

**A Qualitative Study of Family Communication Patterns Theory of Digital  
Supplementation on University Students**

by

Heather Vaughan

Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Strategic Media, PhD

School of Communication & the Arts, Liberty University

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### Abstract

Currently there is data that exists to support the benefits of traditional parental supplementation. However, the same cannot be said for digital parental supplementation. At present, it is unknown if remote interaction is necessary and whether it generates the same results in human beings, emotionally, mentally, and physically. As society continues exploring the complexities of the digital revolution and technological tools, it is imperative to explore the limitations as well as allowances in computerized communication. Even more importantly, there are several opportunities associated with digital parental supplementation that people must consider. First, digital media can provide proper parental supplementation if it does not exist in the home. Second, digital media offers all people the same freedoms regarding the exploration and understanding of life. Third, if healthy levels of communication are present within the modern, American household, children do not require digital parental supplementation. Rooted in *family communication patterns theory*, this qualitative analysis reviews the concept of digital parental supplementation and its association with the theory's four basic communication patterns: (a) consensual, (b) pluralistic, (c) protective, and (d) laissez-faire. Through the examination of American children linked to Generation Z, the connection is dissected, drawing distinct lines between current data about *family communication patterns* and modern innovations. The study also highlights potential areas of future inquiry which involve sibling communication variances, ethnic conversation differences, the integration of Christian principles into family interaction, and the presence of multiple communication patterns in the same household. The overall intent of the study is to reiterate the importance of communication in the home as well as the value placed on the traditional family unit.

*Keywords:* social media, digital communication, wellness, family support

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Printed by Liberty University Press, Inc., in the United States of America.

First printing, 2024.

Liberty University Press

1971 University Blvd

Lynchburg, VA 24515

[www.liberty.edu](http://www.liberty.edu)

### **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my big sister Patti. Thank you for feeding me, loving me, protecting me, and providing me with traditional parental supplementation. You are truly an incredible woman of God who lives and breathes the Word of the Lord. May this work prevent other children from missing out on their dreams simply because they lack positive parental communication, influence, or guidance within the home.

### **Acknowledgements**

Words cannot express my appreciation for my professor and chair Dr. Erin Black. She has consistently provided encouragement, spiritual guidance, and doctoral direction. I also could not have finished the course without Dr. John Katsion. Thank you for being a part of my committee and for all the valuable insight.

Additionally, I would like to share my extreme love for my family members, specifically my husband and daughter. Both of you have sacrificed a lot along the way to help me achieve this degree. I am forever grateful and honored that the Lord allowed you both in my life.

Lastly, I would like to praise Dr. Mark Gregory and his wife Jan. Together they supported me the entire journey, listening to my ideas, reading my proposals, sitting through mock interviews, and cheering me on down the final stretch. Your friendship to Robbie, myself, and Dylan-Reese is priceless.

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**List of Abbreviations**

**CIT:** cultural identity theory

**COVID-19:** Corona Virus Disease of 2019

**DI:** Digital Interaction

**ED:** Eating Disorder

**FCP:** Family Communication Patterns Theory

**FCPT:** Family Communication Patterns Theory

**FOMO:** Fear of Missing Out

**IG:** Instagram

**RFCP:** Revised Family Communication Patterns Theory

**RQ:** Research Question

**SIP:** Social Information Processing Model

**SS:** Social Support Theory

## **A Qualitative Study of Family Communication Patterns Theory of Digital Supplementation on University Students**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This study examines the relevance of digital parental supplementation and its correlation specifically with existing communication patterns within the home. While current works from Lopresti et al. (2021) and Person et al. (2021) highlight the benefits of traditional parental supplementation, there is no equivalent support for digital parental supplementation. This review fills in the gaps between the two, featuring distinct research rooted in the practices of *family communication patterns theory* (FCP) (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Through a qualitative approach, the realm of digital parental supplementation is explored.

#### **Overview**

Even though digital communication is one of the most popular forms of conversation today (Weinstein & Lejoyeux, 2010), the benefits of digital parental supplementation remain uncertain. However, this study displays the usefulness of digital media and its relevance specifically in families with low communication levels. Research conducted by Jensen et al. (2021) affirms the direction of this study. The investigators called digital media a “core platform for parent youth interaction” (p. 2) as well as the primary source of communication in older teens and young professionals. This increase escalated during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the need for digital communication in a lot of areas but specifically for young people (Appel et al., 2020). During this time, research conducted by Appel et al. studied the ways families used remote interaction for general conversation, emotional encouragement, and mental wellness. Although face-to-face connection should be prominent (Callahan & Inckle, 2012) in a person’s daily life (Scharp, 2017), research is developing that supports significant advantages of cyber

conversation (Jensen et al., 2021). According to Jensen et al. there are many assets in using digital media to communicate, particularly within the American household which lacks parental/child connection.

### **Home Environment**

Home environment makes all the difference for children. According to Baxter et al. (2012), the household affects a child's ability to grow emotionally, mentally, and physically. The development starts early on, specifically between the infant to toddler years. Research from Baxter et al. showcases the importance of parents reading and talking to children in these phases. Consistent attention on communication and comprehension will encourage autonomy and develop strong learning skills in children (Baxter, 2012). In fact, Baxter et al. reiterated that the more supportive parents are, the more their children excel at school. Activities such as reading, overall classroom success, and attendance increase when home life is positive for kids.

Children also excel physically when their parents participate in their activities. Baxter et al. (2012) encouraged guardians to attend events at school as well as those held after hours. Participation creates a sense of stability and confidence for kids. Additionally, children blossom physically when their mothers and fathers take them to non-academic outings. Concerts, plays, and community events are just some of the scenarios Baxter et al. recommended for parents. These memorable moments assist children in social growth as well. They also establish a strong bond with parents which prepares the children for handling serious issues later in life. Baxter et al. claims that kids crave parental support. Children use it to tackle emotional issues inside and outside the home. Specifically, as they age, positive and happy relationships with

parents become crucial.

### **Parental Involvement**

Jensen et al. (2021) highlighted similar research about parental involvement. According to Jensen et al., parents make a stark difference in the lives of children. Mothers and fathers are highly influential initially in the formative years but also during the adolescent period and preliminary stages of adulthood (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2019). Maternal and paternal immersion generates openness and awareness in babies (Baumrind, 1966), while parental guidance influences behavior development in children (Carter & Welch, 1981). Research by Carter and Welch (1981) suggests that parental impact diminishes slightly during the early teens but returns heavily into the later adolescent years and early adulthood.

### ***Gender Influence***

While parental involvement makes a difference in the lives of children (Carter & Welch, 1981), the gender of the parent also plays a role in child development. Cooksey and Fondell (1996) investigated the critical level the father is expected to play in a nuclear household. Even though the mother spends more time with the children, Cooksey and Fondell (1996) discovered the elevated level of impact dad has on home life. According to the pair, children are more successful in academics when their father eats, plays, and engages with them. There are major differences though in the level of fatherly engagement depending on marital status. Cooksey and Fondell (1996) discovered that single fathers are the most active in their offspring's life, even more so than children who live in a two-parent home. Meanwhile stepfathers who don't have any biological children in the home are the least likely to interact or

develop a relationship. The scholars also noted that season of life impacted how much time fathers spend with children in their home. For example, the father may share limited connection with the kid(s) in the home, if a household contains only daughters, houses small kids, or the father works long hours. Likewise, dads of boys typically are more active in their kid's lives versus dads of girls or gender combos (Cooksey & Fondell, 1996).

### ***Ethnic Impact***

Another point of interest for Cooksey and Fondell (1996) was ethnicity. The scholarly pair featured that Black fathers are not as likely as White fathers to eat with their children. Hispanic dads and more educated fathers are more likely to share a meal with their kids than White fathers and uneducated dads. However, Black dads were more likely to talk to their kids than White fathers, and they are more apt to help with homework or reading (Cooksey & Fondell, 1996). Hispanic dads are likely to help with homework too but are more likely to build relationships through fun activities.

Even though Cooksey and Fondell (1996) focused on the father primarily in their research, they did mention mothers too. The mother is extremely influential in behavior and academics. In fact, a mother's presence and influence is just as valuable as having a father present in the home. The one variance though is time. The mother tends to have more minutes readily available for children which is why a lot of kids bond more with the matriarch of the family (Cooksey & Fondell, 1996).

**Parental Decline**

Overall, scholars determined that parental involvement is incredibly important and beneficial for children (Swartz et al., 2011), regardless of age, ethnicity, or gender. The involvement occurred in the following forms: emotional, informational, and instrumental (Wang, 2019). Children without these types of support lack autonomy, personality, and sensitivity (Jiao, 2021). According to Choi (2017), racial and cultural barriers contribute to the lack of parental involvement, particularly outside of the home. Choi shared that minority parents struggle with understanding the do's and don'ts of critical white theories and or behaviors. The misunderstanding discourages minority parents from wanting to participate in extracurricular activities outside of the home. Also, Choi (2017) blames institutional racism and the lack of partnership between teachers and minority parents. Choi claims that teachers do not attempt to learn more about their non-white students or their heritage which creates a disconnect between parents and teachers.

Yoo et al. (2020) noted parental inadequacy is a growing problem in the United States but attributed the issue to mental illness rather than racism. According to Yoo et al. (2020), nearly 674,000 kids in America suffer from abuse yearly. Nearly eighty percent of the abuse comes from the children's parents. Although the abuse is higher in minority or immigrant environments, factors such as crime, financial burden, and oppression are also catalysts behind the high number (Yoo et al., 2020). Barboza (2019) claims that parents living extendedly in these areas are more likely to deal with depression, mental health depreciation, and substance dependence which can lead to child abuse or mistreatment. Yoo et al. also linked marital problems and a lack of

positive relationships to the onset of child maltreatment. With this data in mind, it is critical to discover if parental supplementation is possible through remote assistance. Specifically, it is critical to investigate if this substitution is beneficial when parents are not present or active in their child's life.

### **Traditional Parental Supplementation**

Before the digital revolution, children often practiced *traditional parental supplementation* by filling the void of parental inadequacies through face-to-face interaction with a pseudo-mother or pseudo-father figure. According to Lopresti et al. (2021), these parental substitutes offered supplementation in five main ways: (a) consistent communication, (b) routine meet ups, (c) devotion to the relationship, (d) accountability, and (e) activity assistance. Lopresti et al. noted that communication was monumental in the initial phase of relationship building between a parental substitute and the child. Regardless of the age of the child, communication was always an essential factor. Additionally, routine meetings were important to help children feel valued. Plus, a noticeable devotion to the relationship ranked highly for pseudo-mother or pseudo-father figures to display. Also, Lopresti et al. (2021) noticed when these individuals incorporated accountability or support for the child's various activities, the relationship excelled.

Educators often provide *traditional parental supplementation* to children due to their roles in the classroom. Person et al. (2021) discussed the natural evolution, particularly focusing on the self-healing abilities generated by teachers. According to Person et al., educators are great at helping students develop self-confidence which often leads to success in and outside of the classroom. The personal attention from



teachers also reduces low academic performance by students. Another unique association involves future development. Person et al. (2021) uncovered that students with role models in the classroom tend to become strong leaders who give back to their communities.

### **Digital Parental Supplementation**

*Digital parental supplementation*, in this study, is thought of as the integration of digital communication to replace a parent or guardian. While it is unknown if this concept can occur, *digital parental supplementation* is expected to give children the opportunity to inherit emotional, mental, and physical assistance through digital media rather than a conventional human being. *Digital parental supplementation* is a term created by the author specifically for this study to describe the substitution of familial aid as well as personal discovery for kids. Also, *digital parental supplementation* can occur through social media, web searches, instant messaging, online groups, text messaging, and email but is not confined or limited only to those regions.

*Digital parental supplementation* progressed consistently among Generation Z during the COVID-19 pandemic (Saud et al., 2020). Saud et al. (2020) repeatedly featured case after case in their research regarding social support. Throughout 2020, members of Generation Z used digital media to assist peers and even cyber strangers battle physical as well as mental health issues (Saud et al., 2020). Saud et al. consider this movement to be monumental culturally, personally, and professionally for American youth.

**Parental Absenteeism**

Parents often serve as a major support system for their children from the beginning to the end (Jiao, 2021). According to Jensen et al. (2021) children lean on their parents for guidance in their early years (Carter & Welch, 1981) as well as to adulthood. Jensen et al. noticed this behavior not just for incidental things but also for serious life choices, especially as they enter college and beyond. Their presence can impact development in a child's life (Wang, 2019).

Sadly, parental absence also impacts children in several negative ways (Swartz et al., 2011). According to Zhang et al. (2014), parental absence does diminish a child's intellectual triumphs. Zhang et al. uncovered a strong relationship between academic decline and limited or no parental involvement in a child's life. In homes where both parents were absent, children scored significantly lower in mathematics and language tests. Zhang et al. noted a similar finding in single-parent homes. The decline was not as high as in households without any mothers or fathers.

Nguyen and Hoang (2023) conducted a similar study in Vietnam. This study concluded that children who are parentless tend to be less educated than those with two guardians in the home. Nguyen and Hoang discovered that death, divorce, or abandonment were the top reasons children performed low academically. Children of abandonment fared the worst while kids from broken homes came in second with death in third (Nguyen & Hoang, 2023). Also, kids from two parent homes scored the highest in their query. Children from single parent families outperformed units without any mothers or fathers.

Another point of interest in their research involves the variance between

mothers and fathers (Nguyen & Hoang, 2023). Nguyen and Hoang found that children in homes without mothers were worse off than those with them. In the Cooksey and Fondell (1996) study, the mother plays an essential role in the family unit. According to Nguyen and Hoang, the mother is credited more with managing the children and educating them.

### **Effects of Parental Absence**

Yazawa et al. (2023) connected the dots between parental absence and weight management. The research team uncovered a strong tie between child abandonment and being underweight as an adult. Yazawa et al. (2023) claimed it all had to do with the age of the individuals when their parent(s) left them. The connection between the two is explored in the next section.

### ***Weight Gain***

Typically, individuals who were between the ages of three and fifteen (when their parents left) were neither underweight nor overweight as adults. However, if the study participants' parents left before age three they were typically underweight. In the same regard, individuals whose parents divorced were more likely to be overweight in adulthood. It is important to note that Yazawa et al.(2023) noticed no extreme weight issues with adults whose guardians were in other places because of work.

### ***Suicide***

Fu et al. (2017) noticed another physical component linked with parent absence- that of suicide. According to research from Fu et al., parentless children were more likely to commit suicide than those with both parents in the home. Suicide rates

were lower in homes associated with at least one parent. Also, Fu et al. discovered that any child facing parental absence was more susceptible to emotional disorders like depression, physical fear, social concern, and suicide.

Parental absenteeism is extremely dangerous for children. Garcia and Duggan (2022) discussed the concerns surrounding the problem in their recent article regarding sleep in children. The pair focused their attention specifically on the effects death and divorce have on young people. Garcia and Duggan analyzed elements such as sleep duration, caliber of sleep, level of night terrors, and how long it took to fall asleep. However, quality of sleep was the only subject slightly disrupted, according to their research. The other variables showed no change when associated with death or divorce (Garcia & Duggan, 2022).

### **Introduction to the Problem**

Despite layers of research regarding the benefits of *traditional parental supplementation* (Person et al., 2021; Lopresti et al., 2021), there is not enough knowledge about *digital parental supplementation*. For this reason, the application of this study is critical. Data must be provided to fill in the gaps between the two. According to Manago et al. (2020), now is the time to conduct such a study because of the impact digital communication has had on the family unit.

### ***Effects of Parental Involvement***

Parent-child relationships are stronger in the twenty-first century than in the past because of digital communication (Manago et al., 2020). Liu et al. (2008) attributed the progression to daily conversation rituals like text messaging. These digital tools have increased communication between family members by nearly fifty percent (Liu et al., 2008). Liu et al. tracked the boost to college campuses as well. Through some form of digital communication, almost ninety percent

of college students check in weekly with their parents (Liu et al., 2008). While Manago et al. (2020) reiterated similar conversation statistics, researchers also uncovered a relationship between digital communication and improved health in older teens and early twenties. Scholars attributed the enhancement to the influx of parent child connection. Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2019) commented on the well-being of teens as well. Padilla-Walker and Nelson discovered meaningful perks for kids when their parents were involved.

