world has shrunk a great deal. We're not great travellers. There's some people, probably like yourself dashing off to wherever you go, all over the place. You see a bit more of life than we do and you talk to the country people but we don't get around a great deal.

Janice Waters: But you see you hear that on the travel programmes, you see. You get a gist of what's going on.

Sam Waters: But they're a bit highly coloured, the travel programmes.

Janice Waters: I like the ones with Attenborough. They're very good. That was really... some of the colour in there is lovely. They had the, you know, all the ice... ice floe.

Sam Waters: ... which is fantastic. We shall never go there but it's fantastic, isn't it, to see. You see the world has shrunk what with dishes and satellites

and so forth; communication is almost instant throughout the world, isn't it. Whereas in our day, in our earlier days, shall we say, it would take a fortnight for the news to get anywhere or, wherever it was, or... You didn't get instant news and instant visual news. Now the visual news is right in your door; right in your living room.

4.2.6 Teletext

Teletext was one of the few innovations that had made some in-roads into the homes of the current young elderly. Over half of our participants had teletext facilities and most of those that possessed teletext used it occasionally: for sports results, checking their shares on the stock market, for weather and road reports, programme listings, and the news. Some planned to get teletext at a later stage. Gwen Evans thought that she had made the wrong decision when she bought the last set in that she should have got a remote control and teletext.

Gwen Evans: The next one we get will have the full works of all that, you know. It's only just that I didn't go into it enough. I suppose the Teletext was around six, seven years ago and I didn't go into it enough. I would like it for the cooking recipes and the holidays and that. They come up on the Teletext, don't they?

Teletext had a particular value for those starting to lose their hearing. Bernie Griffith had decided to get a teletext facility when they bought their current main TV set 5 years previously. They had first seen the facility on their daughter's set. Years ago, Bernie Griffith had tried out an induction loop plugged into his hearing aid but he could not be bothered with using it. It was good enough for him to see the words when watching films or the news. Even Lucy Griffith had got used to putting the teletext on and reading the words - which in some cases was necessary even when she could hear programmes.

Lucy Griffith: Trouble is I put Teletext and I get the habit of putting it on, you know. I mean, I can hear it but I put it on, don't I?

Bernie Griffith: Yeah, especially when Rab C. Nesbitt's on. He talks right Scottish so Lucy has to look at it just to get it what's happening.

Lucy Griffith: I said "I can't understand what he's saying. I must have Teletext on."

Bernie Griffith had discovered another benefit in having the teletext sub-titles on:

Bernie Griffith: That's all right if you've got company and all because they're all talking and you can leave the picture on, turn the sound right down and I can see it on Teletext. So it's very good, I reckon.

But teletext was not just evaluated in functional terms. In the Englefield household, teletext represented different things to Joanne and Ray. Joanne

regarded that as 'fiddling around', as unnecessarily playing with the technology - which lead to a discussion of the gender division of labour and 'free' time.

Joanne Englefield: Oh. I can't be bothered with all that, you see. I could just look it up in the Radio Times and that. You've got more time than me to fiddle.

Ray Englefield: Well I've got more time, yeah. Or I make more time.

Joanne Englefield: Ray, who got the pizzas and that when we came home today at 12 o'clock? Who leapt up in the middle of lunch and sorted the man who came to repair the washing machine? Who went and got the coffee?

Ray Englefield: True.

Joanne Englefield: Right.

And Frank Payne certainly did not use his teletext as part of a rational information seeking process. Frank referred to his interest in gadgetry several times, and saw teletext as just that - like his fascination with the computer screensavers, it was one of the odd things to play around with that attracted his attention.

LH: But when you do use it, what type of things do you look up?

Frank Payne: Oh anything, you know; the news that you could read about or now and again you think about trying to find out when planes are arriving and all that kind of... silly little things but something away from, you know, the usual thing.

Some, though, were less confident with the technology. The Cloughs set had teletext, but the facility was never used - Ivy feared that if they experimented with the remote control it would cause problems with the TV.

Fred Clough: Now if I started interfering [she'll say] "What do you want [to do that for]. You'll mess it up", you know. So I generally leave it. I don't bother. "You'll break it". She gets in a two and eight. She gets her knickers right in a twist. So I thought "No, leave it and done with it."

And Rosie Aldridge had decided not to get a set with teletext because it was too daunting:

Rosie Aldridge: I thought I'd get into a muddle with that...it took me ages to learn the video and I don't even know that properly.

4.2.7 The VCR

Most of our sample had VCRs, although not all had been bought personally by our participants. The Welmans' had been bought for them some years previously by their two sons, Frank Payne's had been a retirement present and the Evans' had

also been a gift. Some had purchased their machines before retirement, but a number had not so the VCR was also unusual in that it was an innovation introduced at a relatively late stage into people's lives. Often its acquisition was at the initiative of an adult son or daughter, or other younger relative, in terms of providing the technology, suggesting it or loaning them a VCR to try out. The video was used predominantly for time-shifting: both to record interesting programmes when the young elderly were out and to save day and night-time material which could be used to fill in the slots when live evening TV was less interesting. The latter was more likely amongst those with more home-centred lifestyles, while the former occurred amongst those who led a more active retirement, such as Maureen McLean whose pottery class meant that she missed *Country Practice*. Through the VCR, she could watch it on her return while recovering with a cup of tea, and both the McLeans could catch up on the evening's viewing after returning from their folk dancing. Few of the young elderly rented or bought videotapes, and when they did it was mostly for visiting grandchildren. Few saved them, except in relation to some of their particular interests, for instance Chris Shepard's art appreciation course for the University of the Third Age.

Amongst those who had bought a VCR before retirement were the Williams. They had originally rented a VCR to see whether they had any use for such a device. When they found they did use it 'quite a bit' they decided to buy a VCR when they changed their TV. Meanwhile, the Grants had bought their VCR a few years earlier when their son was still with them. He had expressed an interest in having one and by that time in their lives they felt they had more disposable income. They had thought that VCRs were too expensive for them when they were first becoming popular. The Englefields had acquired their VCR 7 years earlier and felt that it had considerably enhanced programme choice - like many others in our sample, they were very positive about the facility.

Ray Englefield: The video has made a difference because if you video a programme you want to see when you're away and then you see it, you know, it enlarges the amount of stuff you can see. I think the video was about the best invention there was [in recent years].

They had bought it as both of them started to find they had a bit more spare time for watching TV, although the initial suggestion came from his son who at that stage was still living at home. Ray described his experience of the format standard battle which delayed purchase to some extent.

Joanne Englefield: There were two sorts of videos first because I remember Jill Chapman bought the wrong one.

LH: Betamax.

Ray Englefield: Oh that's right, yeah. We dithered as to which one to get and we thought 'Well let's wait until one of them gets a market superiority', yeah. We thought well, for spares and that sort of thing...

Standards did not always matter if only time-shifting was involved - as with the Evans. For others who wanted to buy or rent some software it was a factor. The Cifonellis had acquired their first video - a Betamax - 8 years previously, mainly because their younger son wanted to record OU programmes. When that format did not attract enough software support they got a VHS system and gave the old VCR to their elder son.

