



## The Home as a Site of Platformization

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**Abstract** Chapter 3 investigates how processes of platformization play out in relation to the spaces and spatial arrangements of family life, focusing in particular on the idea of the home. Given that family life, including the meaning of the home, are constructed through relational practices and that these practices are increasingly *platformized* (that is, occurring through and in relation to platforms), this chapter asks: how is the platformization of the family reshaping and extending the home? Drawing on qualitative empirical data from our own projects and existing literature, we examine how platforms are implicated in family life within the physical space of the home *and* how platforms might be used to extend the idea of home beyond a physical space of co-location. We argue that, on one hand,

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the use of platforms reconfigures how the physical home is experienced by those within it—sometimes fracturing the idea of the home as a private space and other times supporting the practices of care, intimacy, and organisation that give it meaning as a home—while on the other, it extends relational practices beyond the physical boundaries of the home, opening up new possibilities for families to practice care and intimacy across distance.

**Keywords** Home • Household • Family • Family-as-practice • Platformization • Platforms

## INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we investigate how processes of platformization play out in relation to the spaces and spatial arrangements of family life, focusing in particular on the idea of the home. While the shared home is not a precondition for family, in many cases it remains a key context for the everyday practices of care and belonging through which family is constituted.

Recent scholarship has highlighted how the ‘platform family’—as envisioned by smart home platforms—challenges the idea of the home as a safe haven with clear boundaries (Goulden, 2021). As relationships and communication between parents, children, and grandparents are ‘networked,’ the home becomes a space of transconnectivity (King-O’Riain, 2015), a digitally networked space with porous boundaries (Flewitt & Clark, 2020). This can have varied outcomes. On the one hand, the home may be seen as infringed on or pervaded by digital platforms in the form of marketplaces, commercial interests, and risks related to digital ‘city streets.’ On the other hand, the closeness and care of family is reconfigured within the home through the mediation of platforms and stretched out to those beyond the home, such as distant family members (King-O’Riain, 2015). Platforms also intervene in the connections between homes and local communities, as pointed out by Caliandro et al. (2024) in their study of AirBnB. They discuss AirBnB’s corrosive effects on housing access and local neighbourhoods due to processes of commercialisation—effects that the platform seeks to obscure via a powerful ‘sharing economy’ imaginary of warmth and affection between domestic hosts and visitors. Their example emphasises how the use of platforms can reshape

not only domestic space but the wider neighbourhoods and communities in which homes are situated.

Platforms can also attempt to impose their own definitions of the home and the family, producing mismatches between the rigid definitions assumed by platforms and the much more complex and varied experiences of actual families. Goulden's (2021) examination of group accounts on Google and Amazon's smart home platforms highlights how these platforms impose their own definitions of 'the family' in order to make domestic life "both encodable within digital systems, and commensurate with the platform's commercial logics" (2021, p. 916). For example, users can only be members of one Amazon 'Household' at a time with no allowance for non-nuclear families or separated families. Similarly, many platforms come with embedded expectations of families sharing one domestic space. Take, for example, the streaming platform Netflix with its insistence that a family needs to live under the same roof. Netflix enforces this definition through the use of information such as IP addresses, device IDs, and account activity, forcibly excluding family members who do not seem to be near (hence close) enough. Small exceptions to this rule are accommodated—within moderation and as exceptions—when family members seem to be travelling. Amazon 'Households' are somewhat more generously defined as people living within the same country but moving between them is discouraged: you can only join a new household 180 days after leaving a previous one (Goulden, 2021).

Based on these considerations, we argue for the need to examine relationships between the family, the household, and the home when researching families and platformization. In this chapter, we draw attention to these elements by taking up the focus on relationality and family-as-practice outlined by Sefton-Green and Livingstone in Chap. 2. Given that family life, including the meaning of the home, are constructed through relational practices and that these practices are increasingly *platformized* (that is, occurring through and in relation to platforms), we are asking: how is this platformization reshaping and extending the home? In asking this question, we are interested both in how platforms are implicated in family life within the physical space of the home, such as how their use impacts the meanings, understandings, and uses of the home, *and* how platforms might be used to extend understandings and experiences of home beyond these physical spaces of co-location.