When parents maintain a consistent relationship with their children, outcomes like life encouragement, emotional support, and positive outlook emerge. Research conducted by Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2019) affirmed this belief specifically in the areas of security and autonomy. According to Padilla-Walker and Nelson, when a parent sends a text message to their child, it reminds the child that he or she are loved and supported. Additionally, re-reading the messages later reminds the students of their connection to home. Jensen et al. (2021) expanded on this concept, uncovering that children often feel more supported by their parents after pondering old threads. This process stimulates more calls and text messages for both parties. In some cases, Jensen et al. reported an increase in face-to-face interaction as well.

### ***Digital Independence***

Outside of face-to-face relations, there is a link between autonomy and digital communication. Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2019) claim it can be both positive and negative. On the one hand, constant parental-child interaction is beneficial to the college student. As previously mentioned Manago et al. (2019) uncovered relationships to excellent mental and physical health when parents used digital conversation tools to interact with their children. Positivity encourages students to make educated, independent choices and then reflect on the situations as well as the outcomes with their parents (Manago et al., 2019).

***Digital Setbacks***

However, research constructed by Racz et al. (2017) showed a less favorable perspective. According to Racz, digital communication can backfire, eliminating organic autonomy. Tools such as text messaging encourage college students (and children in general) to stay connected to their parents 24/7. Green (2007) believes constant contact robs college students of privacy and opportunities for independent behavior. Ling and Yttri (2002) agree, claiming digital communication creates a breeding ground for parental intrusion rather than involvement. Ling and Yttri feel constant exposure diminishes family relationships instead of helping them. Jensen et al. (2021) concurred that their research unearthed negative consequences. Jensen et al. claimed the usage of digital technology diminishes ‘real life relationships’ (p. 469) and causes trouble with parents. Nearly eighty percent of teens are obsessed with their phones (Jensen et al., 2021). This conclusion is disturbing since findings from Milkie et al. (2015) suggest overall life success in teenagers stems from more facetime with parents. However, it is important to note that Milkie et al. recorded in the same study that parents are just as likely as their kids to be preoccupied with technology. Milkie acknowledges the ironic correlation, claiming technology is often a troublemaker within the American household, for everyone. Typically, conflicts result over the amount of screen time, or parental attempts to minimize it. The other most common issue between kids and parents involves social media. Milkie et al. (2015) acknowledged this problem only gets worse as children age. It is linked to education requirements and social communication.

***Mental Health Impact***

In addition to text messaging, digital resources like websites, email, instant messaging, and social media platforms have made a stark difference in tackling the loneliness epidemic as well as mental illness. Biagianti et al. (2018) discussed these breakthroughs, highlighting a few

key conclusions. First, digital interaction (DI) can diminish loneliness. Second, depression and quality of life may improve with social media usage. Third, through online connection peer support is possible, and fourth, under the proper supervision DI can be capable of helping people who suffer from serious mental illness (Biagianti et al., 2018).

**Social Effects.** According to Biagianti et al. (2018), social isolation is a developing complication with severe burdens. The top consequence involves the onset of mental illness. The next concern includes hospitalization. Often due to the lack of social support physically, medical assistance is imperative. Biagianti et al. felt these issues were amplified in individuals who lived with psychotic disorders. Since these people have little routine social interaction, they struggled with loneliness deeply. However, the integration of social media platforms is changing that. Networks like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are enabling people with mental illness to create and maintain peer connections.

While the value of in-person support groups is great for people with psychotic disorders, Biagianti et al. (2018), recognized they are not always recommended or offered. The severity of the conditions created additional problems for the participants. Also, people with severe mental illness might be hesitant to use conventional healthcare. Plus, transportation can be challenging as well. All together, these reasons make the remote options extremely attractive. Specifically, the Internet offers peer-to-peer relationships while eliminating a lot of the hindrances generated in person. These benefits tend to improve a person's well-being, confidence, and self-respect as well as symptom reduction in some cases (Biagianti et al., 2018).

Online interaction is another meaningful benefit (Biagianti et al., 2018). Recent research acknowledged that platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube give people a chance to connect with others like them. Remotely, they can chat about treatment plans, as well as wins

and losses without any monetary costs or loss of privacy. Biagianti et al. noted that these opportunities improved overall quality of life and minimized relapses. However, the team was unable to classify these benefits as well as the interaction as official friend-centered support. More data is imperative to know if organic online relationships truly simulate in-person

**Social Risks.** Even though digital interaction (DI) is responsible for changing the lives of many individuals battling mental illness, there are lots of concerns too. Risks like cyberbullying (Langmia & Tyree, 2017), addiction (Bernstein, 2011), and social isolation (Biagianti et al., 2018) are all side effects that can be worsened in people with psychotic disorders (Biagianti et al., 2018). Scholars like Bernstein (2011) and Langmia and Tyree (2017) highlighted these dangers repeatedly and warned against the usage of social media. However, the Biagianti et al. team reiterated that the benefits of social networking outweighed the negatives for those who struggled with mental illness. Biagianti et al. (2018) encouraged usage of technology with these individuals if it is securely monitored. Specific directions should be implemented to encourage cautious behavior. Plus, digital literacy classes are encouraged for participants.

Depression is another area of mental illness where social media is impactful. Zheng et al. (2022) discovered a positive link between social media and depression during the second COVID-19 outbreak in China. The 2021 resurgence of the coronavirus created enormous amounts of depression in China. Researchers noticed a higher percentage of the mental illness in people who were low-income, low-education, children, impoverished women, and travelers. However, when these groups increased their usage of social media, their struggle with depression lessened. Zheng et al. suggested that social media be integrated more often for treatment purposes during public health crises to reduce and eliminate the threat of hopelessness. Zheng et al. (2022) specifically felt social media would be helpful for individuals who display substantial



amounts of vulnerability. Again, this is a point of contention between scholars. For example, researchers like Bernstein (2011) and Langmia and Tyree (2017) disagree with the findings of Zheng et al. (2022) and Biagianti et al. (2018). Research from Bernstein (2011) as well as Langmia and Tyree (2017) supports that depression is only fueled by social media usage.

### ***Physical Health Impact***

In addition to mental health, social networking is helpful in fighting physical afflictions. Wenig and Janetzke (2022) champion its usage against eating disorders (ED), particularly in the realm of self-help. The pair followed several recovery accounts on Instagram (IG), monitoring a unique form of treatment therapy. In congruence with supervised support, Wenig and Janetzke believe social platforms help ED patients to cope on their own. The pair noticed the following adjustments for ED through IG: (a) behavior change, (b) existing treatment support, (c) social acceptance, (d) peer-driven motivation, and (e) adaptable assistance.

**Negative Concerns.** There are negative risks linked with this form of treatment too. Wenig and Janetzke (2022) strongly suggest the usage be monitored by proper personnel. Unfortunately, too much time on IG could result in negative outcomes. Plus, producing or digesting too much content on IG could produce unfavorable results as well. ED patients who need stronger emotional or physical assistance should stick solely to face-to-face assistance (Wenig & Janetzke, 2022).

**Ethical Concerns.** Social media usage is normally associated with ethical concerns in the world of mental health. White and Hanley (2023) expressed anxiety over therapists who use social media for treatment professionally and then operate as mental health influencers personally. The pair believe the current work guidelines are not clear and must be specified. White and Hanley warn mental health professionals to be super careful, not just of their actions

but also their own well-being. While White and Hanley encourage the incorporation of telepsychology as well as social media into patient treatment plans, they demand more exploration into professional conduct. Additionally, the pair encourage proper ethics training and development of practice guidelines.

### **Problem Statement**

Even though scholars like Lopresti et al. (2021) have confirmed the advantages of *traditional parental supplementation*, it is unknown if the same exists for *digital parental supplementation*. Also, it is uncertain if *digital parental supplementation* is necessary for children who live in homes with low levels of communication. For this reason, the application of this study is meaningful. Data must be provided to fill in the gaps between the two.

### **Digital Revolution**

According to Anderson and Jiang (2018), in the United States nearly 100 percent of teenagers (between the ages of 13 and 17) own or have access to a smart phone (Rizzo et al., 2019). Almost 80 percent use digital technology to communicate (Madden et al., 2013). Madden et al. also noted that more teens interact remotely now instead of hanging out face-to-face. Digital interaction has forever changed the way people communicate (Rizzo et al., 2019). The advancement has also launched the internet into a pseudo-familial relationship in the households of most American families. Cyberspace is a new family member that is changing the way mothers, fathers, children, siblings, and relatives are communicating with or without one another (Jensen et al., 2021).

### **Theory Foundation**

Around the turn of the century, Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) discovered four communication patterns within families: *consensual*, *pluralistic*, *protective*, and *laissez-faire*.

*Consensual* families implement heavy amounts of conversation and obedience into their households while *pluralistic* units talk a lot and integrate low levels of orderliness. *Protective* homes are exactly the opposite. These households expect massive amounts of obedience but discuss truly little whereas *laissez-faire* families hardly implement (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). Reuter and Koerner (2008) explored these classifications further with a study focusing on the effects of being in a low communication environment. Both consensual and pluralistic households are thought of as the most productive for children. According to Reuter and Koerner, consensual and pluralistic homes create children who are effective yet disciplined communicators that tend to excel in life, while children who come from environments low in conversation struggle during the teenage years as well as later in life. Reuter and Koerner (2008) also highlighted that kids who live in low communication families suffer from emotional neglect and obedience overload. Jiao (2021) concluded similar findings. He discovered that children who come from inadequate conversation backgrounds are plagued by anxiety and operate unhealthy relationships both with guardians and friends. Personal relationships are difficult for these individuals, both platonic and romantic. Jiao found that deficient discussions in families unanimously create worry while communicative relatives maintained healthy boundaries.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to identify the existence and relevance of *digital parental supplementation* as well as its connection to family communication patterns within the home. This study examines the need for digital media, which is often produced by low levels of communication among family members. While this investigation focuses on *digital parental supplementation* it does discuss *traditional parental supplementation* as well. The differences and similarities are laid out but not compared. This study seeks to merely determine if *digital*

*parental supplementation* is equivalent to its classic counterpart. It is important to remember that in this analysis digital communication or media is defined but not limited to social media, surfing the web, email, text messaging, instant messaging, Facetime, and any other way to communicate.

### **Significance of Study**

The meaning behind this study revolves around the existence of *digital parental supplementation* and a link to families with low levels of communication. Through qualitative analysis two key principles are constructed. *Family communication modification* is developed first with *family communication supplementation* created second. *Family communication modification* involves changes American families will implement due to research discovered or highlighted by this analysis. These individuals communicate regularly inside and outside the home, using digital and non-digital means to interact. Families in this scope fall under the *consensual* and *pluralistic* conversation styles constructed by Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002). Units that are grouped into the *protective* and *laissez-faire* households can integrate *family communication supplementation*. This process will give direction for children who are growing up without positive parental influence or appropriate communication (Wang, 2019). According to Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2019), proper parental involvement is critical in a child's life from the preliminary stages onto adulthood. *Family communication supplementation* will provide opportunities for emotional, mental, and physical needs to be met, remotely.

### **Research Questions**

While current data affirms the benefits of person-to-person communication as well as positive parental influence within the home, it is unknown if remote conversation replicates the same results. For this reason, it is critical to explore whether digital media can serve as a pseudo family member, filling in emotional, physical, and mental holes, left unfilled by inactive person-

to-person relationships with family members. To determine these answers the following questions must be examined:

- 1.) **RQ1:** How is digital parental supplementation present in the four family types of the FCP framework?
- 2.) **RQ2:** How is digital media being substituted as an immediate family member to supplement shortcomings in the home?

Even though most of the data about FCP (Koerner et al., 2017) and digital connection was obtained through a mixed methodological technique (Rosland et al., 2012), this study is qualitative (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) in nature with an interview style approach. College aged students and older teenagers (Pfeil et al., 2008) between the ages of 19 and 26 are the focus of the study, simply because they use digital communication the most (Jensen et al., 2021).

Additionally, it is imperative to divulge that the author of this study has a connection to the dissertation's subject matter. According to Creswell and Poth (2018; p. 47), it is vital to divulge any potential biases or hindrances to the query. In the pair's nine "*good qualitative*" traits series, step two pushes authors to communicate these potential violations and maintain transparency throughout. The author of this study grew up in a *protective* family, which means the home was low in communication and high in obedience (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Unfortunately, this could taint or influence the data collection process. Creswell and Poth recommended having another party conduct the collection operation. However, to guard the privacy of the study participants, the author did not include an additional person. Instead, she assigned aliases to the students, hiding their true identities from others and herself to prevent any biases or prejudices from contaminating the research.

**Definitions**

**Consensual:** A communication pattern that incorporates balance of communication and obedience (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002).

**Conformity Orientation:** A communication element that analyzes the level of obedience in a home (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972).

**Conversation Orientation:** A communication element that examines the level of interaction between family members (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972).

**Co-orientation:** One of Newcomb's most famous principles. Occurs when people experience similar things but recount different conclusions (Newcomb, 1953).

**Digital Parental Supplementation:** The integration of digital communication to replace a parent or guardian (Vaughan, 2023).

**Enacted Support:** The acknowledgement that help is available (Albrecht & Goldsmith, 2003).

**FCP:** The abbreviation for *family communication patterns theory*, a concept that analyzes the four patterns' families use to speak to one another (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006).

**Laissez-faire:** A communication pattern that operates without the integration of communication or obedience (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002).

**Matter of Concern:** A representative in Newcomb's Model of Communication. *Matter of Concern* or *X* displays a specific issue or concept that prevents progress or assists in advancement (Newcomb, 1953).

**Pluralistic:** A communication pattern that relies heavily on communication but little on orderliness (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002).

**Precision:** One of the critical factors McLeod and Chaffee uncovered in their socio-orientation and concept-orientation research (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972).

**Protective:** A communication pattern that relies heavily on obedience but no conversation (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002).

**Receiver:** A representative in Newcomb's Model of Communication. Students and teachers serve as *receivers* (Newcomb, 1981).

**Schemas:** Pieces of the past the mind uses to predict future scenarios with relatives (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006).

**Separate:** The final class used to describe marriage styles in correspondence *with family communication patterns theory*. The spouses operate separately in every way (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006).

**Sender:** A representative in Newcomb's Model of Communication. Students and teachers serve as *senders* and *pupils* inasmuch whereas *x* depicts a problem, idea, or position that upsets the conversation progress or advances it forward (Newcomb, 1981).

**Socio-orientation:** Part of the cornerstone of FCP that involves adjustment inside the family unit (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972).

**Traditional:** The first class used to describe marriage styles in correspondence *with family communication patterns theory* (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006).

**Traditional Parental Supplementation:** Face-to-face interaction with a pseudo-mother or pseudo-father figure to fill parental inadequacies (Vaughan, 2023).

## Summary

Digital communication is one of the most consumed conversation mediums of the century. Some scholars call it the main communication resource while others recognize it as the sole communication medium for teens and young adults. Isolation troubles related to the pandemic of 2020 reinforced the need for digital interaction. During this season, researchers

inspected the tools families used to interact. Data revealed that families implemented daily interplay, familial support, and cognitive assistance all online. Despite outcomes highlighting the benefits of person-to-person interaction, more data is emerging regarding the awareness of remote support.

The study in this portion investigated modern information about the principles of *family communication patterns theory* (FCP). FCP is a theoretical framework centered on the ways parents, partners, and children talk to each other. By way of a qualitative methodology, the interview technique is implemented, evaluating current information about FCP, remote conversation between relatives, and the perks of cyber assistance. Also, digital tools such as email, social networking, text messaging, and other channels of digital interplay will be examined. Plus, great emphasis will be placed on older teens and young professionals, intentionally noting what mediums they use to communicate as well if the need for digital parental supplementation exists in their lives.

Additional information in respect to *family communication patterns theory* (FCP) is essential for the protection of the modern American family. New data regarding the existence and relevance of *digital parental supplementation* could produce valuable connections inside the home, particularly, if the family communication pattern contributes to the necessity of *digital parental supplementation*. Unfortunately, much of the information about FCP was collected prior to the digital revolution. Additional data, specifically focusing on digital media and *digital parental supplementation* could contribute greatly to FCP's core principles. Also, current information generated from a modern study could give families currently struggling to communicate a fresh perspective.