The Solomons were amongst later adopters of VCRs. They commented that it was only when they were commonplace that they considered having one.

Eva Solomon: I think all these machines and video things, they come down in price and they just seem to be ordinary, everybody was having videos... you accept them as ordinary things.

The arrival of grandchildren finally tipped the balance.

Nathan Solomon: Because we've had the grandchildren it was felt that certain programmes which would be suitable for them would be worthwhile to video so that they could watch these things.

Eva Solomon: When they wanted to watch there was often nothing [on]... now you can also control the children's watching, to an extent, by videos.

This particular household undertook a more long-term form of time-shifting: they usually recorded a good deal of material over the Christmas period and then showed it to their visiting grandchildren at various times in the year.

The Cifonellis provided an example of the young elderly renting and buying children's videos which they kept aside for when their grandson visited.

Muriel Cifonelli: We have, by sort of mutual agreement with his parents: we have different ones to what they have. So he knows he can come here and watch certain things. It's a treat, the fact that we've got something which he wouldn't have at home because they've different ones.

We noted early how the initiative to buy often came from children, as in the case of the Robbies.

Edith Robbie: It was David said "You should get one of these, Dad, and you can see some films." And you said "All right." Then you had to phone him up in Germany and ask him how it worked.

The Griffiths' VCR originally belonged to their grandson up until 3 years ago and, as with many interviewees, came to them as a gift.

Lucy Griffith: You see my grandson had it, and he bought it off of someone. Then he wanted to go for something a bit modern and he was selling it. So Bernie's niece bought it for Bernie. Because when his brother died she had the house, so she wanted to give him something out of it. So that's why

we've got that. Otherwise we would never have had the video. I'd be lost without that now though.

Bernie Griffith: Yeah, we used to say at the time though "Oh we don't want one of them." But now we've got it, we'd say "Oh if that went I'd have to buy another one."

The McLeans had also not originally foreseen what role the VCR would come to play in their lives.

Maureen McLean: Actually, our daughter bought it for us when she got married. That was her gift to us.

LH: You'd never thought of getting one for yourself?

Maureen McLean: No.

LH: But from the timesheets it looks like it's proved so useful for you.

Maureen McLean: I know. I mean, this is what our daughter keeps saying whenever we meet. She says 'How did you do without it?' And we say "We don't know".

After some considerable battles with manuals and help from their children, most of those with VCRs had come to grips with the technology, although not everyone managed all the features. For instance, Pauline Grant had not got used to programming the timer with the remote control, and so had to resort to lying on the floor to program the front panel. She was in charge of the VCR since husband Jim was deemed to be incompetent with technology, and the same argument was made by Gwen Evans. Joanne Englefield and Dorothy Williams fitted the more common pattern of gender roles, leaving any recording to their husbands: although they thought they could cope if they had to. But the actual operation of the machine was only one dimension of use. For example, Lucy Griffith would often be the one to tell Bernie when their stock of video material was running low so that he should video a few more programmes to keep in reserve. In other words, there is the issue of who organises and initiates VCR use. Meanwhile, Gwen Evans not only operated the VCR but took the initiative in recording items for Eddy to watch the next day.

Gwen Evans: Now I taped a programme last night. That sports programme. It never come on 'til 20 past 10 and Eddy will watch it some time during the day. You know if he comes in early before half past four, he'll watch it then because it's some football and that Torville and Dean in the ice skating.

The changing career of this technology was best illustrated in the case of widow Rosie Aldridge. The couple had first acquired a video two years before the husband died. He made the suggestion because they had changed their routines and had stopped going out with friends on Saturday nights. Instead, they used to stay in and hire videos. Rosie Aldridge rarely did that now - the machine was

used mainly for time-shifting her soaps. However, before he died her husband had always been in charge of the VCR, so she had to struggle to master it, through the help of friends, when she was widowed. She could now set up the timer although there were some things she would have liked to do but could not: such as programme the machine to record more than one programme during the evening. The VCR had become much more important to her now that she lived alone and wanted something to pre-occupy her. She talked about how she had missed having the VCR when her old one broke down.

Rosie Aldridge: I didn't like being without one. As soon as I told my son, I said "Oh I can't be without one". Because there's some nights you come in and there's nothing on at all, is there.

In this instance, her son arranged a replacement, although Rosie Aldridge decided which brand she wanted.

At one time, Rosie Aldridge and her daughter had had an arrangement to ring after *The Des O'Connor Show* - i.e. they fitted in their contact around the broadcasting schedule. But their calls had been getting later because of her daughter's late night shopping. So Rosie Aldridge now preferred to watch video programmes later in the evening so that she could control them if the phone interrupted.

Rosie Aldridge: Well I think sometimes when you're really into these soaps and someone rings you and you really feel as though you are getting annoyed with yourself, even if, after all is said and done it's nothing, is it, really.

LH: What, annoyed that you're missing this?

Rosie Aldridge: That you've got... yeah, you're missing it.

There was only one household where the VCR was not used for time-shifting but for pre-recorded software. The Cloughs were critical of much that was on TV nowadays and thought that there was little worth recording. Twelve months prior to the interview, they had bought a VCR at the suggestion of Ivy's daughter. Since then, some films had been bought for them by one of their grandsons, and they had bought some of their own which they watched regularly, creating their own media world.

Ivy Clough: Well there's nothing in the cinemas that appeals to me much now. I mean, they don't have anything [for people of our age]. Now I've got video tapes in there but they're all the old-fashioned films and I can sit and look at them. I bought one the week before last, Seven Brides for Seven Brothers. I've never seen it so I put it on and I sat and watched it and enjoyed it. And I sort of lost myself watching it.

Fred Clough: That is one advantage with that [machine] -- you can go and get the films you want and sit down and enjoy it.

The Cloughs had been wary of time-shifting any broadcast material because of anxieties about upsetting their technology.

Fred Clough: No. I've got the instructions there to do it if we want to do but it would have to be a good programme before I messed about with that lark. As we said, at the moment the stuff you get on there now is mostly a load of flipping rubbish. Not even worth recording.

Other research has noted that some of the elderly resist video since it has the potential to extend time spent watching TV (Randall, 1995: 8). An example of this was provided by the Summers. In fact, a VCR would have been perfectly acceptable to Daphne Summers because its use would have paralleled her existing audio practices - she was used to time-shifting her radio plays. But Roger Summers had tried to avoid what he saw as an extension of TV by misinforming Daphne about how the VCR worked.

Daphne Summers: To have a video I've got to have a new telly.

LH: Why?

Daphne Summers: Well it won't go on that [set], will it?

LH: Yes it will.

Daphne Summers: Will it?

LH: Yeah.

Daphne Summers: Oh.

Roger Summers: Oh God! I said it wouldn't.

Daphne Summers: He told me it wouldn't! Ah, (to LH) you'll have to come back and fix it for me.

LH: [Joking, to Roger] So you're trying to sabotage this effort to get a video?

Daphne Summers: Yeah, I think that would be a good idea and then I could tape things off that, the same as I do off the radio.

Roger Summers: You'd just watch things a lot more and waste more time.

Daphne Summers: I don't waste my time when I'm watching though!