We begin the chapter by outlining key elements within the idea of 'home,' including homes as bounded spaces that are given meaning

through their use and as spaces that can have varied significance for family life. We then outline earlier research on the domestication of media technologies in the home that has charted how the introduction of new media technologies to domestic settings is bound up in changes to domestic spaces and practices of dwelling, often requiring the reformulation of norms and practices. We describe the shift to a mobile and networked domestic media environment—the environment in which platformization is occurring—and highlight recurring negotiations around privacy and autonomy, public and private spaces, and the uses and meanings of the home—negotiations that are echoed in our discussion of platformization that follows. We then map two key trajectories along which the platformization of family life relates to the home: first, how platform technologies are involved in reshaping domestic practices *within* the home and, second, how platform technologies are bound up in the extension of relational family practices *beyond* the home. We do so by drawing on examples from existing literature and from fieldwork that two authors of this chapter undertook in the UK (Livingstone & Stoilova, 2024) and Norway.<sup>1</sup> In line with the broader ambitions of this book, we use this discussion as a means to raise questions that point towards possible research agendas.

## THE HOME, THE HOUSEHOLD, AND DOMESTIC MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES

### *Conceptualising the Home*

There are two key dimensions of the concept of ‘home’ that are central to our discussion. One is that the family home has been defined, at least recently, through its perceived separation from the public world beyond. It has been understood as a private space to be occupied and invested in by a single nuclear family for whom it provides a space of respite and recovery (Segalen, 1996). This specific formulation of the home emerged in Western contexts as a middle-class norm following the industrial revolution and was closely linked to emerging gender roles in which women (and children) were encouraged to stay home rather than

<sup>1</sup>This fieldwork was conducted as part of the PlatFams project (<https://chanse.org/platfams/>). The project is investigating the role of platforms within family life through qualitative research with up to 100 three-generation families across five European countries (Norway, Estonia, UK, Romania, and Spain).

engaging in paid work (Hareven, 1991; Segalen, 1996). In this formulation, the home is associated with intimacy, privacy, warmth, and leisure and is set in contrast to an outside world associated with anonymity, public life, and work. This boundary between the home and the world beyond has always been partial and contested (see Goulden, 2021) and, as described below, has often been reconfigured through the introduction of media technologies that have brought ‘in’ the outside world in new ways. However, it has remained a powerful imaginary that has given meaning to the idea of home, even if the reality has always been more complex. In this chapter, we consider how the platformization of the family relates to these perceived and actual boundaries between home and the world beyond.

Secondly, and relatedly, we recognise that while contemporary normative models of family (especially coupledom) often still centre on the idea of cohabitation (Roseneil et al., 2020), the home is not necessarily central to many people’s ideas and experiences of family life. While there have always been exceptions, the norm of the family as a heterosexual co-residential couple with children that dominated in the mid-twentieth century has shifted as family living arrangements have diversified and perceptions of who counts as family have become less about co-residence and more about relationships, care, and belonging. For example, research has charted the experience of families separated by national borders (Das et al., 2023) and people who are in romantic relationships but choose to live separately (Duncan et al., 2013). The rise of solo living and shared housing has further eroded the norm equating domestic space with romantic relationships (Roseneil et al., 2020). Today, it is particularly evident that a family may or may not be a ‘household’ that resides together in a shared ‘home.’ At the same time, however, the family practice approach we draw on (see Chap. 2) emphasises the role of family practices in constructing the home as a space that holds meaning. As Morgan (2019) notes, family practices “do not simply take place in space: they also create spaces, through the investment of meanings, positive and negative.” That is, the family home, as distinct from the physical place of a house, is created and given meaning through the same practices by which the family constitutes itself. In this chapter, we consider how these changing and varied relationships between the family and the home intersect with the platformization of family life.