Because digital communication tools make up the most consumed conversation channels available, more research is necessary. Modern data implies that more people are surfing the information superhighway than ever before in search of remote assistance (Siebel, 2019). Scholars expect the need to continually increase as technology improves, offering emotional, mental, and physical support. For this reason, further inspection into FCP would be helpful.

The evolution of this study and the development of *digital parental supplementation* will be explored in the next chapter. While this chapter introduced and raised awareness of the problem, the second section highlights gaps in the literature. These gaps are used to highlight the existence and usage of *digital parental supplementation*. Plus, the link regarding this information and family communication patterns theory is inspected alongside various theory conflicts about the study's ties to homes. Opportunities for advancement not only with this study, but also in the sphere of FCP will be reviewed in the next chapter. The following pages lay out more backstory regarding FCP as well as changes and conflicts in research. Additionally, the meaning of this project is analyzed alongside its connection to FCP.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This investigation inspects the importance of *digital parental supplementation* and its correspondence particularly to conversation styles within the family. Although research regarding the benefits of *traditional parental supplementation* (Lopresti, 2021) is available, not much is known about the effectiveness of *digital parental supplementation*. The purpose of this study is to examine the necessity as well as the possibility of *digital parental supplementation* and its roots in *family communication patterns theory* (FCP) (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). According to Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2006) there are four basic communication patterns (a) consensual, (b) pluralistic, (c) protective, and (d) laissez-faire. In this analysis, there is a strong connection between these four communication styles, Generation Z, and *digital parental supplementation*. This review reveals a link between *digital parental supplementation* and family communication. Through a qualitative methodology, the relationship is explored. However, there is a gap between digital and *traditional parental supplementation*, which is why this analysis is necessary. Chapter two highlights the foundation of the study's theory, *family communication patterns theory* (Koerner & Fitzpatrick (2006). Chapter two also features the study's tradition origin, other key elements alongside the investigation's communication framework, and relevant literature essential to the study.

### Overview

In this section, the foundation of *family communication patterns theory* (FCP) (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002) is explored. Also, the association between this study and the sociopsychological tradition are displayed. Plus, past and present research regarding FCP, human communication styles, as well as the need for some form of parental supplementation are featured. Specifically, in this section, discussion about

*conversation orientation* and *co-orientation* are highlighted which affirm the need for this study.

### **Situation to Communication Tradition**

While theory is often considered a connector in the world of communication, tradition is thought of as a divider (Apuke, 2018). Craig (1999) built seven categories to house communication theory: (a) *semiotic*, (b) *phenomenological*, (c) *cybernetic*, (d) *sociopsychological*, (e) *sociocultural*, (f) *critical*, and (g) *rhetorical*. More commonly known as traditions, Craig (1999) used these categories to generate variance as well as internal discussion between scholars. Even though some of the concepts overlapped or noticeably conflicted with one another, the traditions welcomed all placement. Analysis in this manner helped researchers truly grasp the ins and outs of the theories. Craig referenced this phenomenon as intellectual coherence. The process generated a harmonious yet continuous discussion for all to analyze year after year.

### ***Sociocultural Tradition***

The *sociocultural tradition* is a possible fit for this study because of its correlation to FCP. The *sociocultural* tradition examined the societal sphere broken down through personal perspective (Maguire, 2006). The primary target of the *sociocultural* tradition discussed group hierarchy and past circumstances. Even though a portion of scholars feel pecking order changes people's personalities, others think individual temperament is reliant upon the present culture as well as vocabulary, interaction, and investigation. Maguire believed that people initiated entertainment socially which restructured the pecking order. These games involved favors or specific responses that affected verbal and non-verbal conduct. Long-term, these elements involved the *sociocultural tradition* (Craig, 1999).

### ***Sociopsychological Tradition***

The sociopsychological tradition is also a great fit for this study because of the connection to the human mind. Maguire (2006) claimed this tradition placed lots of scrutiny on feelings, recognition, and psychological condition. The tradition is split into three classes: *emotional*, *physical*, and *mental*. The *emotional* stage centered around communication behavior. The *mental* phase focused on personal transformation, with a fixation on accumulation, conservation, and operation. The mental stage is the foundation of the *sociopsychological tradition*. The *physical* phase probed the total activity of the intellect. Furthermore, Maguire (2006) encouraged scholars to remember that *sociopsychological* concepts contained cause-and-effect dilemmas. According to Maguire, these issues are often resolved through analysis. Craig (1999) believed this sphere was covered mostly in personal principles.

### ***Dissertation Correlation***

Since the human communication process featured emotional, mental, and physical components, *Family communication patterns theory* (FCP) is an excellent philosophical portrayal of the *sociopsychological tradition*. Conventional communication is favorable within the family and cultivates successful people across all aspects of life (Koerner et al., 2017). Because the *sociopsychological* heritage is ingrained in personal conduct it couples nicely with Koerner and Fitzpatrick's initial thoughts. Admirably, the link between the data and the tradition generated new hypotheses.

### ***Tradition Justification***

Although this study can exist in a *sociocultural* (Craig, 1999) realm, the tradition that best fits this study is the *sociopsychological* tradition. The reason behind the selection involves the tradition's focus on elements of the human mind (Maguire, 2006). Emotions, awareness, and

overall mental status are of immense importance in the *sociopsychological* tradition (Craig, 1999) as well as in this study. Also, cause-and-effect dilemmas (Maguire, 2006) or situations involving personal principles (Craig, 1999) make up a huge part of the *sociopsychological* sphere. In this study, lack of parental involvement is the cause, and the effect is *digital parental supplementation*. The personal principles encompass the four communication patterns of FCP and whether *digital parental supplementation* is necessary.

**Sociopsychological Connection.** Additionally, *Family communication patterns theory* focuses on core elements such as the emotional, mental, and physical components of conversation which encompass the three main parts of the *sociopsychological* tradition (Maguire, 2006). The emotional stage works well with family interaction. The mental sphere is a storehouse for data regarding digital communication and its effects. The physical region aligns best with the health and wellness of the human body.

Ironically, before Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) publicly explored FCP, Newcomb (1953) laid the groundwork for it to align with the *sociopsychological tradition* (Craig, 1999). In Newcomb's principle of *co-orientation*, two or more people concentrate on the same person, place, thing, or idea and develop similar concepts or points of views regarding the object. In family units, equivalent practices occur, causing a group of beliefs with essential, psychological and civil components to develop. Initially, Newcomb (1953) said the *co-orientation* process started with recognition of a couple's or household's views. The next step occurred when family members or spouses became aware of the other person's beliefs which led to the construction of three vital elements within the home or relationship: *agreement*, *accuracy*, and *congruence* (Newcomb, 1953).

**Newcomb's Relevance.** Newcomb (1953) claimed *the agreement* involved the resemblance of the couple's or family's perceptions. For example, if a household believed in spending time together and regularly the family members upheld commitments to see one another, then the clan agreed. *Accuracy* represented the opinion regarding a spouse's or relative's viewpoints as well as their real-life position. According to Newcomb, if the wife felt the husband was truly faithful to their marriage, and indeed the husband was devoted only to the wife, then their relationship contained lots of *accuracy*. Lastly, *congruence* occurred when a family member's individual perspectives matched their assumptions about the other person's beliefs. For example, if a father loved his child and felt the child loved him, *congruence* was present. These attributes all came from intellectual origins and can only exist if present on both sides.

Newcomb's trio was also prevalent in the social aspect of a family. According to the scholar, *agreement*, *accuracy*, and *congruence* reflected a positive and communal social setting in a household. When these attributes existed in a family, they are related to one another (Koerner and Schrod, 2014). However, it is important to note that a co-oriented family does not have to acknowledge a shared social setting (to have agreement, accuracy, and congruence), because family members can disagree on how beliefs are perceived.

*Co-orientation* (Newcomb, 1953) and communal reality go hand in hand. Koerner and Schrod (2014) claim this occurs for three reasons: (a) group coordination, (b) cognitive ambition, and (c) intellectual balance. Group coordination is necessary for homes to operate as a unit, therefore Koerner and Schrod claim the attribute is vital for accuracy. The pair claim accuracy contributes to functions and behaviors; without it miscommunication and inaccurate perceptions occur. Cognitive ambition is critical for psychological equilibrium (Heider, 1946) and another reason why the two-walk side by side. Heider believed the human psyche longed for

balance and internal harmony within the home. According to Heider, if relatives or spouses stuck to positive viewpoints regarding the family, then the other relatives observed the same opinions. The same went for conflicting beliefs within the home. Heider felt they led to inaccuracies and disagreements internally because of the psychological need to maintain balance. These practices produced a shared reality in the household (Koerner & Schrod, 2014).

McLeod and Chaffee (1972) expanded on Newcomb (1953) as well as Heider (1946) in their exploration of family communication. The pair investigated the attribute of *agreement* deciding that households achieved union in two ways, perception and description. First, relatives discuss or share opinions about a topic and then develop their position based upon family member feedback. Second, households develop ideas about something based upon social definition. McLeod and Chaffee (1972) named this principal *concept-orientation*. Since this scenario highlights interactions between spouses, children, and siblings rather than the topic itself, McLeod and Chaffee referred to this practice as *socio-orientation*. The pair believed that households methodically and expectedly integrated these two techniques to attain agreement and communal reality. Koerner and Schrod (2014) believed these two concepts should be modernized and transformed, changing the conceptualization and operationalization of the theory. These updates led to the current perspective of FCPT (Koerner & Schrod, 2014).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Theory is vital in the realm of communication. According to Maguire (2006), it connected people as well as ideologies together, creating progress for all. Maguire saw theory as a special grouping of conclusions that equip scholars with definitive perspective. Theories are helpful because they increase intelligence. Additionally, Apuke (2018) associated theory with innovation, astonishment, and progression. Apuke (2018) viewed theory as having a meaningful

relationship with the following pieces: hunches, core concepts, definition, and guidance.

Hunches tend to develop hypotheses and are classified into three categories: prospective outcomes, continuation beliefs, and worth development. Baxter and Braithwaite (2008) felt the core pieces of communication theory contained the following: (a) expectation, (b) infringement, (c) implicit conservation, (d) reasonable behavior, (e) inflated enlightenment, (f) favorable awareness, (g) clarification, (h) evaluation, (i) exchange, (j) groundwork, and (k) authenticity. Definition, the third element of theory, according to Li et al. (2015), provided a pair of indispensable clarifications, *causal explanation* and *practical explanation*. *Causal* showcases correlations while *practical* connects ambitions. Finally, guidance integrated angles or areas for scholars. According to Baxter and Braithwaite (2008), theories can only earn a name if they possess hunches, core concepts, and definition (guidance is optional).

### ***Study Theory Origin***

*Family Communication Patterns* (FCP) theory is an ideology focused on discussion habits within a family (Koerner et al., 2017). Early on, Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2006) determined that family members talked in one of four communication styles: (a) *consensual*, (b) *pluralistic*, (c) *protective*, and (d) *laissez-faire*. A *consensual* unit implements tons of conversation and orderliness (Koerner et al., 2017). A *pluralistic* family communicates heavily and operates with low obedience levels. *Protective* families do not talk really at all but do practice a lot of good conduct while *laissez-faire* tribes enforce none of either.

Although this study is rooted in FCP, it is more about the possibility and necessity of *digital parental supplementation*. This study also focuses on the correlations between *digital parental supplementation* and the four communication patterns of FCP. As noted in chapter four, certain patterns see excellent value in *digital parental supplementation* and others do not. For



this reason, additional research regarding FCP, parental substitution, social media support, and general digital communication have been included for context. It is important to remember that while these sources cover a variety of ages in children, the primary age focus for this study is between 19-26. According to Jensen et al. (2021), people in this range tend to use digital communication more than any other age group.

**Theory Foundation.** *Family communication patterns theory* (FCP) is a concept built upon communication designs within the household (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). Initially, Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) believed that relatives used one of four styles to speak to one another. The quartet consisted of (a) *consensual*, (b) *pluralistic*, (c) *protective*, and (d) *laissez-faire* (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). A *consensual* clan administers a lot of discussion and obedience. A *pluralistic* unit communicates heavily but does not have acquiescence. *Protective* groups do not talk at all but convey oodles of orderliness while *laissez-faire* families practice neither.

Moreover, Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2006) derived that family members fall into one of two categories: *conversation orientation* or *conformity orientation*. *Conversation orientation* produces communication and *conformity* incorporates orderliness. Also, Koerner et al. (2017) discovered correlations to civil unions and parenthood. The first association is *Traditional*. It works well with consensual design (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). In this style, mothers and fathers talk routinely with their partner and offspring. *Independent*, the next link, spotlights relatives who move autonomously. *Separate*, the final marriage classification involves people who are married but are self-reliant. Furthermore, it is vital to mention the concept of *schemas*. According to Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002), *schemas* are the remembrances of past discussions with family members. The pair separated them into a trio of subjects. The first involved basic

communication awareness. The second encouraged international context and the third required routine family interaction (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). It is important to understand *schemas* because often they determine communication relationships in the home. Partners, offspring, or siblings base future conversations on past discussions. Koerner and Fitzpatrick believe *schemas* contribute and control most conversations within the home. Schemas are relevant to this study because they may encourage or discourage parental supplementation through digital application.

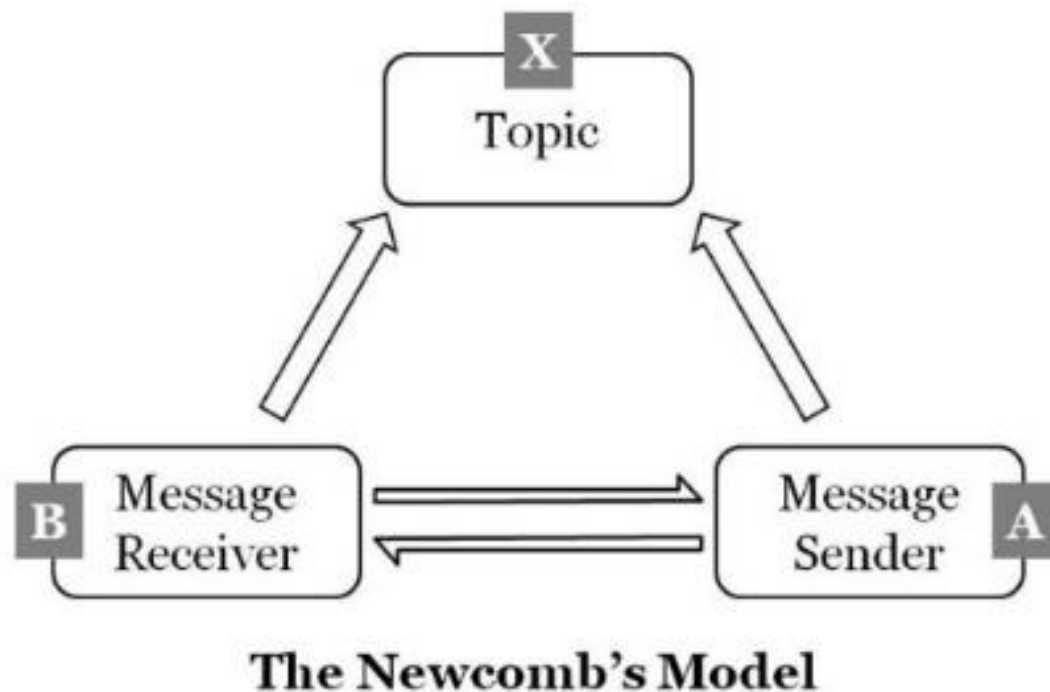
Outside of Koerner and Fitzpatrick's research, Koerner and Schrodts (2014) expanded many of the original thought processes behind schemas (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). Koerner and Fitzpatrick believed schemas were responsible for both conversation control and conformation. While Koerner and Schrodts (2014) felt they had more influence on *conversation orientation* and only affected behavior some of the time (Schrodts et al., 2007). However, when a child's behavior is affected, Schrodts et al. (2007) claimed their mental status and self-esteem are also adjusted simultaneously. The social avalanche follows from some form of parental approval. Daily behaviors and cyber perspectives also contributed to communication patterns within the home. According to Schrodts and Ledbetter (2007), they expand or diminish guardian-offspring relationships, depending upon conflict resolution styles.