4.2.8 Satellite and cable

None of our households currently possessed satellite or cable. Technology enthusiast Bert Digby had had satellite for a year in the early days of the service

before channels were scrambled. Working in a brown goods store, he had had the chance to buy a satellite dish for £40, knowing that he would get a year's viewing before pay-per-view applied. He thought this was worth it and had enjoyed his year of watching, especially the sport. However, such a facility was no longer worthwhile once it cost more, in part because TV was not so important in his life anyway. The only other one to show serious interest was widower, Frank Payne, who had seen some programmes but thought that it was too expensive an option to consider at the moment.

Frank Payne: They did interest me but when I found out how much it was going to cost every week, I thought to myself well I don't know whether it's worth going into it. But of course whether it will eventually come down in price, then it may be a different kettle of fish.

Then there were those with very particular reasons for at least considering satellite and cable. The Cifonellis had talked about the advantage of getting Italian language programmes so that Jack could up-date his language and keep in touch with the Italian culture in which he grew up. He had noticed that new phrases entered the language over time and since he only went back to Italy occasionally, he did not know what they meant. But on the whole it was not worthwhile: they did not feel they watched sufficient TV to be interested in satellite or cable.

Some were also critical of satellite TV's content, having been unimpressed with the programmes they had seen on other people's TVs and when on holiday - especially since it seemed to contain many repeats. However, the most common response of the young elderly was that there was enough for them to see on terrestrial TV, especially with the video option of recent years. As the Englefields noted:

Joanne Englefield: After all, there can't possibly be so many good programmes being made, can there, to fill all our channels [and satellite]. Besides, if you're going to be a bit selective, you would probably still end up with what you're looking at now, wouldn't you?

Ray Englefield : I think there's quite a big selection on the television now. I mean, you've got four channels and you've got a video. You're very hard pressed not to get something you're willing to watch.

4.2.9 The camcorder

While only some of our sample had camcorders, the technology did generate interest. Sometimes, interest related not to any nostalgia but to their current activities. For example, in the past the Williams had hired a video camera to film their grandchildren, but their own children had now acquired camcorders and handled any filming. Nevertheless, George and Dorothy had talked about getting a camcorder to video bowling - several people at the bowling club had been discussing the merits of seeing videos of themselves to improve technique. Chris Shepard had actually used one to show pictures to his art class. Meanwhile, the McLeans thought that a camcorder would be useful for helping to remember folk

dances, but the really convenient technology had come just a little too late in their life:

Maureen McLean: I think we're a bit ancient... long in the tooth ...to go into that now. If we were, say, 20 years younger, we obviously would, don't you think?

The most common reason for having or wanting one, however, was the preservation of personal memories - of family events such as weddings or, most commonly, of grandchildren growing up. For example, Nathan Solomon had bought a camcorder after he retired for making videos of his grandchildren. Nathan had used a cine camera to record his own children growing up. Bert Digby still had the separate video recorder units which had the functionality of the modern combined camcorder and which had been used to capture memories and family history. And Chris Shepard had acquired his mainly for recording family events, although sometimes his children were less than enthusiastic about being filmed and seeing the videos.

Widower Frank Payne was seriously considering buying a camcorder, having already researched different brands and discussed it with his bank. He explained his interest in camcorders:

Frank Payne: Because I'm so fascinated that you can... it's like if you make a tape recording, you can go back on it and listen to it in later years. If you've got a camcorder, you can record things of life that you like to look back on.

LH: Do you have any idea of what type of things you'd like to record?

Frank Payne: I'd like to record family, you know, relations and events like the Lord Mayor's Show or things like that.... I've got a video tape taken of me when I retired and I sit and watch that now and again.

Frank's wife had made an audio tape of the family many years early, so he already appreciated the way that technologies could support memories.

Frank Payne: One of the tapes I've got, I don't know where it is now, but where we all had a family get together with my parents - I think it's Golden Jubilee - and, you know, where you hear the voices of your brothers and sisters and it's memories, memories all the time...

For those with an interest, cost remained the main barrier to purchase. Although Fred Clough was not generally an adopter of technology, camcorder technology, represented an extension of his interest in taking still photos.

Fred Clough: I'd like to [have one] but they're a bit too expensive.

Pauline Grant had hired one when visiting her daughter's family in Australia and thought that a camcorder would be lovely for filming the grandchildren and their

holidays. However, Jim was not keen on the extra expense nor on having to carry one around with him.

While the Cifonellis would have liked to have a camcorder, they had mixed feelings.

Muriel Cifonelli: Well a few years ago, when my eldest son was living at home he helped run our Scout troop and they did a film of Robin Hood in the woods, acted it all out and whatnot. And that I suppose really opened up our interest in it. I suppose mostly we would only record events or family things. We still think it might be quite a nice idea but we're not 100% committed, you know....It's very difficult to know, actually, because you can buy so many things that you don't actually ever use [and also] a lot of people's camcorder recordings are not particularly interesting. They're quite dull, I mean. You know, I mean, it's not all that exciting to see a child running across a park.

Finally, although the Waters had no interest in camcorder technology, Sam thought it might have been different if they had had grandchildren. This discussion led Janice to reflect that their general interest in preserving the past did not actually match their ability to find the time to look back.

Janice Waters: We've got photographs from the past...we've had holidays and we've got slides and [cine] projectors and all those sort of things. But we never ever seem to use them. In fact, somebody said the other day "Oh it would be nice, you know, to see those. It would be great fun", because we've got things, you know, with a whole crowd friends like old weddings and things like that. But you see we don't seem to run them because there's always something doing or something going and we don't have time to sit down and watch that. In our life, there are so many things going on, that you don't sort of have a lot of time to keep up with the past.

LH: You're more interested in the present?

Sam Waters: Yeah, that's what we live in, don't we.

Janice Waters: Well, yes, you see. There's always something to do or somebody to help.

4.3 Media, Values and Temporal Orientation

The degree of willingness to consider the innovation of camcorder technology at this stage in their lives is indicative of how important capturing the past, its main application, can be. This theme of temporal orientation will now be explored more generally. The existing literature has already noted the significance of reminiscing where TV touches on people's previous experiences (Willis, 1995: 10) and connects with generational memory (Tulloch, 1989: 198). While some degree of orientation to the past existed in our sample across several media, the

issue was more complex because it related not just to having the space to reflect at this stage in life, but also to the changing experience of media and the values they entailed.

For many, looking back to the events of their youth in the war years had particular salience. Some TV programmes provoked especial memories for Sam Waters.

Sam Waters: It's like Dad's Army. I knew that. We knew about the Home Guard and one or two funny people like... similar to that. My father wouldn't let me join the Home Guard because I was only 17 or so. It was a bit of a joke. I mean if Hitler had invaded, he would have swept through the country and they literally did have sticks with knives on the end. They didn't have any guns. [When I was in the army] we had guards on the exchange from the chaps in the Home Guard. They put a couple of bullets through the cables as well, you know, and left one up the breech when they were cleaning them. In rifle drill the idea is that you always rapped the bolt ten times to make sure there wasn't anything in there.

LH: So when you see Dad's Army, it rings true to some extent?

Sam Waters: It's nostalgic and the officer in that, we knew a chap... he reminds us of him. But it's typical of him. It's typical.