### *Domestic Media Environments*

The domestication of media technologies within the home has long reconfigured spatial and intimate relations within the domestic sphere. Broadcasting, initially through radio and gramophones and then television, were widely seen as perforating the boundary between the home and the outside world by providing new ‘windows’ onto public life from within private domestic settings (Spigel, 1992, p. 7; Williams, 1975). These media forms also reconfigured the material arrangement of the home, with furniture and floor plans shifting to make room for new technologies and the social practices developing around them, such as gathering around the television at meal times. The introduction of the telephone similarly challenged boundaries between public life and the private sphere of the home via the unpredictable appearance of telephone calls (Fischer, 1994). Again, new material configurations, like the telephone bench, developed alongside new social practices, such as negotiating when and how to accept calls and afford privacy to the calls of others (Marvin, 1988). Computer use likewise reconfigured practices and spaces of dwelling through the appearance of the ‘home office’ and ‘computer desk,’ and the emergence of new forms of work and leisure (Lally, 2002). As noted in Chap. 1, the family constructs itself through relational practices. Our point here is that at least some of these practices have been worked out in relation to a changing cast of technologies in the home, as these technologies allow for, encourage, and discourage particular practices of dwelling together. We note in particular that these shifting social and material configurations often have implications for privacy, both between family members and between the home and the world beyond.

Charting more recent changes to domestic media environments, scholars have observed the proliferation of media devices in the home as technologies have become cheaper and more portable (Kennedy et al., 2020; Livingstone, 2002). Rather than being situated in specific and often shared spaces—the TV in the lounge, the telephone in the hallway, etc.—media technologies have migrated across the home. In some cases, such as smartphones, they are more attached to people than spaces and are used in different locations around the home. In other cases, media technologies have moved into more private spaces within the home, with household members having their own TV sets, music systems, and so on, often located in bedrooms for individual use. Work in the early 2000s by scholars like Sonia Livingstone (2002; Bovill & Livingstone, 2001) described how

family members began spending more time in their own rooms consuming media on personal devices rather than in shared familial spaces. For children in particular, bedrooms become key spaces of privacy and autonomy, often replacing the freedoms that earlier generations typically found by roaming outside the home (Livingstone, 2002). At the same time, the use of internet connectivity has also reconfigured boundaries between the home and the world beyond, expanding the home's role as a node within wider networks of labour, consumption, socialisation, and organisation (Kennedy et al., 2020). It is on this foundation of a mobile and networked domestic media ecology that the platformization of family life is playing out.

Through a review of literature on platforms in family life, Erstad et al. (2024) highlight how the use of platforms transforms and reconfigures the relational practices of the family—a process described as “platformised relationality” (p. 175). They find that existing research points to a resulting “co-construction of family intimacy through digital technology, with emotionality, family everyday habits and intra- and intergenerational hierarchies being interwoven in the platform environment” (Erstad et al., 2024, p. 10). In this chapter, we consider how these processes of platformed relationality take place in relation to the home.

### RESHAPING AND MEDIATING DOMESTIC SPACES, RITUALS, AND HOMEMAKING

In this section, we consider how the use of platforms is reshaping family life *within* the home. While the shared home is not the sole precondition for family relationality and intimacy, it remains a key site for everyday practices of familial care and belonging, and the presence of platforms within the home has varied implications for how collective dwelling is enacted and experienced.

Research has begun to indicate some of these possibilities. In their study of how Australian families play Minecraft via mobile devices, Balmford and Davies (2020) demonstrate how game play involves negotiating household spaces. Some families designated areas of the home as off-limits for children's Minecraft play in order to manage noise, ensure adult supervision, or limit the time children spent playing the game. At the same time, shared play between family members recast spaces in the home as places for joint play, effectively “extending the family home into the virtual space of the game” (2020, p. 15). Ferdous et al.'s (2016) study of

how families negotiate technology use during shared meals provides similar observations about the negotiated arrangements of technologies and people within the home. Many of their findings concern hardware, such as how laptops, smartphones, or TV sets are arranged in relation to bodies, furniture, and food, and how these arrangements are designed to encourage particular practices and qualities of togetherness. While platforms were not a specific focus of the study, some of the findings indicate the role they played in these arrangements, such as the deliberate use of smart home technologies and streaming services to “contribute to mood and ambience” on special occasions, or the conditions under which using smartphones to watch videos or engage with social media were deemed acceptable during meals. Importantly, they found that the use of platforms and other media technologies during mealtimes was contingent on whether the uses aligned with the families’ socially enacted values around sharing meals. That is, families co-developed their own sense of when platform use supported their relational practices and when it was disruptive, with these ideas varying across families.