Beyond schemas, Koerner and Fitzpatrick focused on a few other areas of *family communication patterns theory* (FCPT) (Koerner & Schrodts, 2014). One of the most noticeable areas involved the name. The pair modified the theory label from FCP to FCPT. According to Koerner and Schrodts, both felt the modification was necessary because of their variances regarding the concept's core principles. Together both believed that FCPT is not culture based and not linked completely to the United States, like with other western based theories. The pair discussed its existence in other civilizations such as China, Japan, Malaysia, and Iran. Also,

Koerner and Schrodtt investigated areas of potential growth and development for future queries regarding FCPT.

**Theory Development.** When Koerner and Fitzpatrick first developed their assumptions regarding *family communication patterns theory* (FCP), they based them on the previous queries of McLeod and Chaffee (1973). While the main concept about families using one of four conversation patterns (*consensual, protective, pluralistic, and laissez-faire*) to interact was original to Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002), the perspective regarding the presence of communication patterns in the home was not. McLeod and Chaffee employed their research to audit conversation designs internally between partners, parents, and offspring. Categorically, the scholarly pair tracked the ways parents disclosed news to their descendants. McLeod and Chaffee constructed their findings on precepts discovered by Newcomb (1981).

Newcomb worked diligently as a leader in his field, examining the connections between discussion and alteration. This association was revolutionary for the time because research had yet to concentrate solely on family discussion styles. Newcomb is famous for his popular conversation prototype, *Newcomb's model of communication* (Newcomb, 1981). The concentration of his inquiry granted meaning to conversation within culture. Newcomb believed personal connection was beneficial in continuing friendships with each other. The style functioned in a trilateral strategy which contained the succeeding pieces: (a) *sender*, (b) *receiver*, and (x) *matter of concern*. The *sender* and the *receiver* depicted educators and pupils. Whereas *x* depicted a problem, idea, or position that upset the conversation progress or advanced it forward (Newcomb, 1981). Figure 1A displays *Newcomb's model of communication*.

*Figure 1A*

The purpose of the model is to convey the importance of balance. Particularly, Newcomb focused on the communication perspective. While each piece appeared independently, Newcomb used the arrows to imply dependency. The model indicated that the *topic*, *message receiver*, and *message sender* are all a part of one another and rely on each other for stability. The model is often referred to as the *ABX model of communication* because of its triangular structure. *Sender* fills the *A* space. *Receiver* makes up the *B* spot, while *X* contains the *Topic* or *Matter of Concern* area. An example Newcomb (1981) liked to discuss often involved teachers (A), students (B), and the (X) topic. If the educators integrated a developing strategy into their school, it was imperative that the stream of communication stay uninterrupted between the teachers and the pupils. Should *B* disagree with *A* about the strategy then the communication balance could be disturbed. It is vital for *A* to minimize any troubles with *X* or *B*.

Newcomb laid the foundation for Koerner and Fitzpatrick. Additionally, Newcomb's work enabled other scholars to identify the advantages of communication inside and outside the home. Newcomb acknowledged that human beings need positive interactions for advancement. Without him, this study regarding parental supplementation would not have been possible.

**Theory Development.** One of Newcomb's (1981) most popular axiom's is *co-orientation*. *Co-orientation* occurs when people experience similar situations but produce conflicting conclusions about the circumstances (Boswell and Dodd, 1994). When *co-orientation* happens, the individuals involved initially focus on their personal perspective. Later, they consider what others will think or say. *Co-orientation* is a part of Newcomb's (1981) attempts to understand what influences communication. Newcomb believed that influence is linked to personal affection or attraction. For agreement, people may change their viewpoints on a particular subject if their friends or social circles feel differently regarding the issue. According to Newcomb, people desire balance in conversation; therefore, to achieve it individuals may compromise their viewpoints. This behavior is relevant (alongside *schemas* or the past) (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002), because it can impact communication designs in the family unit. Change in communication patterns could encourage or discourage the need for parental supplementation.

McLeod and Chaffee (1973) modified this concept and uncovered three critical factors: *precision*, *concurrence*, and *agreement*. *Agreement* requires a level of likability between the involved parties. *Precision* is associated with compatibility while *concurrence* generates correlations between individual perspectives. All three are dependent on one another. McLeod and Chaffee (1973) believed this threesome is invaluable and mandatory in creating *socio-orientation* and *concept-orientation*. These two elements are necessary for family communication.

**Theory Expansion.** *Socio-orientation* and *concept orientation* according to Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2006) are the cornerstone of *family communication patterns theory* (FCP). *Socio-orientation* encompasses modification within a family while *concept-orientation* includes conversation. Through these rudimentary assumptions McLeod and Chaffee (1973) grasped that parents administered as well as merged a hodgepodge of dialogue strategies within their household. The deviation formed around body language, conversation, and condition. Together these pieces helped scholars understand the *how* and *why* behind family communication. Also, *socio-orientation* and *concept-orientation* added explanation to household behavior.

### ***Further Theory Development***

Chaffee and McLeod (1973) are also known for their work on another topic that could be loosely connected to family communication patterns as well. The pair initially discussed the process of selective communication back in the 1970's, which focused on an individual's tendencies to convey items that depicted their viewpoints. Stroud (2008) expanded on this form of exposure more, specifically analyzing why people behaved in this manner. Stroud felt there were a few reasons but specifically focused on the origin of self. Stroud believed people selected their media outlets, chose their communication resources, and administered their behaviors based upon personal interests, preferences, and advancement. Although these conclusions tended to focus on one-time instances that influenced outcomes, Stroud suggested future research be conducted to examine the link between habitual behavior and selective interaction or exposure.

**Selective Conversation.** Habitual behavior and selective interaction are extremely relative in the American household. Although initial research of family communication patterns theory (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002) highlighted the existence of only one communication pattern in the home, recent research suggests that multiple patterns exist (LaFreniere, 2020).

Scholars believe these patterns are influenced by factors like household culture, finances, and gender (Neil & Coyne, 2018), while other research confirmed they are present because of selective communication (Hovick et al., 2015). Hovick et al. uncovered that often family members share or withhold certain data from others in the home because of potential interpretations.

Selective communication is a common issue in families, especially if health problems exist. According to research conducted by Hovick et al. (2015), when chronic concerns are present, some relatives are comfortable discussing their private matters while others stay more reserved. This scenario is not just between parents and kids. It occurs between spouses as well. Hovick et al. attributed the variance to worry prevention and privacy.

**Selective Behavior.** Genetics are another reason for selective communication. Hovick et al. (2015) claimed that siblings at times discussed certain topics between each other that they did not share with their parents. Hovick et al. linked the behavior to genetics, citing that they share similar body types and may experience the same problems as well. In some households, an identical scenario was common between the guardians and the children. According to Hovick et al. (2015) some participants did not want to hide any health issues specifically from their kids, to prevent the same things from happening to them. Diseases such as diabetes, stroke, cancer, and heart disease possess the greatest level of concern as well as the highest level of shareability.

The last argument for selective communication in the American family involved the degree of closeness and conversation pattern among family members. Hovick et al. (2015) reported that some relatives divulged information solely because they shared an emotional connection with one another, in addition to a physical relationship. Other clans based their interaction on previous discussions. If past conversations seemed one-sided, then those same

family relatives withheld future information simply because these individuals had the right to do so (Petronio, 2010).

Also, the level of interest affected communication between relatives. Hovick et al. (2015) mentioned multiple times that if younger family members did not express enthusiasm in the conversation at hand, then parents ended the discussion. These same parents were likely never to mention it again. According to Hovick et al., these behaviors are not dependent on ethnicity but are highly linked to gender. The main reason is that females possess more of the family health knowledge and tend to oversee more of the personal household matters (Hovick et al., 2015).

### **Related Literature**

Since most research on FCP (Koerner et al., 2017) is founded upon face-to-face interaction, it is imperative to know if its beliefs convert to a cyber realm. Technological advancement has produced tons of new connection channels that are changing the manners in which family members share (Siebel, 2019). These adjustments represent an innovative age that needs more investigation to uncover the advantages and disadvantages of the era. Yet to pave the way to future success, scholars are investigating the past.

### ***The Past Becomes the Present***

Jiao (2021) recently uncovered information for scholars investigating family communication patterns. He discovered specific connections between family members who are cumbersome in *conformity orientation* and or *conversation orientation*. Jiao's review exposed many homes weighted down by obedience saturated children, overcome by anxiety. These same individuals wrestled with identical issues in intimate friendships. In the same regard, households heavy in communication produced kids attached to their parents throughout all stages of life. The inspection featured high communication styles (*consensual* and *pluralistic*) as the most



beneficial patterns. According to Jiao (2021), the *consensual* and *pluralistic* designs coordinated lots of family conversation in congruence with obedience and generated the least amount of guardian security over the years. Additionally, compliance of any class stimulated anxiety in the other two patterns (*protective* and *laissez-faire*). Jiao's revelations linked with Koerner and Fitzpatrick's (2002) initial findings as well as Reuter and Koerner (2008) spotlighted troubles for children growing up in low conversation homes. Offspring in *protective* or *laissez-faire* households experience an unfortunate disadvantage in life (Reuter & Koerner, 2008).

### ***Mental Discord***

FCP is not just being implemented in the communication field, it is also being used in propaganda and persuasion. Compton and Craig (2019) correlated familial concepts with the benefits of *inoculation theory* (McGuire, 1964). *Inoculation theory* proposed that a person's ability may be protected from impact similarly to the body's defense against viruses. McGuire suggested that exposing children to some forms of persuasion initially guarded them from vicious propaganda filled attacks later in life. *Inoculation theory* contains a duo of quintessential pieces: *threat* and *refutational preemption* (McGuire, 1964). *Threat* is an independent awareness and *refutational preemption* symbolizes information that people can administer to fight off indoctrination. Compton and Craig (2019) believed the principles of *family communication patterns theory* (FCP) mixed with McGuire's perceptions could be beneficial, specifically in helping children overcome peer pressure.

### ***The Future of Family Communications Studies***

*Family communication patterns* (FCP) investigation is now taking root in the field of healthcare (Bevan et al., 2021). Gal et al. (2020) incorporated FCP to resolve what factors encouraged or discouraged hospital attendants to stay or go, after strife develops. By applying

random sampling, Gal et al. concluded that a clan of people or cooperative climate does influence the outcome. Also, adverse reports as well as tension are effective too. These studies provide affirmation that some form of supplementation is necessary not just in the home but also professionally. The concept of parental supplementation through digital communication can be transformed and incorporated into many occupations. However, eliminating the downfalls of *protective* and *laissez-faire* homes (Koerner et al., 2017) could diminish future issues in the business world as the children move into adulthood.

### ***Healthcare Assimilation***

Many scholars are linking FCP and familial caregiving (Bevan et al., 2021). According to Koerner et al. (2017), relatives in these situations often generate tons of *conversation orientation* and produce an abundance of perceived *support* (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). Albrecht and Goldsmith (2003) declare *perceived support* as the recognition of aid. The concept is one of two classifications. The second is known as *enacted support*. *Enacted support* occurs when family members accept the help extended to them. Even though *enacted support* and *perceived support* vary, both are similar in that they require assistance from multiple people (Bevan et al., 2021). These categories make up a popular ideology called *social support theory* (High & Scharp, 2015). In association with *family communication patterns theory* (FCP) (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006), High and Scharp established their principles on caregiving. Familial caregiving demands remarkable aid and load sharing between relatives (Bevan et al., 2021). Principally, studies revealed that vocal support is vital among family members. Useful discussions and tons of interaction make an enormous difference in families that are dealing with illness, definitively, because all familiar caregivers provide care completely free of charge (Bevan et al., 2021).

**Caregiver Hardship.** Caring for a loved one involves more than simply administering pills. Bevan et al. (2021) deduced that the normal structure blends together the following: (a) daily internal chores, (b) personal hygiene care, (c) fiscal management, (d) regular instruction, (e) flexibility, (f) medical guidance, (g) emotional support, and (h) legal aid. Remarkably, most familial caregivers elect not to be paid, because they have no professional healthcare experience (Bevan et al., 2021). Research on this subject also highlights that a chunk of caregivers sacrifice a major portion of their life because of their daily duties. Unfortunately, they are often unable to attend church or meet friends and struggle emotionally, financially, mentally, and physically more than other family members (Bevan et al., 2021). If these individuals had some type of support through digital communication, their outcomes would change. It is possible remote support could encourage their well-being and prevent them from hardship.

**Caregiver Prosperity.** Krause and Markides (1990) believed that family members must work together to be successful in caregiving. The duo grouped tribal assistance in three categories: *emotional*, *tangible*, and *informational*. *Emotional support* is essential to eliminate burnout. *Tangible* included money as well as other forms of physical assistance (Goldsmith, 2004). Finally, *informational* involved discussion. Conversation is monumental and mandatory for optimum results.

### ***Theory Conflict & Development***

One of the largest areas for conflict and development, according to Koerner and Schrodtt (2014), revolves around *operationalization*. The current model of FCP is centered on behavior-oriented communication and obedience-driven direction that are culturally as well as chronologically based. Koerner and Schrodtt felt these catalysts are outdated. The pair desired a more modern approach to family communication that is representative of millennial tendencies.

**Theory Variation.** The original version of FCP is based upon Ritchie and Fitzpatrick's interpretation known as *Revised Family Communication Patterns* (1990). The couple revitalized McLeod and Chaffee's (1972) model to include strategies of *socio-orientation* and *concept orientation*, which are used to achieve family agreement. However, Ritchie and Fitzpatrick (1990) re-named the techniques, changing *concept orientation* (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972) to *conversation orientation* and *socio-orientation* to *conformity orientation* (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). Ritchie and Fitzpatrick explained the substitution in this manner. Family communication is centered around discussion. Since concept orientation involved lengthy talks, regarding various angles, Ritchie and Fitzpatrick noticed family members analyzing the dynamic of the argument rather than the concept itself. This transformation encouraged them to change the name from concept to conversation.

Similarly with *socio-orientation* (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972), Ritchie and Fitzpatrick (1990) updated the name because of the communication behaviors linked to the initial concept. According to Ritchie and Fitzpatrick, families that encouraged socio-orientation also encouraged obedience rather than open discussion. Parents in these households desire for the kids to learn their viewpoints rather than develop their own. For this reason, the couple felt the name *conformity orientation* was more relevant. Koerner and Schrodtt (2014) believe the *RFCP* model (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990) needed another revision specifically because of the confusion regarding conformity. Ritchie and Fitzpatrick's scale implies a prominent level of negativity in the two scales. In the conformity side, lack of orderliness means complete freedom for children in the family. It is inferred that Ritchie and Fitzpatrick associated obedience with dictatorship or strong adoration. The pair incorporated guilt and shaming into their scale as well. Conflict conversation is also viewed with negativity. Ritchie and Fitzpatrick convey that discussion is

discouraged in any form. However, Koerner and Schrodts (2014) desire a blend of RFCP or FCP for clarification purposes. The duo believe it would help future research.

**Belief Alteration.** Koerner and Schrodts (2014) also desired more information regarding the outcomes of FCP. According to the scholarly duo, the current model does not clarify why certain communication outcomes occur. Koerner and Schrodts on the other hand believe that FCPT does explain why certain households administer specific behaviors. They believe their version of the popular theory conveys data regarding family effects. Currently, it is not clear (regardless of what version is used) why these behaviors affect relatives differently. Does shared reality have something to do with it or not? How much does conversation play a role? Does it have to do with an individual's self-esteem (Koerner & Schrodts, 2014)?

**Strategy Preference.** Another great region of development involves why families prefer to use one strategy (conformity or conversation) over another, both, or neither. Koerner and Schrodts (2014) feel that future research must be done to advance awareness of family conversation, not just in American households but across the world. Koerner and Schrodts claim there is evidence to support communication patterns are prevalent in other countries. Plus, the pair believes American families use levels of *conversation orientation* and *conformity orientation* (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990) as well as generational schemas (Koerner & Schrodts, 2014). Koerner and Schrodts feel these memories affect the household climate for years and years, impacting family after family. Lastly, the academic duo desires to investigate the impact of combining multiple communication patterns in a home. For example, if a person from a protective home marries someone from a pluralistic home, how does the union affect communication behaviors in their household? Koerner and Schrodts want to examine the patterns that emerge and dissect the trends produced from within when using FCPT.