Elsie Davey added:

Elsie Davey: I like war films. I think because we was in our teens it made a lasting impression. You used to go to the pictures and you used to get it on the news.... like in the picture on the newsreel, wasn't it, all the soldiers and that and I think when you're in your teens you're very impressionable. I was 12 when the war started and I was 17 when it finished. So I mean, at 12 I was aware of all what was going on and especially at 17. My brother was in it, my cousin was in it.

A friend had lent the Williams a video of a TV programme about the war period because they thought that it would interest them. This anecdote led to a discussion of how their interest in programmes about this period had actually increased in retirement.

George Williams: It was mainly about how people lived in those days.

Dorothy Williams: Yes, well it was something we knew about because we'd done it, we were there, sort of attitude, and remember it. We were saying "Oh, do you remember we used to do this?" and we used to queue up at the Odeon, Leicester Square and things like that.

George Williams: Well I suppose there's a bit of nostalgia about these things really. That's what it is, isn't it really? It's nostalgia.

LH: But is that something that's... you've got more nostalgic now you're older?

Dorothy Williams: Oh definitely, yes. You do. It goes with old age actually.

George Williams: I think so, yes.

Dorothy Williams: Yes. Because I can remember my parents' days as well and you fall into that same mode eventually...Now, if there was something on, we would say "Oh yes. Do you remember we used to do that and that...?" We would be interested in it.

There were also institutional forces which prompted a revival of interest in the war at this point in their lives. For instance, Jack Cifonelli was among those whose interest in the war had been revived by the D-Day commemorations at the time of the interviews. Roger Summers had developed slightly more interest in some war programmes after retirement because of the revival of ex-RAF clubs. As in the case of the Williams, other people could also take a hand in prompting that interest based on what they thought would appeal to the young elderly.

Roger Summers: If I feel that they're basically non-fictional, I would (watch one). Quite often I only see those because one of the children they ring up and say "Oh so and so's on now. You might be interested".

Not all interest in the past related specifically to the war. The Cifonellis liked some historical drama like *Middlemarch* and the *House of Elliott*, with Muriel commenting on the latter:

Muriel Cifonelli: But I think that's partly because of the styles, it reminded us of childhood as well.

Jack Cifonelli: Yes, and our parents would have been that era anyway.

Muriel Cifonelli: Not that rich but of that era. ... the war films and the war programmes have been repeated so many times and they're so well documented but things like the late 1920s, they're not so well documented so just to see the fashions and the cars and go back to that kind of thing - the old-fashioned prams and things, that was more interesting. It was a kind of borderline lifestyle for us, you see. We can both remember our parents, our mothers, wearing dresses very like some of the things they wore there and the awful hats they used to wear and all that sort of thing.

Nor was it just depictions of events from their youth that could appeal. The Waters and the Shepards still liked to watch the old films with the old stars who had been prominent in their youth, while Frank Payne thought that he had watched more films from this era since retirement.

Frank Payne: I watch more and more and, you know, some of the old films that cast back memories.

Reminiscing extended to audio, too. In the period when he was alone before he met his current ladyfriend, widower Frank Payne used to play old records with the music from his youth when he was lonely.

Frank Payne: I used to use [the record deck] quite a lot because I've got some records that I've had for a long time. One of my first records I ever bought was Man from Mancunia. I bought it at a jumble sale and the music fascinated me and I've still got that and I am also a nut for musical... old time musical songs.

LH: So do you play these often?

Frank Payne: Oh yes, quite often I just sit here and play them to my heart's content.

LH: Is this more liable to be at weekends which are quieter?

Frank Payne: Yes, more... quite often... Not so much now as - because I've got this other friend. But I used to, when I was on my own, I used to play them, you know, quite a few hours on a Sunday.

While the Daveys added how the songs provided an aid to memory:

Ken Davey: You see, it's all the old songs.

Elsie Davey: Songs for our era like, you know. We used to listen to Luxembourg and all that for the songs. I mean, they play a lot of them old songs now, don't they?

Ken Davey: Yeah, all the old sentimental songs.

Elsie Davey: Yeah, well sentimental to us. It don't mean anything to the youngsters now... Definitely nostalgia. When a certain song will come on and I think "Oh I remember we used to go on up the Battersea Town Hall dancing to that tune". Yeah, a lot of them jog my memory like when I hear something and I think "Oh yeah..." like and the picture comes in your mind of when you used to go out with your friends and that song was being played all the time.

Ken Davey: Yeah, or you might hear Glen Miller or something like that.

Elsie Davey: Well those days, if you got a number one hit it used to stay like that for about nine weeks. I mean now you get a dozen of rubbish that you couldn't even hear for, well, nine days let alone nine weeks.

This was obviously not the 'pop music' generation and while some had adapted their tastes over the years to accommodate newer forms of music, others were critical of more modern music. For those like Sam Waters, new radio stations playing older forms, like Melody Radio, had more appeal. After Ivy Clough had

recalled playing the gramophone when she was young, she commented on current day musical styles.

Ivy Clough: We had a gramophone and we loved to play that and Sunday, it was in the parlour, as we called it, and we used to play that all Sunday. Not the music they have now though. I can't stand that.

Fred Clough: I certainly don't like the rubbish they pump out now.

Ivy Clough: Yeah, well I haven't got that rubbish. I mean, I've got rubbish you can listen to, you know, that's relaxing.

The newer music entailed not just different styles, but different values. It was both produced and consumed in different ways, as the Griffiths had pointed out earlier. However, if they were somewhat critical of musical styles many of this same cohort were even more critical of changes in TV over the years. So in part, where a preference for the past existed it was not just nostalgia but was a rejection of what was currently available. Previous writers had already noted elderly people's very critical reaction to sex, violence and bad language reflecting the earlier TV viewing experience of this cohort when Reith's principles dominated broadcasting (Bleise, 1986: 581; Willis, 1995: 10; Randall, 1995: 10-11). These same themes, unsurprisingly, emerged in our own work. But so also did a certain amount of resistance to American productions. For instance, the old 'good' films people like the Shepards remembered were British productions from the 1950s. They, along with a number of others, rejected the increasing number of both US films and TV series, mainly of the action genre. These were also seen as some of the worst culprits for introducing what was regarded as gratuitous sex and violence and bad language.

Reflecting on how TV had changed over the years, for the Solomons the first thing that came to mind was the depiction of violence - it had become both more realistic and closer to home.

Nathan Solomon: I would think now [I watch] less because a lot of the films which are shown generally tend to be... there is a lot of violence and I don't like it now as perhaps in earlier times I never thought about it as violence.

Eva Solomon: I think the violence is different. The violence used to be much more of the western type or more... I mean, I've always objected to the westerns as well. Always objected to the westerns.

LH: But how do you think the violence has changed? What's it like now?

Eva Solomon: More realistic, I think. The western was a remote sort of violence. Now it is the ordinary street violence. It's people doing things in our environment whereas the western is dressed up. It's historical.

Nathan Solomon: It's far away. It's further away, yeah.

Eva Solomon: Yes, and it was what would happen a hundred years ago. It's not actually what is happening... I mean, that sort of violence is not copycat violence, is it, as you get now.