These examples begin to illustrate how platform use in the family home takes place through processes of negotiation, with the meaning and role of platforms in shared spaces and rituals being worked out collectively. Of course, these negotiations do not always go smoothly. Fieldwork in the UK from the recent project described above provides several examples of how the platformization of family life can offer ‘wormholes’ through domestic space, allowing non-family members to take part in family routines in ways that are welcomed by some family members but not by others (Livingstone & Stoilova, 2024). In one example, Stephen—a mid-40s working-class father who lives with his wife and two children—discussed how digital technology use was reshaping their Christmas rituals. The whole family had gathered for Christmas, including his wife’s sister and parents. After opening presents, the celebration quickly ‘dissolved’ as the children went on their devices and preferred to spend time playing or talking to friends rather than around the family Christmas table. Video calling platforms played a particularly disruptive role, as his nine-year-old daughter called a friend and the two girls spent time together showing off their new presents. In Stephen’s view, this friend was effectively invited to share their Christmas celebrations and enjoyed more of his daughter’s attention than the family who were present in the same house. He felt that the experiences he had as a child of a family enjoying each other’s company was long gone:



It's never like the old days where the whole family would sit around watching the telly [...] My daughter would run off and be talking to a friend for an hour, or then my son would FaceTime his friend. And once they've opened their presents and they've had their dinner, you lose them. They go off into their own world. Whereas years ago, the whole family would be around, sitting around the table, telly, playing games together. Now it's a totally different era now to when I was a kid.

There are clear echoes here of the longer histories of new media forms (particularly the telephone) bringing 'outside' people into the home in ways that challenge existing routines, etiquettes, and understandings of the divide between private and public. For Stephen, communication platforms intensify this process in unwelcome ways, enabling his children to bring friends into family rituals and displacing collective media practices—namely, watching television together—that had been important to his own experience of being a family. Presumably for Stephen's children, these communication platforms have very different meanings as places of connection and fun, enabling them to engage with their own interests and social networks from the confines of home.

The shift from collective to individualised media practices that Stephen feels so keenly is not wholly unique to platforms. As noted above, scholarship from the early 2000s charted how cheaper and more portable media technologies led to a proliferation of entertainment media across the home, enabling much more individualised practices of media consumption, including the development of "bedroom culture" in which children shifted their media use to their bedrooms in pursuit of privacy and autonomy (Bovill & Livingstone, 2001; Livingstone, 2002). In a context of platformization, we could ask how the greater degrees of personalisation afforded by platformed media experiences, and their accessibility to much younger children, might extend bedroom culture further. We could also note that while Stephen's focus is on the unwelcome intrusion of his children's friends, the platformization of their interactions also brings corporate interests into the home in new ways, as the more intensive datafication of interpersonal interactions through platforms is used as a source of commercial value. This is an issue taken up in greater detail by Pangrazio, Langton, and Siibak in the following chapter on 'baby apps.'

While Stephen's account raises questions about how platforms might disrupt domestic spaces and rituals, other examples from the same study pose questions about how platforms can act as facilitators of the home,

building connections and enabling practices of homemaking. A family with neurodiverse members living in rural UK, for example, illustrates how the platformization of the domestic space itself can help those carrying out caring responsibilities and can even act as a ‘digital carer’ (Livingstone & Stoilova, 2024). Catherine—a white British mum of two in her early 50s—needs all the help she can get with organising family life and often uses platforms to ‘control’ their home. From smart lights in all rooms, a Google nest/assistant, and a doorbell that identifies visitors to platforms for education, shopping lists, and fitness, Catherine navigates nearly all aspects of their life via some form of tech assistance. This seems to help her keep track of everyone’s activities, coordinate their varying routines, remind family members of their tasks and responsibilities, and generally stay on top of domestic life.