**Multiple Patterns.** Since Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) introduced the world to FCP, researchers have debated their conclusion of four communication patterns within a unit (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). They have also argued the ability of several conversation styles in the house at once between separate family members (LaFreniere, 2020). Many scholars dismissed these thoughts until Koerner (Koerner et al., 2017), herself, recognized the rumors publicly. Koerner felt her original work is marred and should be re-worked to reflect the dynamics of a Millennial home. According to LaFreniere (2020), the average Millennial home contains at least one if not multiple non-biological individuals. Koerner's acknowledgment has led to more serious inquiry regarding the number of communication patterns within the home. Also, to reflect the modern American family, communication data is being gathered from all people in the home, not just biological relatives (LaFreniere, 2020).

**Pattern Deviation.** Deviation in communication designs between family members is one of the most interesting factors of FCP. For example, communication theorists such as LaFreniere (2020) think communication styles differ depending upon the guardian. New data unveiled higher levels of *conversation orientation* between children and mothers while dads yielded heavy values of *conformity orientation*. The antithesis happened with the corresponding guardian. Mothers received bountiful amounts of conversation and minimal orderliness while dads got less discussion but more obedience (Koerner et al., 2017). Marks et al. (2009) correlate this outcome to gender authority dispersion. Fitzpatrick featured the same information in earlier work (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). According to Ritchie and Fitzpatrick, children connect differently not just with mothers and fathers but also with brothers and sisters. This conclusion is important because it confirms assumptions that several communication patterns in the home are possible. Patterns also transform or develop as family members age (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). Together, these

revelations could impact the outcome of this investigation. Koerner and Fitzpatrick's original work (2002) was based on four communication styles, with only one being applicable per home. Since their conclusions were flawed, it is unclear whether non-consensual homes truly are non-consensual. Only one parent or child was interviewed which could lead to opposing perspectives.

**Environmental Impact.** Another realm of *family communication patterns theory* (FCP) that is provoking curiosity involves nervousness and its impact on household interaction (Neill & Coyne, 2018). Also, finances, health, and household affect familial connection. According to Neill and Coyne, these elements influence household discussion by creating the following: (a) *labeling*, (b) *discrediting attributes*, (c) *discrimination*, and (d) *unequal power*. Explicitly, in wellbeing curriculums, guardians who perceive themselves to be classified as less-than to other social groups may convey identical perceptions to their offspring. These actions can subconsciously sway interaction inside the home and incite doubt as well as panic (Neill & Coyne, 2018).

Unrelenting illness could spawn similar tendencies (Rosland et al., 2012). If one of the household inhabitants is sick constantly, Rosland et al. claim that communication patterns can change. Rosland et al. also discovered variance in homes with prominent levels of orderliness. In these households, sick family members tend to suffer setbacks more often. Rosland et al. noted when these families cut off communication with their sick relative, the individual's health improved. In homes more *conversation oriented*, sick relatives recovered faster or fought off disease better (Rosland et al., 2012). Although these studies were conducted person-to-person, they affirm the need for social support in humankind. People need positive encouragement regardless of the life event. Research conducted by Rosland et al. establishes the need to know if the same is possible through digital communication.

### ***Theory Modification***

As previously mentioned, Koerner et al. (2017), one of the founding theorists of *family communication patterns theory* (FCP) (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006), led the way to theory adjustment. A more modern examination from Koerner et al. (2017) emphatically implies there can be multiple discussion designs in a home, instead of just one. Koerner et al. (2017) claimed the foundation of FCP is blemished and must be modified to replicate the modern American family which Millennials have constructed. LaFreniere (2020) agreed, recommending that new data on FCP is gathered to reflect familial adjustments put in place by America's largest generation (Barroso et al., 2020). Since current FCP data is based on face-to-face research in a pre-digital world on an outdated family model, it is vital to field current information. However, before the investigations can start, it is critical to understand the Millennial generation inside and out. The following paragraphs provide a breakdown of Millennial demographics and psychographics to familiarize the reader.

**Generational Influence.** According to LaFreniere (2020) and Koerner et al. (2017), today's average American family does not resemble households in the United States of yester year. See Table 1A for a visual breakdown. Surprisingly, modern American clans possess extra or non-blood related individuals in the household more than in the past. The Millennial generation (Barroso et al., 2020) is the main catalyst behind the transformation. According to Barroso et al., the millennial generation (individuals born between 1981-1995) is thought of as the biggest tribe of people born within the same time limit since the Baby Boomers. Millennials are recognized the most diversified group in American history as well as the most adorned with higher education accolades such as graduate work. Ironically, the same generation is the least decorated with traditional families and stable households (Gayle et al., 2021). Millennials are



behind their ancestors (Generation X, Baby Boomers, and Silent Generation) in three prominent categories: familial inclusion, birth amounts, and marriage ratios (Barroso et al., 2020).

**Generational Trends.** Millennials do not treasure marriage like their predecessors.

Barroso et al. (2020) claims they are comfortable living forever unwed or getting married later in their golden years. Also, it is important to note that mostly college educated Millennials are the ones who typically marry. Another unique tidbit about Millennial romantic behavior is that fifteen percent of Millennials are with a companion of a contrasting ethnicity or nationality (Barroso et al., 2020). Review Table 2A for further detail. For those Millennials who do marry or live with an individual, seventy-five percent choose a partner with an identical grade of education. Wistfully, this fact differs a bit for females since they are finishing undergraduate and graduate curriculums at quicker speed than males. Eventually, because of this situation, females will be forced to marry someone with a lower level of education.

Although Millennial women are having children later, they are still producing rival amounts of kids (Fry, 2022). Barroso et al. (2020) claims these females usually have two or more children, despite being older. Barroso et al. credits the adjustment to more consciousness of teenage pregnancy. Thirty-three percent of Millennial mothers are unwed, which is greater than any other group. Only nineteen percent of fathers follow the same path. Sadly, Millennial males are less prone to stay with their biological children than any other group. Most Millennial fathers who reside with their biological kids are married.

Additionally, the Millennial group is one of the most politically aggressive generations ever (Rosentiel, 2009). According to Rosentiel, Millennials are the initial group to test-drive social media and are the least likely to seek out religion. They are wearier of social and

governmental agencies than their ancestors yet more optimistic about the future than previous generations. Millennials welcome innovation and are okay with regular assessment (Fry, 2022).

Millennials are unlike any generation in American history (Fry, 2022). They have flipped the proverbial life script doing things their own way. These innovations have forever modified American culture for better or for worse. A thorough understanding of their lifestyles, thoughts, and behaviors is imperative to freshen up intelligence on FCP.

### ***Support Analysis***

In this section, distinct types of assistance that are offered remotely are discussed. Surprisingly, there are a lot of social media sites and online entities currently administering various levels of support. In this area, digital assistance and physical assistance are examined. Also, the positive effects and negative effects are inspected in depth throughout the following paragraphs.

**Negative Physical Effects.** Even though the focal point of this project revolves around the positive effect of digital communication, it is critical to acknowledge the vast amount of negative information stemming from cyber outlets. Bernstein (2011) noticed the trend between depression, adolescents, and social sites such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. The correlation comes from the weight of importance placed on digital comments, shares, and followers. The continuous flow of digital conversation ironically generates isolation issues as well as privacy problems. Bernstein also cautions parents about marketing vulnerability. However, in homes with low communication levels, warnings are rare. Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2006) associate much of the disconnect in households with lack of communication and important levels of obedience. Rosland et al. (2012) even equates prominent levels of orderliness and lack of communication with the advancement of physical disease.

Additionally, social media usage has been linked to memory loss and poor function in adults (Sharifian & Zahodne , 2021). Sharifian and Zahodne discovered a relationship between important levels of social networking and low cognitive performance. The pair believe the link is due to negative emotions. Sadness, anger, frustration, and envy are all forms of detrimental feelings that social media can conjure up from time to time. An increase in these emotions can affect an individual's memory (Sharifian & Zahodne, 2021). Also, an influx of stress as well as copious amounts of negative information may contribute too. For example, political issues, social troubles, and personal problems can be catalysts. Plus, network tools such as comments, likes, shares, and follows are credited with causing stress. Together, these factors are likely to produce negative cognitive performance.

*Social comparison* is a cyber disturbance many users face regularly. Sharifian and Zahodne (2021) declare *social comparison* occurs when people base their happiness on the lives of network users they do not know. Regular users assume their lives are not as glamorous or positive and start to feel less than or unhappy. According to Sharifian and Zahodne, these users become distracted and disillusioned which also generates inadequate memory function.

Similarly, to social comparison, some online participants reported memory loss because of fear of missing out, also known as FOMO. Sharifian and Zahodne explained that some people feel they are missing beneficial or memorable moments due to what they see on social media. Since social networks are linked to event calendars, they often contribute to awareness of big events or parties people cannot attend or were not invited to. These outcomes diminish individual well-being (Sharifian & Zahodne, 2021) and unwittingly prompt daily memory loss due to stress or overwhelming negative feelings.

Bennett et al. (2020) uncovered similar data in their study regarding social media and body dissatisfaction. Their research displayed an association with melancholy, regret, and antagonism after consistent time spent online as well as depression. Bennett et al. also highlighted a key point about social media. According to the research group, negativity linked with social networking and body dissatisfaction is not prevalent in any other location on the internet. Additionally, Bennett et al. (2020) pointed out that digital literacy is important in preventing future negativity. Specifically, the researchers suggested that digital content education devote extensive time to social media usage. The points of focus should include awareness of the dangers of social comparison, media awareness, and digital footprint. Plus, coping skills are highly recommended to add as well.

**Negative Social Effects.** Another sector of online disturbia includes cyberbullying. Langmia and Tyree (2017) discuss the remote transformation of bullying and how online outlets have heavily contributed to this reboot. Ghosh and Pramanick (2018) go further in their research by focusing on the adverse conditions cyberbullying causes in teenagers and adults. Studies conducted by Ghosh and Pramanick label online harassment as the primary reason problems like confusion, dread, misery, resentment, skepticism, and uncertainty develop. According to Ghosh and Pramanick cyberbullying also creates deep-rooted concerns such as lousy grades, high insecurity, low drive, and suicidal tendencies. Alongside cyberbullying, Bernstein (2011) also places blame on the digital act of *sexting*. *Sexting* occurs when a person receives or sends messages that possess naked photos. Bernstein associates the action with mental and emotional repercussions as well as felony offenses.

Social media addiction is another big issue. Webb and Wasilick (2015) believe teenagers and some adults battle an affliction called *internet addiction* which involves unmanageable

compulsion to cruise the information superhighway or use electronic devices. Weinstein and Lejoyeux (2010) feel this kind of sickness contains five elements: (a). cyber-relational, (b). cyber sexual, (c). computer addiction, (d.) net compulsions, (e.) and information overload. According to Weinstein and Lejoyeux, the most common side effects are depression, social phobia, impulse issues, classroom missteps, and major levels of FOMO or fear of missing out.

Research by Callahan and Inckle (2012) affirmed that remote assistance is not for everyone. Callahan and Inckle spotlighted two mental illnesses that should not be treated online. Suicidal thoughts and severe mental illness must be treated face-to-face and not left in the hands of novice individuals. Less severe ailments such as depression, anxiety, and worry are better suited for digital therapy. Minimal nonverbal communication is another issue for trained mental health professionals (Callahan & Inckle, 2012). According to Harrison and Knapp (1972), nonverbal communication is a huge portion of conversation in general.

Litt and Hargittai (2014) blame *digital illiteracy* for all the cyber problems. Just as humans pick up various face-to-face social skills from friends and family, it is unknown exactly how people learn manners on the internet. Even though some people are savvier than others, true digital proficiency is hard to measure. Litt and Hargittai (2014) recognize this issue as the root of many online obstacles. Kim and Yang (2015) identified the same issue in various social media sites describing *digital illiteracy* as the inability to decipher, perceive, join, and gauge the internet. Kim and Yang classified this inadequacy into two parts: (a.) internet skill literacy and (b.) internet information literacy. *Internet skill literacy* demands basic knowledge of the requirements necessary to peruse the information superhighway whereas *internet information literacy* centers around an individual's competence in navigating the fake news to achieve private or public objectives.

Privacy is hard to come by remotely (Vallance, 2013). Clarke (2016) categorized the huge problem into five groups: (a.) deception, (b.) dependability, (c.) government information compilation, (d.) weather information, and (e.) advertising. Initially, cybercrimes like identity theft are what people immediately think of but according to Clarke it is much worse. Clarke claims that larger businesses vie for client data with smaller companies over and over. Next, personal information is shared across the globe through international banks. Unfortunately, this transaction highlights people's financial past as well as the present repeatedly for all to see. Plus, cyberspace provides tons of access to legal and political records including information on climate change. Even though this access may seem minimal, it slowly chips away at humankind's personal and national identity over time, eliminating our freedom.

**Platform Variance.** Tik Tok is the fastest growing social network online with more than 600 million active members (Yingyu, 2023). Of the six hundred million active members, around 85 percent are 24 years of age or younger. Yingyu claims the majority of Tik Tok users are college students who use the platform for entertainment, social communication, and education. The reason this age group loves the platform is because of the short-form video content welcomed on the site. Yingyu conveys the network is beneficial in helping members of Generation Z establish their values, political perspectives, happiness criteria, and personal beliefs.

As much as Tik Tok is helping members of Generation Z, Yingyu (2023) believes it is also hurting the group. Yingyu's research supports ideologies that Tik Tok is perverting its user's professionalism, work ethic, honesty, and personal principles. Additionally, studies show that the network is changing user attitudes and feelings. Plus, Yingyu unveiled there is a connection between Tik Tok and mental illness as well as nervousness. Also, Yingyu attributes collegiate

academic decline to Tik Tok. The reason is the vast production and consumption of media daily. Since the content is short-form, it allows more video consumption than long-form networks provide. The massive amount of content hinders college students' ability to study. Others call Tik Tok childish, an invasion of privacy and a contributor to online assault (Yingyu, 2023).

Although negativism is everywhere online, assistance is not. Hayes et al. (2016) discovered that social media users trust Facebook the most when it comes to emotional, mental, and physical support. Their research featured that some people would use Twitter and Instagram for assistance, but it really depends on the situation. For example, if people seek career guidance they would go to LinkedIn, rather than Snapchat or TikTok (Bayer et al., 2015). Regardless of the platform, networker participants place immense value on advice received from their social haven (Fulk et al., 1987). Fulk et al. claim this is because of *Social Information Processing Model* (SIP). SIP is the belief that humans select their social environment and their high-tech devices on four standards: (a) impartial media characteristics, (b) past and present dealings with the press, (c) private goals, and (d) remote reputations regarding certain social networks. Normally, Americans manage a few profiles across different platforms.

Additionally, it is critical to discuss network reputations. Facebook, Twitter, and Tumbler (Hayes et al., 2016), are thought of as the best sites to obtain consultation. Pfeil et al. (2008) tagged Facebook as the best place to receive enthusiastic support. Archer and Kao (2018) claim the main reason stems from Facebook's 24-hour social network. The digital resource center runs all day usually without fail, which is why many feel Facebook is a social support system rather than a social media platform. Facebook never closes and provides tons of methods to find useful data or people. According to Pfeil et al. (2008), Instagram, LinkedIn, or Snapchat are not linked

with serious aid but with irrelevant subjects such as career guidance, fashion advice, self-improvement, or travel.