The Waters, in line with several other interviewees, noted the general move towards explicit sex and swearing on TV.

Janice Waters: Really, the only things that we turn off are sexy things because with that kind of thing really, I think that's a personal affair and I don't think that should be, you know...

Sam Waters: They want to show the sexual act on the television. They want to... what can I say, shock you and I'm sure that some of these people are trying for the ultimate shock so that they can get talked about. Janice is of the same opinion as me...that the sexual act is something private and intimate between two people and it didn't ought to be displayed on the television for all to see. But it seems to me that every Copper, whoever comes in the television, has to jump into bed with somebody and they swear so much. I know in life they do swear quite a lot but I do believe that the television could do a great deal for the nation by stopping the swearing instead of making it the normal word. I'm sure there's another way to express things that would eventually get through to the younger generation who are watching a lot of television.

Lucy Griffith compared current TV to when her daughter was young.

Lucy Griffith: Things were a bit different then. I can't remember having a programme on that I wouldn't let her watch. So, I think television was different then. The programmes you get on today there's such a lot of swearing and things like that. I mean I wouldn't let any child watch it.

Bernie Griffith: You turned it off one night, didn't you? Don't usually but it was the Mafia and... the swearing and unnecessary kicking and punching. Oh I don't want that.

Lucy Griffith: Oh I turned it off. Oh dear, the language... I said "I've had enough of this". I said "My goodness! Good job it's late at night." It really was bad and, you know, I can't remember television like that.

Returning to the issue of our participants' temporal orientation as regards media consumption, by no means everyone looked to the past. Muriel Cifonelli emphasised that she wanted to live in the modern world and so to an extent distanced herself from the media of her earlier years - unlike some of the other interviewees, she did not have a nostalgia for these productions.

Jack Cifonelli: Now I think we've got to the 50th [anniversary of the war], they're actually showing quite a number of war films, and I find myself being quite interested in seeing the war films as they were. Some have been edited, to

make them perhaps fit in to the programme time or whatever. I'm always intrigued to see how things have changed. How the modes have changed.

LH: What, how they make films differently?

Jack Cifonelli: Yeah, how they make films differently, that's right.

Muriel Cifonelli: I don't watch them because, on the whole, if they're old films, I don't like the style and I've completely outgrown it. I mean, it's completely in my past, all that. I don't watch them. Very rarely. I don't like the type of English that we spoke in those days when we were kids. It's... the speech wasn't artificial because it is the way people spoke but it does sound artificial today, which I find irritating.

LH: How about the sort of style of the British film like the Ealing comedies?

Muriel Cifonelli: Oh, yeah - comedy films. Well, we have watched them, haven't we?

Jack Cifonelli: Oh yeah - we've watched them. We've watched them change. I think the films have changed from the innuendo style, if you like, to the realistic style of filming. Whereas you were expected to imagine the situation and develop it in your own mind. Now you're given a scenario and there isn't much to go on from, if I can put it that way.

Muriel Cifonelli: It's one of those things actually that when you're watching - you're talking about old films here - it is quite fun now and again to recall the past but I certainly don't live in it. The past is not my life. I'm not going to say to you "Well, in our day we did so and so and it was much better". It was just different. You know, I just don't see it like that.

LH: Does that mean you like more films that are about contemporary topics?

Muriel Cifonelli: More so, yeah. And also you have to remember in our youth we went to the cinema such a lot. I mean, at least once a week minimum. Which means we've seen a lot of these films.

Joanne Englefield found that listening to the music of her youth was not, in fact, a pleasantly nostalgic experience.

Joanne Englefield: I find that also songs from the past always make me feel very sad so it's not really a lot of use me putting on things.

LH: Why do they make you feel sad?

Joanne Englefield: Don't know. It just does. I'm that sort of person. It always makes me want to cry. I'd only have to hear the Salvation Army coming down the road and... "I'm going to cry". So I don't tend to sort of do it. It's a shame really.

LH: Because some people like to listen for nostalgia. These were important in their youth.

Joanne Englefield: Yeah, that's right, that's right... my mother was like that. It used to make her very happy but it doesn't me. It makes me sad. I don't know why but there it is.

And although Rosie Aldridge's son had bought her the ghetto blaster a year ago, she now played her tapes less because they reminded her of the past life with her husband.

Rosie Aldridge: I used to play them on Sunday mornings but sometimes they depress me some of the songs so I don't play them now as I used to. I don't play them a lot.

LH: Presumably these are tapes you've had a long time; why do they depress you?

Rosie Aldridge: Oh when you think of different times I haven't got now, you know.

If on the whole looking to the past has some importance for this cohort at this stage in their life, the picture is clearly much more complex.

Finally we turn back to the Cloughs who articulated some of the strongest views consistent across all their media consumption. They provide the best example of how choice and evaluation of media content can relate to the changes in their own lives and in society around them. As with many others, the Cloughs positively objected to some trends in TV:

Fred Clough: If sex comes on it, that's it over.

Ivy Clough: Off it goes. I don't like sex on TV. I think it's disgusting.

Fred Clough: I mean, when they start snogging, she says "Here you are, they're off".

Ivy Clough: I say "Turn it off".

Fred Clough: The films they put on now... to get a good'un, they're very few and far between. Most of the films they put on the telly now are bed hopping. You see them hopping in and out of bed with every Tom, Dick and Harry all the time.

And once again it cropped up when they considered the key ways in which TV broadcasting had developed.

Ivy Clough: Oh I think it's changed a lot. Too much violence on there to start with. That's why I don't like it.

Fred Clough: Too much violence. Too much obscene language on there now.

Ivy Clough: And too much sex.

Fred Clough: A lot of it's unnecessary. I mean, you get children now, they say they educate them in school in sex and that but I don't think it's all there. I think a lot of it's learnt from there. I mean, when I left school - not being vulgar - but when I left school is all I knew it's for is to pee out of. But now, I mean, even our grandsons, we're shocked at some of what he comes out with.

Ivy Clough: I mean, even me. I mean, I was going to have my baby and I didn't know where it come from and I was the laughing stock of the hospital.

When discussing the comedies they liked, part of the appeal was the perceived familiarity of some East End characters.

Ivy Clough: Oh yeah. I sit and laugh at Birds of a Feather. Now that I think is funny and I can thoroughly enjoy that. That and who's the other one? Rodney... what's his name?

Fred Clough: Oh yeah, Fools and Horses, isn't it?

Ivy Clough: Yeah. Now I can laugh at that. I can sit and enjoy that.

Fred Clough: Another one I used to like watching was the one who used to call his wife a 'silly moo' - Alf Garnet.

LH: Till Death Do Us Part. What appealed about that?

Fred Clough: Well, he was a proper cockney in it, ain't he?

Ivy Clough: Yeah, they are. So was whatsit, isn't ...the one from Fools and Horses. He's a proper cockney.

Fred Clough: They're like how people was.

The Cloughs only watched some soaps. When discussing *EastEnders*, they noted how it had appealed at first because it represented the community they had known and lost. But even this media community was now undergoing change and becoming at odds with their nostalgic memories.