Of particular note is her practice of using platforms as mediators in situations when getting her children to adhere to their routines is challenging. She uses parental control apps like Google Family Link to structure the children’s time online and maintain what she sees as a healthy balance between spending time offline and in digital spaces. She also broadcasts messages to everyone in the house via Google Nest smart speakers and explained that, in certain situations, this seems to be a more neutral form of interaction that provokes less resistance. For example, when her own reminders to the children to switch off the lights and go to bed do not work, she will ask Google to do it for her using the voice interface of their Nest smart speakers.

We don’t need to leave the living room to say, ‘it’s time to do your teeth’, ‘it’s time to do this, that’. I mean, we do, but sometimes we just don’t have to. [...] There’s speakers in pretty much every room.

For Catherine, platforms play an important role mediating everyday life within the household and are embedded in practices of homemaking. Her extensive use of platforms in running the household and the home brings to mind arguments about the platformization of infrastructure and the infrastructuralisation of platforms (Plantin et al., 2018). What does it mean for the infrastructure of family life within and beyond the home to be *platformized*? Catherine’s account suggests that the answers to these questions might not always align with the expectations and imaginaries of platforms themselves. While the Google Nest is primarily marketed as a device that provides a voice-controlled AI assistant, Catherine values it as an

intercom that can tell her kids to brush their teeth—a much more ‘low-fi’ use.

While platforms assist Catherine in managing the household, they also require their own managing—a role that seems to fall largely to her. While describing her husband as the “tech geek” who is keen to introduce new technologies into the home, Catherine appears primarily responsible for integrating them into the family’s everyday life. This sometimes became burdensome:

It’s just so much. And he [husband]’s just constantly coming up with something new and saying, ‘Oh, we should get this. It’d be absolutely brilliant.’ And I’m like, ‘No, because then I’m going to have to learn how to work it. And the kids will want to know when you’re not here.’

Catherine’s comments draw attention to the “digital housekeeping” that is required to integrate technologies into the home in productive and meaningful ways (Tolmie et al., 2007, p. 332; see also Kennedy et al., 2020 pp. 127–163). They also provide another example of how the platformization of family life occurs, at least partly, through processes of interpersonal negotiation. Here, the meaning of platforms as useful and desirable, or as burdensome, is worked out (or not) through deliberations between Catherine and her husband—negotiations that are shaped by their differing roles in managing everyday family life. Platformization here is not just a ‘top down’ process of commercial imposition but also a relational process in the sense that the entry of platforms into the home requires deliberation and negotiation between people: in this case between two parents but in other cases between other configurations of parents and children.

### RECONFIGURING FAMILY RELATIONALITY BEYOND THE HOME

So far we have focused primarily on the role of platforms in family life *within* domestic spaces. However, platformization also means that family practices that used to centre on cohabitation or copresence are being reconfigured as they stretch beyond the home. This possibility is raised by Erstad et al. (2024) in their review of literature on platforms and multi-generational family life. They note that the intensification of interaction afforded by platforms may “reinforce, extend and potentially reconfigure

existing forms of relationality *that used to rely on geographical and temporal co-presence* to construct family, primarily through cohabitation and child-rearing” [emphasis added] (2024, p. 6). That is to say, being physically co-present in the home is less central to enacting the practices through which the family is constituted, and the extension of these practices beyond the home can reconfigure how they are performed and with what meanings.

It is important to note, however, that the expansion of family practices beyond the physical space of the home has been enabled by technologies prior to digital platforms. Mobile communication in particular enabled new forms of “connected presence” that extended family interactions beyond the home (Christensen, 2009; Licoppe, 2004). For example, in an early study of mobile communication between parents and children, Palen and Hughes (2007, p. 345) concluded that “Parents use mobile phones to help extend the idea of ‘home.’ They, by being communicatively available by a single number, come to embody the physical predictability and stability of home base.” Platformization represents a continuation of these developments as it extends and transforms how, and with what implications, family life, care, and relationships can be practised beyond the home.