Because Facebook is the leading online platform (Tankovska, 2021), most cyber support data revolves around it. Facebook provides many lucrative tools for users to enjoy, one of which is talking to followers in real time, better known as Facebook Live. Followers love the option because they watch things live or catch them later. Plus, the comment section provides another step of two-way immediate conversation. Opportunities like these make people super happy. According to Pentina and Zhang (2017), the more active a profile holder is on Facebook the happier he or she will be. Also, the feeling of contentment encourages participants to reveal more information about themselves online rather than person-to-person. Another reason for happiness is the general thought of support. Online profile holders expect their followers to display loyalty to their posts through comments, likes, and shares. Additionally, Pentina and Zhang believe positivity is greater at times on Facebook because people tend to feature only good things. The scholarly duo attributes this nature to communal conversation. *Communal communication* is when humans only spotlight the good things and forget to mention the bad because thousands, even millions (depending on the profile), can see it. Personality traits also play a role in social networking styles. Costa and McCrae (1992) claimed that extraverts in the face-to-face world act the same in other spheres. Extraverts typically love people and float from individual-to-individual making friends and divulging all kinds of thoughts and emotions. Introverts vary greatly. They struggle with social environments because of bashful or awkward tendencies in large groups and with making friends. Landers and Lounsbury (2006) linked extraverts and introverts to similar conduct online. Extraverts typically possess more followers and are highly



active routinely on Facebook, while introverts dislike social media and stay away from sharing too much.

Regardless of the platform, people, especially in Generation Z and lower, are using social media for support (Saud et al., 2020). Networks like Facebook and What's App present followers with local, national, and international news. These sites also provide insight for personal friends and family members. According to Saud et al., these platforms were monumental during the pandemic. People from all age groups used these cyber connections to stay informed emotionally, mentally, and physically.

**Types of Support.** In the digital dimension, *likes, shares, follows, comments, and connections* represent diverse types of support. Although these elements seem trivial, according to Blight et al. (2015) they possess terrific value. Their application spawned five grades of cyber assistance: (a) *emotional aid*, (b) *informational comfort*, (c) *appraisal help*, (d) *instrumental assistance*, and (e) *network sustenance* (Cutrona and Suhr, 1992). *Emotional aid* is defined as concern or specific sympathy in a person's household. Cutrona and Suhr declare *informational* support as definite data, evaluation, and direction. *Appraisal* assistance integrates beneficial criticism while *instrumental* support administers a hodge podge of advantages that transform depending upon the situation. Finally, *network sustenance* analyzes where individuals belong, culturally. Even though these classifications of support appear positive, in-depth research exposed several layers of side effects.

Hayes et al. (2016) discovered that humankind is empathetic and sympathetic online to a degree but once that sphere is breached cyber support diminishes. Sadly, digital connections shift from advocates to adversaries, changing the online environment from positive to negative. Informational queries are different as well because people who seek them willingly expose

themselves to a conundrum of comments. Although some are extremely beneficial, others are very detrimental to an individual, organization, or product (Hayes et al., 2016). Informational investigation involves travel, food, and personal reviews. While Cutrona and Suhr (1992) named instrumental aid as one of the most helpful forms of support, it is the least accessible online (Hayes et al., 2016). Seekers must find specific outlets such as blogs, vlogs, private messaging, or social media groups to experience this type of aid. Specifically, the low availability is because of privacy problems associated with digital media. While people believe there is a need for a cyber outlet, they are leery due to identity theft and data exposure.

Putnam (2020) expands this conversation through exploration of *social capital theory*. *Social capital theory* involves advantages that originate from digital communication. It forms when follows or friendships occur remotely and cannot exist when an individual is isolated physically or electronically. *Social capital theory* contains two fundamental parts: *bridging social capital* and *bonding social capital* (Putnam, 2020). Bridged relationships are more trivial and, on the surface, like networking in the professional realm. Bridging lacks feeling or real connection while *bonding* commands interwoven friendships (Putnam, 2020). *Bonding* mirrors traditional person-to-person interplay, just with a digital twist. The followers involved really care for one another and interact routinely without virtual gain. According to Ellison et al. (2007), lots of social media usage, particularly *Facebook*, generates an influx of both.

Archer and Kao (2018) dissect this discussion further by listing pluses and minuses for both parties. Online, people seeking help never have to leave their home. Oh and Syn (2015) advanced the thought by investigating the anonymity factor. The duo concentrated on the freedom people must share without being judged or unmasked. Accessibility is also a huge advantage. Despite technological apprehension (Postman, 1992), innovative scholars believe that

cyber convenience is worth it (Egan, 2013). Jung and Lee (2017) concur because of their studies involving the *spiral of silence theory* (Noelle-Neumann, 1984). The *spiral of silence* ideology stems from the power of social influence which can either strengthen or diminish an individual or cultural voice. The pair (Jung & Lee, 2017) discovered a correlation between social media assistance and remote opportunity. When cyber participants experience *perceived* assistance, they feel renewed and more willing to share their troubles. Noelle-Neumann's concept has eight main principles: (a) humans do not like isolation, (b) peer pressure is very persuasive in eliminating unpopular perspectives, (c) fear sequesters truth, (d) social climate stimulates key topics, (e) media inclusion is critical, (f) uncertainty risks are prevalent, (g) legal management is likely, and (h) belief adaptation is definite.

**Positive Effects.** Digital support seems helpful no matter if it is asynchronous or synchronous. Prescott et al. (2019) associated this viewpoint heavily with members of *Generation Z* (Pew Research Center, 2022). Teenagers see the internet as a healthy place to share information about themselves regardless of the hour (Prescott et al., 2019). They are also more prone to search for help through digital means over seeking support face-to-face. Members of *Generation Z* value the privacy of the internet as well as the freedom from mental health stereotypes. Kendal et al. (2017) discovered that finances play a role in their preferences too. Most of the participants in the Kendal et al. study credited digital communication with more affordable resources for mental health. Additionally, their query revealed that teenagers between the ages of 14 and 17 prefer to use the internet to solve serious health issues like eating disorders. The group attributed the discovery to five pivotal factors: (a) guidance, (b) security, (c) harmony, (d) pliability, and (e) agency.

*Guidance* is often found in many private groups housed under various social platforms. These online outlets provide the option for receiving advice and giving it, which is attractive to many young people (Kendal et al., 2017). According to Kendal et al. (2017), participants felt this option promoted both mental and physical well-being. *Security* is essential because people want a secure environment to divulge private matters. Also, sharing with a stranger in person can be intimidating, yet doing so remotely is less frightening. Additionally, Callahan and Inckle (2012) observed that face-to-face feedback or evaluation can be scary too which discourages sharing in person. Plus, these remote groups tend to maintain a positive environment. Since *harmony* is a considerable component, young adults desire digital assistance (Kendal et al., 2017). They interact in an encouraging manner and display continuous support for one another. As a united front, they navigate life's challenges. *Pliability* is valuable since people operate on opposite schedules. Lastly, the *agency* highlights the *bonding social capital* formulated among participants. Kendal et al. (2017) noted that the connections forged in these online groups are substantial and distinct which creates deep-rooted levels of responsibility and reliability.

**Support Summation.** Yet when faced with conditions like in 2020, social media is the best communication outlet. Saud et al. (2020) noted that during the COVID outbreak, people depended on social networking for information sharing, socio-psychological healing, emotional support, and professional assistance. Social media was also a game changer in physical communication during the pandemic. Outlets like What's App and Facebook enabled information about the virus to spread instantaneously throughout the globe. Pictures, videos, audio messages, pieces of encouragement, and medical advice were able to reach the masses in real-time which increased social strategies and coping mechanisms (Saud, 2020). The pandemic

changed the way people communicate with one another by still allowing them to communicate with the rest of the world.

### Theory 1

In addition to FCP, this study identified two additional theories that possess alternate support perspectives which align well with the research focus. The research focus of this study is to bridge the gap between *traditional parental supplementation* and *digital parental supplementation*. Also, it is important to determine if *digital parental supplementation* is possible and necessary for children living inside homes in the United States. The following section examines *social support theory*.

**Social Support Theory.** In addition to FCP, *Social Support Theory* (SS) (Albrecht & Goldsmith, 2003) is a great concept to cross-examine. SS analyzes how friends and family have influence in the life of someone who is battling illness or disease (Littlejohn et al., 2017). According to Albrecht and Goldsmith (2003), social assistance contains two principal elements: (a) *perceived support* and (b) *enacted support*. *Perceived support* is the belief that aid is there if required while *enacted support* is the specific acknowledgement of it. Research is clear that both influence health and wellness in humankind (Littlejohn et al., 2017, p. 362). While this outcome is apparent face-to-face, it is unknown if cyber support has the same effect. It is mandatory to inspect FCP and SS theories together more closely, examining if these outcomes preserve people in a remote sphere.

An investigation of SS in a digital realm started during the pandemic but needs further exploration. According to Anna et al. (2020) social media is beneficial for people battling chronic illness. These individuals use online platforms for social support regarding pain management, treatment methodologies, and story sharing. Anna et al. attribute these connections

to enhancing patient clinician communication. However, more examination is necessary regarding long-term efficiency of social media and *social support theory*. Research from Anna et al. proved it is beneficial regularly, but questions exist regarding patient safety. The researchers suggest physicians incorporate social media on a controlled basis, where doctors can participate in online discussions and monitor conversations. Anna et al (2020) believe this will minimize any potential physical or privacy dangers to the patient. Plus, this could diminish the effective communication divide that often exists between clinicians and their cases.

## Theory 2

There are two other theories potentially viable for this study. Both contain different principles but identical concepts that correspond with the core of this study. The purpose of this research is to fill in the blanks between *traditional parental supplementation* and *digital parental supplementation* as well as inspect the level of necessity for *digital parental supplementation* in the United States. The following portion investigates *cultural identity theory*.

**Cultural Identity Theory.** Another avenue of exploration is *cultural identity theory* (CIT) (Littlejohn et al., 2017). CIT is the communication development between members of cultural clubs as they create vocabulary and pecking order. Thompson and Collier (2006) believe diversity is at the center of this hypothesis. Also, the pair see the human psyche as an individual influencer, in two methods, *avowal*, and *ascription*. *Avowal* involves an individual's self-reflection of themselves culturally while *ascription* includes the recognition of the other members. Littlejohn et al. (2017) believe these traits often go hand-in hand. FCP could also relate because cultural clubs whether face-to-face or online could provide parental supplementation when it is non-existent at home.

Online there is a crossroads between social media and *cultural identity theory*. Dobbins et al. (2021) highlighted that *cultural identity theory* influences social media. The platforms people use and their actions online are all dependent on their cyber presence. Research conducted by Dobbins et al. highlighted that people may assume different personalities on social media sites that vary from their typical viewpoints. Therefore, it is important to figure out exactly what beliefs, values, and political associations individuals cling to before issuing messages geared towards communication or marketing. Specifically, with science-oriented information or data with an agricultural origin, traditional social media methodologies are not the best communication format. However, social networking is beneficial in conveying these types of messages when targeted at certain groups.

Dobbins et al. (2021) encouraged future scholars to examine the following elements before messaging a certain group online. Initially, researchers should check out an online gang's confidence level. Next, knowledge and understanding of the topic should be investigated. Then numerical factors and cyber literacy must be examined. Lastly, depending on the topic, Dobbins et al. (2021) recommend dropping traditional messages for more modern directives. Even though more data collection is necessary about the intercession of social media and *cultural identity theory*, the current information presents a terrific place to start.

Researchers suggest future studies about social media and *cultural identity theory* include information on compliance and refusal. A study focusing on these elements could influence platform selection and message acceptance. Also, these details could convey how people use certain information within a group to influence people's personal positions. Additionally, research on what segments people are in the first place would be helpful. Is it merely cultural

identities or does it start with age range or personal beliefs? Information on these correlations would strengthen the overall perception of social media usage with *cultural identity theory*.

### Summary

Digital media has changed the way people communicate. In addition to providing immediate two-way interaction across the world at all hours of the day, it also can connect people living in the same home, at the same time. However, it is unknown if digital communication provides the same support parents usually administer in person. Through application of *family communication patterns theory* (FCP) as well as investigation into *social support theory* (SS) and *cultural identity theory* (CIT), remote assistance is examined in-depth. SS analyzes the influence family and friends can have on the health and wellness of a sick loved one. CIT discusses the impact societal groups can have on one another. Together these concepts could make a dramatic difference in the lives of children who are living in unhealthy home environments. Research displayed in this review clearly shows correlations between unhealthy home environments and mental as well as physical illness.

This study seeks to bridge the gap between *traditional parental supplementation* and *digital parental supplementation* but also determine if *digital parental supplementation* is possible, efficient, sufficient, and necessary for children living in America. In this chapter, relevant pieces of literature are highlighted. These articles of data feature positive and negative effects. Plus, the information breaks down the theoretical framework of FCP as well as the tradition origin of this study. This study fits best in the *sociopsychological* tradition mainly, because of the emotional, mental, and physical components constructing the tradition. In the *sociopsychological* tradition cause and effect as well as principles are a part of the foundation. The principles involve the four standard communication patterns of FCP: consensual, pluralistic,



protective, and laissez-faire. FCP works well with this tradition due to the various emotional, mental, and physical parts involved with the family communication process.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

This study analyzes the importance of *digital parental supplementation* and its correlation specifically with existing communication patterns within the home. *Digital parental supplementation* is the usage of digital media to replace a parent or guardian. The replacement gives kids the ability to obtain emotional, mental, and physical aid remotely rather than through classic face-to-face interaction. Cyber substitution is expected to offer familial aid as well as self-enlightenment. *Digital parental supplementation* can occur through social media, web searches, instant messaging, online groups, text messaging, and email but is not confined or limited only to those regions.

Additionally, this study fills in the gaps between *traditional parental supplementation* and *digital parental supplementation*. *Traditional parental supplementation* is defined in this review as face-to-face interaction with a pseudo-mother or pseudo-father figure to fill parental inadequacies. Research in this study supports a connection between family communication patterns and the need for parental supplementation of some kind. This connection is explored further in chapter three and four through a qualitative methodology. With the integration of a semi-structured interview approach, the associations are scrutinized and rooted in the principles of FCP (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Queries involving FCP often utilize mixed methodology (Rosland et al., 2012), but this approach will solely be qualitative. Qualitative studies are more in-depth and offer a closer look at participants in their own habitat, which provides genuine research (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Since this study covers a new and developing topic, data that is rich in information is

unbelievably valuable. This chapter will breakdown the reasons behind the methodology shift and highlight research plans. Additionally, the design for this study along with the methodological approach will be highlighted in this chapter including the parameters for the interview and study participants.

### **Overview**

Initially, chapter three will remind the reader briefly of the focus for the project. A summary will follow involving the depths of FCP. Through exploration of the existing theory, research plans will unfold. Details discussing the design as well as the tools involved in acquiring fresh data will emerge. Lastly, potential ethical issues will be probed alongside credibility or trustworthiness concerns.

### **Research Method and Design**

Most of the data about FCP (Koerner et al., 2017) or human digital interaction, originates from studies that used a mixed methodological approach (Rosland et al., 2012). Jung and Lee (2017) attributed the outcome to the complexity as well as variety of the subject matter. Also, Jung and Lee claim the tools required to generate the data work better in a mixed methodological study. However, due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter, it is believed a qualitative study is best. In other words, the qualitative methodology is preferred because of the level of privacy required for the participants and the information they share.

### ***Qualitative Nature***

Creswell and Poth (2018) call *qualitative research* a technique that separates athletes from fans. The approach contains enlightenment and real tendencies that transform the world. Elston (2021) admits qualitative investigations include intense scrutiny of a person, place, thing, or idea in its natural habitat. This is why qualitative methodology is the best approach.

Qualitative inquiries will enable genuine research as well as outcomes to answer whether true parental supplementation is possible through digital media.

Qualitative methodology is the best choice for this study because this type of research integrates the perfect blend of hypothesis and structure in a short amount of time (Farrugia et al. (2010). Farrugia et al. suggest that qualitative questions or hypotheses often pave the way for new subject matter, developing original theories and formulating innovative content. In the same regard, the complexity of the inquiries or conclusions could alert the reader or project creator that future studies are necessary. In addition to the thoughts provided by Farrugia et al. on the methodology, the five main genres are (a) *narrative analysis*, (b) *phenomenology*, (c) *grounded theory*, (d) *ethnography*, and (e) *case study* (Creswell & Poth, 2018) *Narrative analysis* highlights the heart and soul of an individual or culture (Creswell & Poth, 2018) while *phenomenology* targets group experiences. In the *phenomenological* approach, one massive outcome is determined based upon each's person's testimony, while *grounded theory* stems from behaviors, relationships, or techniques that develop during the analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). Creswell and Poth (2018) believed ethnography was the best approach when analyzing a variety of cultures. *Ethnography* contains inspection of a "culture-sharing group" (Elston, 2021).