Ivy Clough: I loved EastEnders but not so much now because it's going... it's altering. Not like it was when it first. When it first started, the EastEnders were EastEnders... like everybody helped everybody. But now they're all bickering again, you know, and I don't like that.'

Fred Clough: They're not the true EastEnders we knew. They helped one another years ago. I mean, if you was sick in bed, a neighbour would come and do

everything for you. But now they shut the door and they don't want to flipping well know. Even your own family are like that.

Ivy Clough: Well I mean I have people say to me "Oh hello. We haven't seen you for weeks. I haven't seen you for weeks." Well of course they haven't seen me because they don't go out a lot... I liked EastEnders at the beginning 'cos it reminded me of exactly how things used to be. I mean, especially with the stalls and the neighbours, you know, but now it's not the same.

Fred Clough: This is what done it - tower blocks. Took the community spirit away.

LH: You said you liked some of the other soap operas; what was it - Home and Away and there's another one?

Ivy Clough: Well Home and Away is really a children's programme but I like watching it.

LH: Why do you like that?

Ivy Clough: I don't know. Now that is a family story like, you know, all the neighbours are friendly. See, I know it's an Australian thing but all the neighbours are friendly...how I used to know them.

LH: But doesn't it make any difference that it's Australia... a different way of life from over here?

Ivy Clough: Yeah, it is a different way of life. I mean, I'd like to see that here. I'd like to see the... so you can go in... you know where they go in to have something to drink into the milk bar with Bobby and all that. That would make people friendly.

So even though it was set in an Australian context, *Home and Away* was providing that sense of dependable community and friendships which English soaps were losing.

4.4 Conclusion

This cohort is the radio generation *par excellence* - an extraordinary large number of them remember being Ovaltinies during their childhood. Radio, the great and wondrous novelty of that childhood, was listened to by transfixed children unable to move lest their cats-whisker's receiver lose its signal, and sharing headsets with fathers and mothers around the kitchen table. Radio, powered by accumulators required regular recharging, and involved both a small but often significant expense as well as a weekly chore. Radio was a key part of their childhood and radio mediated, arguably, the most significant period of their lives - the period of wartime.

Early radio listening was for the young elderly in our study both a shared and solitary activity. In those households that had the resources, multiple sets enabled the fragmentation of household culture as parents tuned into the BBC's Home service, and their children to Radio Luxembourg. Access to the radio and to participation in broadcasting culture was constrained both by space and time. The lack of central heating forced early listeners to congregate round the set in the only room of the house that could be kept tolerably warm in winter, and even in the early days of radio when scheduling was rudimentary or non-existent, Sundays and evenings were structured through popular programmes as significant periods of leisure and rest during an otherwise crowded week. Radio listening was almost entirely also, in its early years, and in the memories of our respondents, a singular activity, uncombinable with homework or other reading. It required silence and concentration.

The life history of radio as constructed through the life histories of our young elderly is a history of the progressive domestication of a medium: from a magical and vulnerable wireless to an entirely taken for granted and increasingly displaced, transistor radio, as often as not invisibly embedded in bedside clocks and stereo systems. Childhood, war, evacuation and post war austerity were monitored and made bearable by the continuity of radio, and as a result the medium is still a very significant one in this cohort's lives and daily routines.

Radio's role was progressively to define for many a public sphere, or at least a public sphere of a kind. Through information and entertainment, from *ITMA* to the nightly news and *The Archers*, and to the evening stories attentively listened to by both our respondents as children and, albeit briefly, their own children, radio was seen as breaching the boundaries between the private and the public. It raised issues and ideas that had hitherto been personal and in some cases forbidden into the open, but also, of course, it also provided access to news of the world, and through that access extending the reach and range of the household's views of the world. Neither of these processes unfolded without anxiety - anxieties that continue among a generation that can, in many cases, neither understand nor bear the extremes to which this puncturing and display of the private have now reached, and for some of whom as they get older, the news is also too disturbing to absorb and handle.

In early retirement radio is comforter, a background for other activities, though still involved in the structuring of the day, and often providing companionship so that it is on when the house is otherwise empty or on all through the night, accompanying sleep and offering a reassuring presence both in drowsiness and waking. Radio technologies and associated gramophones and sound systems, grow old with their users. Though some in our study had made the move to CDs and walkmans (these also, incidentally, used for going to sleep), most technologies remain unreplaced and distinctly the consumer products of an earlier time.

The transition to television, for most but not all, came in the early fifties, when the combined effects of increasing relative affluence, the claims for social status in the neighbourhood and the Coronation, conspired to bring television into many homes. Television in the early days was often a communal resource, the site of excited neighbourhood or extended family attention and only gradually the focus of a regulatory struggle between adults and children. Television was, of course, their

children's medium. As such it too had to be domesticated into households with different values to those offered by serials, series and advertising. It was, in the memories of many, quickly integrated into the patterns of family life, especially marked once again on Sundays. Though once again such domestication did not pass without continuing tension and, for many, increasing bewilderment and dismay with the creeping consumerism of the sixties, a consumerism that fundamentally challenged their own moral economies forged, as we have suggested, in periods of austerity and depression.

In early retirement television is used differently depending on the degree of engagement that members of the household have with the outside world. It is a marginal technology when the young elderly are active in their community or in other ways. But in those households where, for physical or social reasons, its members have little with which to engage outside the home, it functions as companion and as a resource which, as they manage to control it, both enables a limited engagement with the world beyond their front door and acts as a reassuring companion at times of solitariness. Days are structured through the scheduling of familiar and favorite programmes, even if they are watched sometimes quite guiltily. Some will watch during the relative security of children's programmes, preferring that version of the news rather than the more complex and challenging evening broadcast. Others find in television a source of intellectual stimulation actively, though privately, participating in the quiz and game shows, testing their knowledge and their response times against those of the televised contestants and finding reassurance of a different kind in their ability to compete. Yet others, less dismayed or dispirited by what they learn of the world from news and current affairs, have found in retirement a new and excited interest in politics, and this is substantially fed by what they see and hear on the box.

Similarly, travel programmes offer a visual and intellectual reach to places both too distant to be known in any other way and to places that may once have been familiar. And soap operas, in ways that students of the media know well in other households, are seen to provide a kind of commentary on the moral and social dilemmas of the age. Some will watch *Coronation Street* for its nostalgic and humorous depiction of a past they identify with, but at the same time will reject *EastEnders* for what they see as the harsh misrepresentation of their own past and community.

Teletext and the VCR offer two compensating technologies for the young elderly. Teletext, surprisingly significant, is used both as an information resource and as a support, through its subtitling, for the hard of hearing. The VCR, often a gift from one of their children, functions both as a time shifter and as a means whereby, though less often through rental or purchase, households can compensate for the marginalisation they feel in mainstream television culture. Indeed it is the arrival of grandchildren which has, on occasion, finally tipped the balance to purchase or acquisition. Their capacity to program the machine and to use it to its full potential is, as might be expected, extremely limited and for many their relationship to the knobs and switches on their machines is an intensely fraught one. Nevertheless time shifting was important and for some simply to enable uninterrupted viewing, uninterrupted, that is, by telephone calls.