### *Platforms for Extending Communication Beyond the Home*

One means through which this is occurring is via more intensive platformization of existing practices for extending family life beyond the home. For example, while families have always found ways to remain in contact with distant loved ones, such as via letters or phone calls, video calling has provided new possibilities for including physically absent family members in everyday situations (Nedelcu & Wyss, 2016). Transnational families in particular have demonstrated how video platforms enable practices of care and feelings of connectedness to be maintained across distance. In her study of transnational families in Ireland, King-O’Riain (2015, p. 268) demonstrates how practices of “hanging out” via extended video calls provides “a window” into the everyday lives of loved ones. Nedelcu and Wyss (2016) describe similar practices among Romanian migrants in Switzerland who use “omnipresent co-presence” via extended video calling to bring distant loved ones into “the inherent features of the ‘everyday’, the ‘regular’ and the ‘fluidity’ of ‘doing family’ processes”

(pp. 210; 212). More recently, a study of romantic relationships during COVID lockdowns showed that video calling afforded “intimacy from afar” in cases where couples occupied different domestic spaces (Cascalheira et al., 2023).

The UK fieldwork described above offers examples of how video calling platforms can also support family relationality among those who live together. For a middle-class ethnic minority family living in the UK, for example, their busy lives and often conflicting schedules made physical co-presence difficult to accomplish (Livingstone & Stoilova, 2024). Omar—a highly educated man in his late 40s—struggled to be a present father for his teen children due to the demands of his high-profile job. Two types of platforms allowed him to “stretch” his parenting practices to and from the home: family tracking platforms that monitored everyone’s movement and location, and communication platforms that allowed him to converse with family members. When shopping, for example, he would video call family members to ask what they wanted and show them what’s available. Omar felt that even these simple tasks were no longer possible without the mediation of digital platforms—without them, he says, “I would be the absentee father because I’d always be at work.” For his family, video calling and location tracking platforms created an alternative zone, beside and beyond the home, where connected co-presence supported relational practices, both big and small.

While early forms of video calling, such as Skype, are not easily classified as ‘platforms,’ these services have been increasingly ‘platformized’ through their integration into the platform ecologies of Big Tech companies. Apple, for example, offers FaceTime, Google has GoogleMeet, Microsoft owns Skype and provides video calling within Microsoft Teams, and Meta owns several apps with video calling features including WhatsApp and Messenger. Also, while video calling services are not necessarily platforms in the sense of facilitating multi-sided markets (see Chaps. 1 and 2 in this volume), developments in generative artificial intelligence (AI) have posed new and urgent questions about how video calling services might develop these kinds of markets by using data from video calls to train AI language models (“Zoom denies”, 2023). All this to say, video calling is a function that has undergone, and continues to undergo, a process of intensive platformization at the same time that it is adopted by families to facilitate new kinds of connectedness. This platformization reconfigures the political economic context in which these interactions occur, as video calling platforms involve different configurations of commercial value, regulation,

and governance than the tools families previously used to maintain ties and communication beyond the home.

*New Extensions Beyond the Home: Off-Brand Uses and Data  
as Family Communication*

As well as the platformization of services *intended for* distant communication, families are also extending family life beyond the home via platforms primarily intended for other purposes. For example, in the research project described above, two families in Norway used the communicative and datafication features of fitness platforms to mediate novel practices of care and connection at a distance.

In one example, Anna (39 years) used the Strava fitness tracker app as a key platform for interacting with her father. Connected to a fitness watch, the platform includes a GPS tracker that logs the user's running routes and sensors that generate a range of biometric training data. As 'friends' on the app, Anna and her father could view each other's data and would leave comments celebrating achievements. Anna noted that the app gave them things to talk about when they met and that interactions within the app were often a catalyst for other forms of contact:

If he comments on one of my runs, it's also a reminder that, oh yeah, Dad! Maybe I should call Dad! It serves as a reminder that it's been a while since I talked to him – that I have more regular contact – because I remember that I have to call my Dad when he comments. In that sense, it can help with that. But I guess we would have been fine without the app [smiles].