To produce a solid qualitative analysis Creswell and Poth's (2018) nine "good qualitative" traits are conducted (p.47). Step number one requires identification of basic details in the project. For this query, a qualitative methodology with a semi-structured interview approach will be administered. The second step encourages substantial ethics, which means any potential biases or threats to the study must be clarified. This study is unique because the author grew up in a *protective* (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002) home environment. Unfortunately, this could taint or influence the data collection process. Creswell and Poth recommended having

another party conduct the collection operation. However, to protect the privacy of the study participants, the author did not include an additional person. In agreement with Creswell and Poth's suggestion, the author clearly discussed her connection and potential biases at the beginning of the dissertation in chapter one to alert the reader.

The third step of Creswell and Poth's (2018) model recommends the adoption of one of the five approaches (I.e., *phenomenology*, *ethnography*, *grounded theory*, *narrative*, and *case study*). In this investigation a qualitative, semi-structured interview approach was integrated. Step number four pushes scholars to shrink their hypotheses to stay on track. At this time, the focus of this study has been cut from the broad perspective of the internet to the narrow scope of digital media. Creswell and Poth suggest incorporating an intrusive data gathering offensive for number five.

### ***Study Relationship***

Creswell and Poth's (2018) sixth phase focused on data analysis. The pair suggest a lengthy, detailed report about all the findings. The author mimicked their suggestions in this study. Phase seven expanded on the findings. The author put together a list of trends, oddities, stages, and conclusions to analyze. Creswell and Poth encouraged scholars to convey the data in a way that transports the reader. Everything must be clearly communicated and monitored accordingly for step eight. Step nine encourages researchers to integrate their background or association with the study into the work. Each scholar should explain their conclusions, how they got there, and any feelings they have about them (Creswell & Poth, 2018; p. 49). Martin (2019) also encourages researchers not to input their own personal biases into this space because it is easy to do especially if the researcher has a personal connection to the study. Although the author does not have a personal connection to the participants, she did grow up in a protective

(Koerner & Fitzpatrick 2006) home environment. Her experiences in a low-level communication environment and lack of parental supplementation sparked an interest in generating help for other children who are living in similar conditions. These experiences along with her professional expertise, branded the concept of *digital parental supplementation*.

### **Research Questions**

Through the lens of *family communication patterns theory* (FCP) this analysis seeks to determine if parental supplementation is possible through social media or digital media. Since the study is rooted in the fundamentals of FCP, the research incorporates the examination of the theory's four communication patterns (I.e., consensual, pluralistic, protective, and laissez-faire) alongside the desire or lack of desire for parental supplementation. By way of differentiating *traditional parental supplementation* from *digital parental supplementation*, current research detected a modern-day substitution already in the mix. For this reason, it is important to explore whether digital media can serve as a pseudo family member.

While current data affirms the benefits of person-to-person communication as well as positive parental influence within the home, it is unknown if remote conversation replicates the same results. For this reason, it is critical to explore whether digital media can serve as a pseudo family member. The remote substitution would fill in emotional, physical, and mental holes, left unfilled by inactive person-to-person relationships with family members. To determine these answers the following questions must be examined:

- 1.) **RQ1:** How is digital parental supplementation present in the four family types of the FCP framework?
- 2.) **RQ2:** How is digital media being substituted as an immediate family member to supplement shortcomings in the home?

Research question one is significant because it analyzes the existing usage of digital media to supplement a family member in modern American households. Research question two highlights the catalysts driving supplementation. Through a qualitative, semi-structured interview approach, these questions will be answered in the results section of chapter four.

### **Setting**

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) provided the backdrop for research associated with this project. UNCG was selected for two reasons: easy access and participant pool. The author of this review works at UNCG which provides access to a varied pool of participants within the designated study age range. Even though the author was not allowed to recruit students she directly impacted, due to the university's size the participant pool was still extremely large. Also, the target audience of this review was college students between the ages of 19 and 26. Because this age range uses digital media more than any other group for general conversation, emotional encouragement, and mental wellness (Appel et al., 2020), it was thought they should be the focus of the study. Since a college campus is a wonderful place to find this age range of individuals (Jensen et al., 2021), UNCG was chosen. Also, it is important to note that the predominate age of students studying at UNCG fall between 19 and 26 years (H.Vaughan, personal communication, July 10, 2023).

The interviewer created a peaceful environment conducive for information extraction. Each participant interviewed privately and willingly in Brown room 215, 002 of Carmichael or through the professional platform, Zoom. The Brown building is located on the back side of UNCG's campus, alongside the building of Carmichael. Both locations are private and only used by people in the department of Media Studies. Data collection lasted for a one-month period between November 5, 2023, and December 5, 2023. During each interview, the researcher and

the student were the only individuals in the room. The interviewer recorded the audio and video of every account, using the tools from the professional platform, Zoom. Then the author used Zoom's transcribing service to convert the audio to actual text. Since the interviewer is seasoned in this technique, each session lasted between 15 and 20 minutes on average. While the interviewer (who is also the project's author) stuck to the ten basic questions, she also wove in flexibility when necessary as well as extra questions.

Information was collected from UNCG students. Originally, the dissertation was specifically for students who were juniors and seniors in the Media Studies department. However, the University's IRB asked the study include all students, not just those in Media Studies. Therefore, the research invitation was extended to all people studying at UNCG. Ironically, many participants came from the Media Studies department and the Psychology department.

### **Study Criteria**

All students were accepted on a volunteer basis and screened beforehand to make sure they met the study criteria. The research requirements were as follows: (a) all students must be American, (b) all students must be between 19 and 26 years old, and (c) all students must operate at least one social platform no less than three times a week. Total, 55 students attempted to participate in the study; however, ten did not meet the overall requirements. The most common issue was age. Primarily they ranged between 27 and 30 years of age, rather than the requirement of 19 to 26. Forty-five students ended up contributing the to study research. Gender, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, and other descriptive factors played a role in the research. More on these traits is highlighted in chapter four.

### **Participants**



College students between the ages of 19 and 26 were the focus of this study. According to Pfeil et al. (2008), they are most affected by digital communication and social media (Bausch & Han, 2006). Additionally, Jensen et al. (2021) discovered that this age range has a meaningful relationship with their parents or parent even during the college years. Jensen et al. attributes the reason to digital media. The research group claimed that technological tools are uniting families like never before.

The study subjects were students at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). Only upper-level pupils (I.e., juniors and seniors ) were welcomed ranging in age from 19-26. The reason for the status clarification revolved around two key principles. First, Boyd & Ellison (2007) claimed this age group is the most connected to digital media. Since the premise of the research focuses on digital supplementation, this group was the best focus (Jung & Lee., 2017). Second, the author has access to upper classmen at UNCG, since she is a lecturer at the institution. Although the students varied in ethnicity and socioeconomic status, most resided permanently in North Carolina. All participants were students at UNCG and either media majors or psychology majors. All participants possessed a prominent level of digital literacy. They were highly advanced in the areas of marketing, video editing, video production, copywriting, newswriting, storyboarding, media ethics, social media management, and human relationships. Additionally, a great portion are bilingual and first-generation college students (H.Vaughan, personal communication, April 30, 2021).

These individuals will come from the college of Arts and Sciences, which is the largest division of the university (UNC Greensboro, 2024). They are full-time students who are mostly undergraduate (78 percent) and predominately female. Since UNCG is made of women mostly (67 percent) (UNC Greensboro, 2024).) this aligns with university statistics. Ninety-one percent

of UNCG students live in North Carolina, with eighty percent attending classes on campus. Ninety-two percent were enrolled either in spring or summer classes with forty percent being Caucasian in origin. Almost thirty percent are Black or African American while almost fifteen percent are Latino. Native American, Native Hawaiian, Asian, and Biracial students make up the rest of the university.

### **Procedures**

Student information was obtained through face-to-face interview sessions as well as remote meetings that ran from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. These sessions were held in room 215 of the Brown building, room 002 of Carmichael, and via Zoom. Each session lasted no longer than 15 to 20 minutes. Every student answered the same ten questions, but some were asked alternate inquiries, additionally, if the interviewer felt necessary. The interviewer determined which sessions needed additional questioning based upon participant responses (I. e. inconsistent responses), and the interviewer's expertise. The number of interviews conducted per day varied. The most interviews held in one day was six and the least amount was one.

### **Researcher's Role**

The researcher is responsible for conveying and defending fundamentals, behaviors, theories, and interpretations of a "culture-sharing group" (Creswell & Poth, 2018; p. 90). Since this review is qualitative with an approach in the form of an interview, it will contain a large amount of observation, which fully immersed the researcher in the student culture. This action enabled the scholar to gain the participant's trust which was necessary for proper data development and identity security. Additionally, the role of the researcher is to predict potential problems and the solutions ahead of time.

## Data Collection

Information regarding the research questions was collected during the months of November and December on and off the campus of UNCG. Study subjects were upper classmen at the university who are delving primarily into the worlds of media and psychology. The participants were a mix of adults, yet more females participated in the study than males. The reason is because UNCG as a University maintains higher volume of women than men (UNC Greensboro, 2024). All participants volunteered for the study and were screened beforehand by the project author to make sure they met the required criteria. The criteria required all volunteers to reside permanently in America, be between 19 and 26 years of age, and operate at least one social platform no less than three times a week. To learn more about the student demographics, visit the *participant* section located earlier in this chapter. Each student took part in a fifteen-to-twenty-minute conversation about communication behaviors at home and with family members. Each participant answered a pre-selected questionnaire. All inquiries on the questionnaire are listed in the next section.

## Primary Interview Questions

In this interview, it is important to note that *digital parental supplementation* implies the following. *Digital parental supplementation* is defined as the usage of digital media to replace a parent or legal guardian. The replacement enables the child to receive emotional, mental, and physical support through digital means rather than a traditional human parent. This substitution accounts for familial support as well as personal revelation. The replacement can involve social media, web searches, instant messaging, online groups, and email but is not limited to those areas (Jensen, 2021).

## Interview Questions

- 1.) What does a parent represent to you? What would the ideal parent be like?
- 2.) Which of these communication environments did you grow up in?:

***Consensual: heavy communication/ heavy conformity***

A consensual family communicates heavily and implements the same amount of obedience into their daily lives and decision-making.

***Pseudo example consensual:*** In Susie's family she talks to her parents regularly about life and daily scenarios. In addition to the general discussion, Susie listens to her parents and practices obedience as well as various principles they discuss. A certain level of orderliness is expected from Susie. When Susie does not conform, punishment is possible.

***Pluralistic: heavy communication/ low conformity***

A pluralistic family talks about everything but does not expect prominent levels of orderliness in return.

***Pseudo example pluralistic:*** In Jacqueline's home, he and his parents talk every day. They discuss all things from serious situations to superficial scenarios. While Jacqueline's parent's want him to obey, there isn't a big push for obedience. It's more of a live and learn philosophy. If Jacqueline makes an unwise decision, he and his parents talk about it, but no real punishment occurs.

***Protective: low communication/ heavy conformity***

A protective family hardly speaks at all but expects lots of obedience in and outside of the home.

***Pseudo example protective:*** Blanca does not communicate with her parents about anything outside of hello and goodbye. However, she is expected to stay out of trouble and make good grades at school. Blanca knows that if she does something to jeopardize the family's good reputation, there will be consequences.

***Laissez-faire: low communication/ low conformity***

A laissez-faire family does not talk, administer, or expect communication or obedience. Each family member operates independently.

***Pseudo example laissez-faire:*** Chen and his parents operate independently in every way. He hardly ever speaks to his mother or father, and when he does it is extremely superficial. In addition, to the lack of communication, there aren't real rules that Chen is expected to follow or any punishment lying in waiting. All parties in the household live on their own, despite physically sharing a home with others.

- 3.) Based upon the participant's answer to question one, question two will be asked in one of the following ways:

- (a) How likely are you to go to an immediate family member (parent or sibling) for emotional, mental, or physical support?
- (b) How likely are you to go to social media friends more so than a family member for emotional, mental, or physical support?
- 4.) Do you think parental supplementation is or was necessary in your home life?
- 5.) If parental supplementation were available through social media, would you use it?
- 6.) In what ways do you supplement digital media currently, rather than integrating a mother, father, sibling, or relative?
- 7.) How comfortable are you discussing personal struggles, family issues, or seeking guidance (on a secure platform) with strangers?
- 8.) What social media platforms or other forms of communication do you use regularly and why?
- 9.) Are you comfortable sharing your problems on social media?
- 10. If given the option, do you prefer to discuss situations in your life in person or online?

### **Alternate Questions**

- 1.) Why do you communicate little or a lot with family members?
- 2.) Why would you or would you not go to an immediate family member (parent or sibling) for emotional, mental, or physical support?
- 3.) Do you believe some social platforms are better for sharing specific things while others are not? Why?
- 4.) What are some topics you would not discuss online?
- 5.) How often do you use social media? Daily? Weekly?

Often in the interview process, participants divulge information more willingly as the process wears on. For this reason, you will notice some overlap with the questions because the

participant may reveal more useful data towards the end of the process.

### **Data Analysis**

The data for this study came from forty-five students at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). All were well-versed in communication tools, (smart phones, iPads, apple watches, and computers) social media usage, and digital literacy as well as comprehension of the main platforms online such as Facebook, Discord, Instagram, Reddit, TikTok, and X (formerly known as Twitter).

### ***Study Plans***

All students were asked the same ten questions, but some received additional inquiries known as alternate questions. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the interviewer should implement fluidity throughout the interview process to access the most valuable data. The information was collected during the months of November and December in 2023. After the data was gathered, the responses were grouped according to their family communication pattern (*consensual, protective, pluralistic, and laissez-faire* (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002)). Then they were reviewed for potential themes (Yin, 2018). The themes were differentiated by color in chapter four and explored further in the results section.

### ***Mock Interview Summation***

In preparation for this study, the researcher conducted a mock interview session to evaluate the performance of the interview questions. On Sunday, July 30, 2023, the lead researcher conducted three different interviews regarding the research topic. The interviewer asked all the primary questions listed above and one or two of the alternate questions. The discussion naturally evolved into in-depth conversations that welcomed the introduction of the alternate queries without any prompts from the interviewer. Each interview lasted around twenty

minutes and provided sufficient data to encourage further inquiries. All participants were between 19 and 26 years of age and identified as either male or female.

**Findings.** Out of the three individuals, two stated they had multiple communication patterns within their homes (consensual to laissez-faire and consensual to pluralistic), suggesting that communication styles change or vary between parents (Koerner et al., 2017) and that multiple communication patterns can exist in the same household (LaFreniere, 2020). Those same individuals expressed a great desire for parental supplementation through digital application. They also provided recommendations on what application should be suggested. For example, these preliminary participants welcomed an app or website that provided live text chat, remote video interaction, email support, or phone assistance- all synchronous for individuals in Generation Z or below. They felt people in their age range or younger and living in their communication pattern would welcome the opportunity for guidance on life, love, and general living (H.Vaughan, personal communication, July 30, 2023). They also were extremely comfortable engaging remotely with strangers if the individuals were verified and considered to be qualified people.

The other participant in the preliminary study selected consensual to pluralistic to describe their home environment. While this participant supported LaFreniere's (2020) hypotheses about the existence of multiple communication patterns within the home and variation between parents (Koerner et al., 2017), she did not agree in other areas. This individual did not see a need for digital application through parental supplementation (H.Vaughan, personal communication, July 30, 2023). They did not desire any connection remotely regarding advice on life, no matter the topic. This individual felt face-to-face interaction is the best and saw no

purpose engaging online with strangers about personal matters. The individual believed family interaction or relative guidance will always be the finest option for children, no matter their age.

**Validity.** These sessions highlighted several areas of future research and encouraged query adjustment. For example, explanations or illustrations were added to question number two. Plus, alternate questions one through five were re-worked to reflect some of the preliminary participant's responses. Their insight also helped solidify the order of the main questions. Without the proper stacking, the validity of the study could be compromised. Researchers should always ask if the conclusion drawn from the dataset is genuine (Punch 2014). The answer governs the level of legitimacy, keeping the questions in the previous format could have potentially compromised the validity of the study. For this reason, the author decided on questions one and two first and then the rest in chronological order.