Audio-visual media, including record, tape and CD playing equipment, as well as the rarer camcorder, have a role in both the mediation of, and orientation to, time. The past is the focus of some ambivalence, and it is quite clear that different couples have very different relationships to it. Some will use their media for more or less wistful recollection of the good old days, others preferring a more engaged identification with the present. But it is the media as a moral force which comes through most strongly. Contemporary culture is disturbing: it is noisy and it is offensive. Language, violence, sex, raucous music are all objected to, sometimes quite vehemently. Class, of course, is a factor here.

5. Conclusion

Underlying the discussions in the previous pages and to some extent framing the study as a whole, is an agenda which sees in new information and communication technologies a debate about the substantial capacity to enhance and improve the quality of life of the elderly, through increases in the control of the physical and symbolic environment that they are believed to be able to provide. We have not addressed this agenda directly thus far, simply because given the nature of our research, it is, in direct terms, unaddressable. We have grounded our study in the realities of the everyday life experience of existing technologies, arguing both in this context and elsewhere, that without an understanding of those realities it is quite impossible to come to terms with the ways in which the potential of information and communication technologies will or will not be realised. It is no good trumpeting the revolutionary significance of, for example, a new information service or an Internet link to health or social services if those who are supposed to be taking advantage of such services are neither able nor willing to use them.

Indeed, in the debates that form and reform around information and communication technologies, it is also important to note the negative. In this case, alongside the hopes for a new supportive infrastructure based on electronic and digital communication are equivalent anxieties: that such an infrastructure will increasingly isolate an already socially isolated population, and create a dependence on technology which is fundamentally counterproductive and likely to increase anxiety and insecurity among those who are consequently deprived of human contact.

There are no simple resolutions of these opposing positions. Both, in their baldness, are unsatisfactory. If we are to assess any future with information and communication technologies then we have to base that assessment in an understanding of the historically and sociologically specific circumstances of those groups or cohorts in whom we are interested, and for whom such technologies may be being designed. In the case of the newly retired and the young elderly we need to be able to separate, if we can, those factors that are structural - that is the realities of increasing age and the loss of work - and those factors that are particular to a given cohort at a given time. These latter factors are both the product of their own life histories - their experiences, in this case, of the lion's share of a century marked by a switchback of economic troughs and peaks, and by a rapid evolution of media and information technology. But they are also the product of the particular circumstances of the contemporary, in this case, for example, both the availability, for many, of occupational pensions, and the still more or less clear boundary between work and leisure or retirement.

Given these initial observations the first thing we can point to is the lack of homogeneity in the experience of retirement and of ageing. While this is unlikely to be a surprise, it is important to note it. The differential experiences of class and culture, of social and geographical mobility, of education, work history and access to technologies together define a complete matrix of expectations, needs and competences which make any generalisations extremely difficult to sustain. There are, of course, common assumptions both that a sense of impending physical deterioration and death on the one hand, and an equally inevitable progressive

marginalisation from the mainstream of society on the other, would provide a commonness of experience, but it would be wrong to read from such assumptions, even if they can be sustained, anything either definitive or consistent for the cohort as a whole. Lifestyles in early retirement, the degrees of isolation or loneliness, the capacity to play an active role in neighbourhood or community are all preconditioned by the diversity of biography and experience, as well as by present circumstances. Although we have not made a significant point of it, quite clearly the loss of a spouse is a major factor in what ageing and retirement might mean.

Relationships to information and communication technologies and services, both present and future, are defined therefore, though not determined, by this complex array of social and cultural conditions. Patterns of use, and patterns of acceptance and resistance, are their product. The design of new or dedicated technologies and services for this and future cohorts of the young elderly will need to be sensitive to these social and cultural circumstances.

Our own cohort of newly retired and young elderly, drawn as they are from widely differing class backgrounds, have expressed in their discussions with us both a commonness of passage through a turbulent period of the century and the uniqueness of their own routes along that passage. They are of a generation whose lives parallel in large degree the lives of information and communication technologies, at least insofar as they have become available to the individual. The BBC first began broadcasting in 1923, so they were the first radio generation. The telephone, although available earlier, has had a much slower and lower diffusion curve. Nevertheless, all had to learn skills and competences that subsequent generations have taken entirely for granted. There is still evidence, not only gendered, for discomfort with telephonic communication. The computer, of course, is of another time, and with only a few exceptions, has been left to one side. Clearly any technologies designed to support this cohort as it ages must take these experiences into account.

What happens to the relationship to communication and information technologies once people reach retirement? In many respects not a lot. The patterns of use established over previous years remain quite fixed. Dependence on the telephone for the maintenance of family and social networks is well established, and tastes in television viewing are unlikely suddenly to shift, though we have noted in one or two cases how retirement has brought not so much a withdrawal into the inner and increasingly isolated world of home but a new interest in the world of public affairs. But there is no doubt that for many households in which both partners are still living the loss of income and the loss of a substantial commitment to out of the home, work related activities has encouraged a greater involvement with television as a means of entertainment and sometimes also of information. The telephone, on the other hand, is becoming even more important not just for social communication, nor even for communication tasks associated with leisure or community commitments, but as an increasingly important tool in the management of public space - to provide information on the availability of goods or services, and to minimise the disruptions of possibly wasted physical journeys. The costs of daytime calling, though significant (and avoided by one widower using a signalling system that obviated the need for his respondent to lift the receiver), is seen by many as being less than the costs of travel. This was unambiguously accepted in the case of functional tasks, but it was

recognised as more problematic by others, particularly when it seemed to reinforce their separation from their dispersed children or elderly siblings.

In many respects these relationships can be seen as being reinforced and shifted by the changing relationship that the young elderly and newly retired have to time and space. This can be seen at a number of different levels. It is clear that retirement is a transition of some considerable significance, fixing, relatively unambiguously, the end of a major stage in the life course, and publicly marked through a whole series of more or less facilitative, but nevertheless entirely significant, indicators - the free bus-pass being one such. Time then was seen as an increasingly limited and therefore valuable resource by those who had the capacity to take advantage of opportunities to 'use' it. Others, it might be said, appeared not so much to use time as to manage it, and to do so in inventive and intensive ways which we were quite surprised to see. But in either case time loomed large. The new freedoms from industrial time that retirement brings were seen as both liberating and oppressive, but again in both cases they enabled and required a greater need to plan, and to structure, both the day and the week. The young elderly could take advantage of such freedoms inside the home, to undertake tasks in their own time, to create time for, as some might see it, more leisurely or self-indulgent activities. These activities might well involve their media - for example, being able to take advantage of the new opportunities to watch television in the daytime. The new freedoms would certainly enable them to avoid the pressures of weekend shopping or rush-hour journeys and so to avoid the effects of the uneven structuring of public time.

Given the greater flexibility to manage time that retirement brings, our respondents talked both about the guilt of stolen time (time, for example, put aside to watch daytime soap operas) but also about the use of the VCR, as well as the phone, to shift time. VCRs were used not just to create a more acceptable televisual culture either for themselves or for their grandchildren, but were for many key instruments in the management of their consumption of television, so that those programmes or films they wanted to watch were recorded, and indeed were watched, at times felt to be more suitable.