The Strava app provides Anna's father with information about her activities—where she has been, how her training is progressing, and other factual information—that he used to signal engagement in her life, which in turn reminds her of her care obligations towards him. Despite living separately, Anna and her father engaged in a spectrum of everyday relational practices—from very minor, like commenting on training data, to more substantive, like phone calls—that were routed around and through their shared spaces on the STRAVA platform.

Interestingly, a second father-daughter pair in Norway described a very similar use of Strava. Per (51) explained that he and his daughter Charlotte (15) used the Strava platform to communicate bidirectional support, care, and love as they kept track of each other's activities and provided

encouragement through comments in the app and in person. When Charlotte travelled abroad for training he could view her runs, and write supportive messages from home. He would even use the app to “help her process her feelings” by reviewing her run when something went wrong. She would likewise offer him praise and encouragement when she saw how far he had run, something he recounted with pride during the interview. The fitness app thus takes on a new meaning in supporting highly relational—and emotional—intergenerational practices far beyond the individual data needs of each athlete.

It is notable that these examples are both father-daughter relationships. Perhaps given the gender dynamics of these relationships, the datafication of a shared interest provides an especially helpful structure around which to enact intimacy and care. In both examples, the Strava platform opens up new opportunities for enacting relational practices at a distance, providing ways of keeping in touch around a shared interest and allowing for a range of interactions through and around the app itself.

As with previous introductions of new media forms to domestic and familial contexts, these platform practices do not simply provide new ways of connecting but also require the renegotiation of intimacy, autonomy, and privacy. Beyond creating new means for family members to communicate beyond the home, datafication-based platforms like Strava also provide family members with new forms of information about one another, sometimes raising challenging questions about how this should be managed. Anna, while not concerned about sharing her location and training data with her father, did have reservations about accessing location data about her nine-year-old daughter, Dina. Anna could view Dina’s location via an app on her phone that connected to Dina’s smartwatch, and later, Dina’s smartphone. She saw the function as valuable in terms of enabling autonomy for her daughter and described how it gave Dina a sense of security as she knew she could reach her parents and be located, if necessary. Yet, Anna was also reluctant to use the location map, saying, “I’m cautious about not [checking] it unless it is necessary because I find it a bit problematic that we would have full control over our children all the time.” When asked what would count as necessary, she was ambivalent: “Well it would be. If I don’t know where she is and can’t get hold of her. When I get worried, I can check. But I have to admit that it doesn’t happen very often. [Laughs] It’s become a bit like that in this modern society – we always have this overview of where they are.” While location tracking facilitated a relatively uncomplicated form

of intimacy-across-distance between Anna and her father, its use between Anna and her daughter prompted much more complex questions for Anna about what constitutes a proper degree of privacy and autonomy for children beyond the home.

Dina, for her part, did not seem to associate the location tracking with any sense of surveillance nor autonomy. She was not aware that her mother could track her and was more concerned about the watch being *restrictive* of her autonomy because of its limited features. She explained, “A smart watch isn’t fun because it decides what you can say. For example, it provides pre-set messages like ‘I’m coming home soon,’ ‘Goodbye,’ ‘Hi,’ ‘I want to go home,’ or something like that. You can’t type in and write what you want. [...] That’s why I wanted a phone.” When asked if the watch had the capability to tell her Mum and Dad where she was, Dina responded, “Yeah, or I actually don’t know. I could at least make calls.”

Both the smart watch and Strava examples underline how the datafication functions of digital platforms add new elements to family members’ practices of not only extending *contact* beyond the family home but also enabling practices of *care* outside co-presence in the same space. To be able to communicate with her Mum through her smart watch, Dina was unknowingly accepting the potential surveillance of her whereabouts by her mother. Likewise, Anna’s father was able to track Anna’s running and training routines, as a side effect of their keeping in touch and sharing interests across distance. This is not simply a case of platforms further decentring the home as a locus of family interaction; these examples also point to broader implications for family life. In its simplest form, the Strava example illustrates the platformization of family leisure practices, and how connections, interests, and health data are digitalised and managed through platform infrastructures. However, more fundamental aspects of family lives—like the negotiations of privacy and autonomy—are also renegotiated. Here, parental control, relational autonomy, safety, and trust are negotiated and constituted through the use of digital platforms, as these platforms are integrated in everyday family practices.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Across this chapter, we’ve proposed two broad ways in which the platformization of family life is taking place against, and being shaped by, the context of the home. On one hand, the use of platforms reconfigures the physical home and how it is experienced by those within it—sometimes fracturing the idea of the home as a private, bounded space, and other