Time, however, is not just a matter of synchronisation, of clocking (Silverstone, 1994), and television, especially, is not significant only in the context of the structuring of the day or the week. Television is an instrument for orienting oneself to time and the use of the medium is often expressive of a household's relationship to past, present and future, to which the notion of orientation refers (Silverstone, 1994). Most, but certainly not all, of the newly retired in our study had a profoundly ambivalent relationship to contemporary public culture, seeing in it an expression of values with which they have little in common and little sympathy. Television was their main route into it, and therefore the management of television became a crucial element in their capacity to protect themselves from those aspects of the contemporary they rejected or found threatening. It also enabled them to reach those images of the past or of the geographically distant which were reassuring, or at the very least less threatening. Given that none in our study had found a way of subscribing to cable or satellite, or even tried, the most obvious route to the golden days of television was not open to them. Video and selective viewing, as well as an albeit qualified commitment to BBC Radio (or something like Melody Radio) were the principal means of

managing this important aspect of their lives. For some households the past was entirely sustaining, and both audio and audio-visual media were central facilitators of memory. For others the past was either too painful or their orientation was to the present, but here, once again, media were central in articulating their relationship to it.

Time intrudes into the lives of the young elderly, therefore, not just in the ways we have identified, but also in marking a process of gradual, sometimes perceptible, physical deterioration. Growing old for our respondents, involved not just a sense of shortage of time, but a realisation of an ageing process which implicated both hearing especially, and mobility, as well as an increasing tiredness. In both cases the result was an increasing incapacity to participate in the public world, and also, in the households of young elderly couples, a source of conflict or disturbance, requiring constant adjustments. Whereas the telephone could be seen as a tool to compensate for decreasing mobility, it was also an irritation, with electronic beepers not being heard or concentration on other media sources being interrupted. Likewise, while television (as well as radio and audio technologies) might also offer some substitute for other forms of out of home leisure activity, those who had difficulty hearing found themselves at odds with partners whose tolerance for the increased sound levels was limited.

The young elderly in our study offer an excellent case study of a section of our society that can be neither included in any generalisation about the social effects or acceptance of information and communication technologies, nor can they themselves be easily generalised about. The particular stage they have reached in the life cycle, and especially the particularity of their own route through the twentieth century, has enabled a distinctive relationship, for most, to a world of public values and practices. Their own values have been forged through the experiences of another age, and one in which the dominant consumerism of our own was both much less in evidence and much less accessible, even to an average member of the middle classes. In ways that are presumably well recognised, their shift into retirement marks a shift also out of the mainstream of contemporary culture. However actively they are involved now, and however actively they were involved at earlier stages of their lives, their own version of themselves, their private and personal reality which is embodied in their domestic culture, is defined against those public values. Such an effort at self definition offers clear evidence of their capacity to define for themselves their own moral economy which is of necessity constantly being negotiated with, and protected against, the erosive force of public values. For many, of course, there is little need of struggle, for the public and formal economy of late twentieth century capitalism will increasingly pass them by.

However it is through the more or less coherent integrity, more or less sustainable, moral economy that each couple articulates not just their relationship to the world but their relationship to their information and communication technologies. Their capacity to manage their lives and to ground them in a shared understanding and a shared life history is without doubt increasingly sustained by their dependence on existing communication and information technologies. On the other hand, given those understandings and the values that sustain them, it is unlikely that radically new information and communication technologies and services will be seen to

offer much that is either useful or acceptable in enhancing the quality of their lives.

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Appendix 1: The Case Studies

The Aldridge household: Rosie (69). She lived in the inner city borough of Hackney, East London. Rosy received under £5,000 from her state pension.

The Clough household: Ivy (72) and Fred (67). Both had been living on a disabled pension for many years. They lived in Hackney, East London. Fred's income consisted of under £2000 from his state and disability pension while Ivy received under £5000 from her state pension.

The Cifonelli household: Jack (65) and Muriel (64). They lived with their daughter, Val, in Barnet, North London, in a suburb near the Green belt. Jack and Muriel each received £5,000-10,000 from their state and occupational pensions.

The Davey household: Elsie (65) and Ken (65). They lived in Hackney, East London. Ken's income consisted of £5,000-10,000 from his state and occupational pension while Elsie received less than £5,000 from her state pension.

The Digby household: Bert (69) and Mavis (66). They lived in Worthing, Sussex. Bert's income consisted of £10,000-15,000 from his state and occupational pension while Mavis received less than £5,000 from her state pension.

The Englefield household: Joanne (68) and Ray (71). They lived in High Barnet, North London. Ray's income consisted of £10,000-15,000 from his state and occupational pension while Joanne received less than £5,000 from her state pension.

The Evans household: Eddy (75) and Gwen (72). They lived in Hackney, East London. Eddy's income consisted of just over £5,000 from his combined state and occupational pensions while Gwen received less than £5,000 from her state and occupational pensions.

The Grant household: Pauline (67) and Jim (70). They lived in Worthing, Sussex. Jim's income consisted of £5,000-10,000 from his state and occupational pensions while Pauline received less than £5,000 from her state pension.

The Griffith household: Bernie (75) and Lucy (74). They lived in Hackney, East London. Both received about £5,000-10,000 from their state and occupational pensions.

The Hawkins household: Penny (67). She lived in Barnet, North London. Penny's income consisted of 5-000-10,000 from her state and occupational pension.

The McLean household: Maureen (68) and Greg (70). They lived in Croydon, South London. Greg's income from his state and occupational pensions was £20,000-25,000 while Maureen's state pension was under £5,000

The Payne household: Frank (71). He lived in Islington, North London. Frank's income consisted of £5,000-15,000 from his state and occupational pensions.

The Robbie household: Stuart (62) and Edith (60). They lived in Barnet, North London. Stuart's income consisted of less than £5,000 from his occupational pension while Dorothy received less than £5,000 from her state pension.

The Shepard household: Hilda (60) and Chris (63). They lived in Haywards Heath, Sussex. Chris's income consisted of £15,000-20,000 from his occupational pension while Hilda received less than £5,000 from her state pension.

The Solomon household: Nathan (73) and Eva (66). They lived in a Barnet, North London. Each of their incomes, including occupational pension, was £10,000-15,000.

The Summers household: Daphne (69) and Roger (72). They lived near Kingston, south London, although they spent nearly half their time at a second home near Worthing, on the South coast. Their combined income was £25,000-30,000 from their state pensions, Roger's private pension scheme and rent from two houses they owned.

The Tarrant household: Kitty (69). She lived in Paddock Wood, Kent. Kitty's income consisted of less than £5,000 from her state pension and part-time work.

The Waters household: Sam (70) and Janice (74). Their daughter Vicky (46) still lived at home, although she was often out at work or out in the evening. They lived in New Barnet, North London. They declined to say what their income was, although Sam receives an occupational pension and had some shares.

The Welman household: Vera (58) and Albert (65). They lived in Plumpton, Sussex. Albert's income consisted of £5,000-10,000 from his occupational pension while Vera received less than £5,000 from an occupational pension.

The Williams household: George (73) and Dorothy (69). They lived in Barnet, North London, in a suburb near the Green belt. George's income consisted of £10,000-15,000 from his state and occupational pensions while Dorothy received less than £5,000 from her state pension.