times supporting domestic practices of care, intimacy, and organisation that give it meaning as a home. On the other hand, the use of platforms can also extend relational practices beyond the physical boundaries of the home, opening up new possibilities for families to practise care and intimacy across distance.

In charting these possibilities, we have paid particular attention to how the family is constructed through relational practices and to the role of platforms within these practices. At the same time, we highlight that platforms themselves are constructed relationally, as their uses and functions are worked out through negotiation and collaboration between family members. Sometimes this leads to coherent shared meanings, as in the case of Anna and her father who jointly adopt Strava as a means of keeping in touch. In other cases, such as Stephen and his children, or Anna and Dina, these meanings are contested and even unresolved. One question to consider here is how these processes might be ongoing, with continual renegotiations occurring to in response to the changing functionalities of platforms, and the changing needs, interests, and values of family members. We could also ask to what extent a platform can come to take on some of the meanings of a home—if platforms and homes are both constructed relationally, at once facilitating and deriving meaning from the practices through which families create themselves, in what ways do platforms become home-like?

Our discussion has also highlighted how, as family ‘doings’ around digital technology are co-constructed between family members, family use practices may both confirm and contest the scripts envisioned and encoded by platform designers (see Goulden, 2021). Training apps can take on new meanings as tools for strengthening and maintaining family relationships while smart home voice assistants can be used as mediators and intercoms between children and parents. While these examples are not quite ‘oppositional uses’ (Shaw, 2017), in which people use technologies in ways that circumvent or contradict their intended purpose, they begin to point to the possibility of such ‘off-brand’ uses. We might ask: when is the value of platforms within family life different to the value imagined or proposed by platforms themselves? Do these divergences matter in terms of trying to evaluate the competing agencies of platforms and families—that is, when measuring how families use platforms against how platforms extract value from families? Under what conditions do families use platforms to extend old practices, and under which conditions do they create entirely new ones?

As has always been the case, the domestication of new technologies into family life challenges established understandings of the home and family life. Platforms, like many technologies before them, ask families to reconsider when and how privacy and autonomy are granted, under what conditions the outside world should enter the home, who must engage in what forms of labour to maintain the smooth functioning of domestic life, and so on. Central to many of these kinds of questions is the idea of the home as a bounded space, separate from public life. Platforms trouble this already blurred boundary in new and more extensive ways, through intensive processes of datafication and commodification. This is an element that we have only briefly gestured to but is taken up in more detail in Chaps. 2, 4, and 6.

Our discussion has also begun to indicate some possibilities in terms of how platforms ‘get into’ the family home. If *platformization* is a process, how does this process begin for families? In some cases, new platforms are sought out for their novelty and introduced to the home, although often through processes of negotiation as with Catherine and her husband. In other cases, such as video calling, existing family practices become more intensively ‘platformized’ in multiple ways. Platforms can also be adopted for one purpose—such as tracking running sessions—but move sideways into family life as relational uses become valued. These are just a few possibilities, but they raise broader questions about the different vectors along which platformization occurs and the different starting points from which it begins.

Finally, while we have primarily focused on families and homes with substantial technology access, it remains important not to overstate the level of digitalisation, and thus platformization, occurring across homes. Research continues to highlight the differing degrees of access and use experienced by different families: while some families live in truly networked ‘smart’ homes in which technologies heavily mediate domestic routines and relations, others experience minimal technological integration, either due to affordability or personal preference (Thomas et al., 2023). What this means for the role of platforms in and beyond the home remains an important question.

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