**Validity Support.** It is critical to point out that Punch (2014) believed there was no complete way to institute *validity*. However, the trio of validity types often used for data assessment include *content validity*, *criterion-related validity*, and *construct validity*. *Content validity* observes whether the complete rationale is represented in the scope (Zellar, 1996). *Criterion-related validity* involves a comparison of a similar review that the investigator sees confidence in. *Criterion-related validity* has two types: *concurrent validity* and *predictive validity*. *Concurrent* displays the present and enables scholars to study current values. *Predictive* highlights the future. *Construct validity* examines similarities to the study's hypothetical beliefs (Punch, 2014). *Construct validity* is the form integrated into this review.

Punch (2014) felt that validation methods developed because of the investigation. Zellar (1996) believed validity developed through an assortment of techniques. Zellar felt this was the case across all methodologies, not just one or the other. *Sensitivity* (Fry, 2022) was also observed



during the mock interview. Punch (2014) noted that psychometrics such as *sensitivity* helped investigators discern between research participants. This form of measurement enabled researchers to see the differences as well as likenesses. In this study, the interviewer incorporated *sensitivity* (Fry, 2022) as needed depending upon the responses from the participants. The researcher noted that sensitivity seemed more relevant to those in *protective* (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006) or *laissez-faire* (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002) households.

**Trends.** Additionally, the preliminary session encouraged the author to keep an eye out for correlations in future interviews. Some of the main trends of interest include the existence of multiple communication patterns within the home, style transformation over time, patterns trends, and ethnicity correlations. Overall, the interviewer identified nine potential tendencies in the remaining interviews, which will be discussed in depth in chapter four.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is a huge part of a study's outcome. According to Punch (2014) these elements fluctuate because of the technique. Punch believes that quantitative studies contain a threesome of credibility traits, content, criterion, and construct- while trustworthiness is linked with regularity. Yet, in the qualitative sphere, reviews are founded more on examination and awareness (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

According to Punch (2014) trustworthiness is important in any study. In quantitative research, trustworthiness is related to consistency which contains two fundamental pieces: balance and indigenous constancy. Balance is present when scholars experience the same conclusion repeatedly despite changing things up while indigenous constancy occurs when outcomes are reproduced consistently (Punch, 2014). Trustworthiness enables scholars'

independence to oversee problems and eliminate them. Yet in qualitative study, analysis relies more on selection of participants (for agreement) and their reliability.

In this study, balance and constancy (Punch, 2014) were detected repeatedly. Balance presented through the same set of questions, the participant's responses, and the interview setting. Constancy existed in the findings and relevance to the specific family communication pattern (Koerner et al., 2017). As previously stated, none of the participants exhibited any concerns regarding their responses.

Trustworthiness is accessible in qualitative studies. According to Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012), legitimacy in any investigation is achieved by a pair of applications: abstract and factual aid as well as an information train. The pair encouraged qualitative scholars to incorporate computers into their data collection techniques. Although various software programs are linked with quantitative research, Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012) acknowledged major benefits for qualitative investigators. The duo believed the component enhances the vital audit trail (Connelly, 2016). Plus, Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012) believed the digital addition could emulate systematic processes and documentation efforts often sought after in quantitative reviews. Sinkovics and Alfoldi called the practice *progressive focusing* (p. 817). According to their research, the implementation provided massive quantities of qualitative data which can often be unorganized.

Trustworthiness is a key part of any investigation because of the assurance that comes along with it. Connelly (2016) attributed trustworthiness to faith in the data and divulged a certain level of belief in the type of study, as well as its policies and covenants. Connelly associated transparency with trustworthiness and any study seeking it. The scholar believed qualitative queries devoted themselves to an important level of virtue and management.

Connelly's principles were applied in this study. The interviewer applied faith to the participant's accounts, trusting in their responses for accuracy and an honest representation of their home lives.

In this study, *progressive focusing* was implemented in small capacities (Sinkovics & Alfoldi (2012). Sinkovics and Alfoldi believed the usage of computers could organize qualitative data in a better way; however, the researcher was concerned about participant privacy. With the introduction of computers, privacy protection becomes more of an issue (Connelly, 2016). For this reason, the investigator used a combination of approaches. The data was collected by using classic tools such as a pen and paper. However, as the analyzation period commenced the researcher organized the info into spreadsheets which helped break down the information for data visualizations.

### ***Credibility***

Credibility is more about the conclusions and the perspectives they create, rather than preconceived notions. Creswell and Creswell feel that credibility does not hold the same value in qualitative projects as it does in the quantitative realm. In this study, all students who fit the criteria were allowed to participate. The requirements included UNCG students who were between the ages of 19 and 26 and resided permanently in the United States. These individuals operated at least one social profile, a minimum of three times a week. Participants ranged in a variety of ethnicities, but all identified as either male or female. None of the students presented any concerns regarding their credibility contributions to the study.

Cope (2014) echoed some of Punch's viewpoints in her efforts to strengthen scholarly perspectives about qualitative studies. Cope acknowledged that qualitative research is different than quantitative studies, not just in the processes but in the applications of inspecting

humankind. Cope saw qualitative research as a method to probe, distinguish, and mature theories and concepts whereas her critics viewed it differently altogether. Koch and Harrington (1998) referred to the methodology as weak. The pair believe the research format is riddled with prejudice and too specific to apply to the masses. However, Cope (2014) disagreed. She felt that qualitative queries were necessary for academic advancement and extremely important in maintaining credibility.

In this qualitative study, through an ethnographic interview approach, information was collected to strengthen the relationship between FCP and parental supplementation but also to acknowledge the connection of *digital parental supplementation* to specific communication patterns within the home. Data gathered in this review can advance knowledge about FCP as well as offer original insight about the usage of digital media to serve as a pseudo-family member. Nearly fifty students from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) were interviewed for this research. Each participant answered at least ten questions in connection with a one-on-one interview. During the interview, the participants were probed and prodded about the relevance of communication in their household. The questions discussed their home environment, family communication style, parental relationships, communication tools, and social platforms.

In qualitative studies, credibility is often associated with Lincoln and Guba (1985). Lincoln and Guba are well known for their quintet of conduct in qualitative research. According to Lincoln and Guba, credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability, and authenticity are vital to develop legitimacy in an inquiry. Cope (2014) called *credibility* the main representation of the information from a study. The analysis involved the perspectives from the research team as well as the primary investigator's depiction (Polit & Beck, 2012). Cope (2014)

went onto define credibility through interaction with the main investigator. She believed the investigator complements plausibility of a project by integrating their observations as well as the verifications of the participant perspectives. Sandelowski (1986) concurred with Cope (2014), affirming that a qualitative study is validated when others confirm similar encounters. In congruence with these processes, investigators can aid the credibility of a study by query involvement, inspection detection, and thorough documentation (Cope, 2014).

The investigator of this study worked hard to aid the research by noting the primary observations of each participant. Although no signs of emotional, mental, or physical discomfort were displayed by any of the participants, the researcher did notice lack of comprehension from some. Since the interviewer noticed this situation, she affirmed the validity of the study, according to Cope (2014). Due to recommendations from Sandelowski (1986), the researcher documented the incidents, later using them to add to the study's credibility. Details regarding this situation are discussed further in chapter four.

### ***Dependability***

Dependability occurred when scholars discovered a level of fixedness in a study's findings (Polit & Beck, 2012). For example, if a query can be recreated with participants declaring similar findings to past studies, *dependability* is achieved (Cope, 2014). *Confirmability* involved the people who generated the data. The processes used in this research did not include prejudices or any alternate perspectives from the examiner. According to Cope (2014) confirmability contains information that originates precisely from the study. All data from this collection is original to the study.

### ***Transferability***

*Transferability* occurs in a qualitative study when outsiders can relate to the content or experiences in the research (Polit & Beck, 2012). Study creators enable this scenario by providing extensive detail. Through specifics, readers can comprehend and correlate to the analysis. However, *transferability* (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) is limited to the objectives of the investigation. Unfortunately, every qualitative study is not able to be generalized (Sandelowski, 1986). The parameters of this study can be generalized to an extent. The generalization occurred with the communication patterns: (a) consensual, (b) pluralistic, (c) protective, and (d) laissez-faire. Typically, individuals who exist in one of the four conversation environments experience similar situations. The situations are specific to the selected pattern. Future readers can review the research in this study. They can also read the definitions of each pattern and make a conclusion or correlation between their home environment which supports a certain level of *transferability* (Polit & Beck, 2012) in this review.

Authenticity is considered fundamental because it conveys the examiner's competency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In a research study, the chief examiner is expected to articulate the participant's ideas and impressions in a reliable fashion (Polit & Beck, 2012). The investigator should use appropriate language, personal testimony, and decorative rhetoric to properly showcase the data. *Criticality* (Cope, 2014) stimulates human selection methodology. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) *criticality* involves great evaluation and the ability to produce accurate portrayals of the learned information.

In this study, authenticity was highly regarded. The interviewer is a former journalist. Because of her former life, she instituted specific and simple speeches to convey the questions and concepts in the questions. She kept the interviews focused and consistent. Plus, the

interviewer incorporated examples whenever necessary to ensure complete comprehension. Additionally, the interviewer integrated her reporting skills into the study to evaluate the data and produce research with prominent levels of validity.

In addition to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) main principles involving trustworthiness and credibility, other scholars put stock in an additional group. Researchers such as Whittemore et al. (2001) felt *clarity*, *distinctness*, *artistry*, *awareness*, and *harmony* are just as vital. *Clarity* is important because of language comprehension and overall study analysis. *Distinctness* involved the narrative of the written account while *artistry* encompasses its brilliance (Whittemore et al., 2001). While *awareness* and *harmony* encouraged efficient examination and constructive collaboration, Cope (2014) made it clear that all parts of the query must complement one another.

For this study, the methodology known as member checking (Cope, 2014) was used. During this process, participants were contacted after the information was reviewed and asked for feedback regarding the themes that emerged. This practice helped validate the conclusions and clarify any uncertainties. The author instituted member checking since it is thought of as supporting trustworthiness and credibility in qualitative queries (Cope, 2014). The practice helped identify a future area of research that needs further exploration involving siblings. The trend is mentioned more in-depth in chapters four and five.

The process of *triangulation* was also incorporated into this research. According to Cope (2014), triangulation is the usage of several ways to collect or record information from participants. In this query, data was gathered through the usage of recorded interview, written observation, interview transcripts, online correspondence, and audio analysis. Before wrapping

up trend conclusion, results from all these methodologies were closely reviewed to determine the most accurate deduction.

### **Dependability, Confirmability & Transferability Summation**

*Dependability*, *confirmability*, and *transferability* should be big components of any qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). *Dependability* deals with the regularity and accuracy of the data (Moon et al., 2016) while *confirmability* focuses on the reproduction of research. *Transferability* is established when the researcher efficiently explains the outcomes in a way that is helpful or pertinent to other studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). *Dependability* (Moon et al., 2016) enables outsiders to comprehend, scrutinize, and review research. According to Moon et al. the process goes hand in hand with *credibility*. Together the pair encompass all aspects of the study, dominating the participants, objectives, and information compilation. *Transferability* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is a vital part of any qualitative query. Since qualitative studies are small or confined to a certain group, transferability is often challenging to achieve. However, Moon et al., 2016) discusses a certain level of flexibility in this stage. Instead of generalizability, qualitative researchers are taxed with finding new revelations that exist undefined- problems or concepts that are relatable in some capacity to the initial approach.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018) qualitative queries are built upon examination and awareness. These studies stem from the ways people exist. Creswell and Creswell often implement the following beliefs: (a) people form the meaning of something as they interpret it, (b) people cooperate with their world and view it with their perspectives, and (c) the average meaning of a word depends on its meaning in society.

Additionally, flexibility is important in a qualitative study. In this query “open-ended questions” are used (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; p. 16). These types of questions encourage



theme recognition and pattern labeling. A certain fluidity with data collection and analysis contributed to overall *transferability* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as well as *confirmability* (Moon et al., 2016) in the study. Particularly, with *dependability* and *confirmability* the author identified consistent repetition involving participant responses, mannerisms, and sometimes ethnicity. Additionally, these elements complemented the recruitment techniques, study populace, and information compilation. Together they contributed to the overall validity of the research (Moon et al., 2016). The *transferability* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of this study will be discussed throughout chapters four and five.

### **Ethical Considerations Overall**

According to Heilferty (2011), the foundation for ethical research developed in the mid-twentieth century. The practice is based upon principles of independence, integrity, philanthropy, and decency. In the digital age, Heilferty points out that these fundamentals are harder to uphold, especially, when research is conducted online. Heilferty attributes the trouble to privacy violation, digital illiteracy, copyright infringement, validity concerns, and misuse of the outcomes. Plus, Heilferty mentions situations where participants are entered into studies unknowingly which generates consent anxiety.

As the concern regarding consent grew, scholars started a clarification mission to ensure when permission was necessary and when it was not. In doing so, researchers started to differentiate between cyber methodologies. Inactive inquiry is the inspection of digital data sets without interaction between investigator and participant (Eysenbach & Till, 2001). In rapid examination, the investigator communicates with respondents but only to confirm or deny the certainty of replies. The last type is known as interactive research. In this technique, analysts routinely communicate with collaborators. According to Eysenbach and Till (2001), informed

consent is the most ethical option, with any of these techniques. However, whether it is necessary or not is dependent on the participant's impression of privacy, but the pair recommend getting consent regardless.

Other online scholars are more concerned about trust rather than privacy. According to Bakardjieva and Feenberg (2000), privacy is important, but estrangement has more effect on study outcomes. Nosek et al. (2002) expanded the discussion listing a trio of moral digital threats. The first involves the lack of person-to-person communication. The second involves the argument regarding informed consent. Is it necessary or not? The third focuses on the loss of obscurity. Nosek et al. recommend that researchers provide extensive information to potential collaborators to help maintain ethics and avoid some of these issues.

For this study informed consent, privacy, and relational interaction were significant. In the beginning, the author issued a recruitment post to her colleagues in the department of Media Studies. The message is listed in Tables 1A. Her colleagues then disclosed the opportunity to their classes. If students were interested in participating, they contacted the analyst through email. After that initial correspondence, the researcher emailed the students back individually inquiring about the requirements to participate. If the student met the criteria, they were then informed about the details of the study and sent an informed consent document. Even though they were not mandated to sign the form, the analyst did encourage them to read it. The form is listed in Table 1 B. If the students emailed again, saying they were still interested in participating, the researcher scheduled a time to have a remote interview session.

The analyst engaged in a rapid relationship with the collaborator (Eysenbach & Till, 2001). According to Eysenbach and Till (2001) this interaction involves the interviewer connecting with the participant but only to confirm or deny responses. In this query, the

researcher spoke to the participants during one remote interview session. During this session, the analyst engaged the participants in standard introductory conversation, gradually moving into the interview portion. Once the participant seemed comfortable, the analyst began the interview. All forty-five interviews lasted between 15 and 30 minutes.

To maintain privacy of the participants, the interviewer assigned each collaborator a number and the name of participant 1, participant 2, participant 3 etc. Additionally, all audio and video files were labeled with the same filing system to protect the participant's identity. The same procedure was conducted on paper as well. These files have been protected digitally and physically are stored securely at an undisclosed location.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), ethnography is a difficult approach because of several reasons. The first, *cultural comprehension*, deals with the troubles of understanding a foreign group. The second, *civil essence*, involves relationship to the culture in question, while the third includes significant historical context. These requirements can be tiresome and long. They can also spark a syndrome known as “*going native*” (Creswell & Poth, 2018; p. 96) which changes the analyst and ruins the investigation. In the same regard, ethnographic queries can cause too much sensitivity or not enough. Additionally, Creswell and Poth attribute funding as an issue as well.

Connection is also a problem with this technique. To build a proper ethnographic approach, the researcher must have direct access to the individual, group, or idea. Creswell and Poth (2018) also suggest a “*gatekeeper*” (p. 93) or someone on the inside is vital. A *gatekeeper* is important because certain cultures or individuals share special vocabulary or conduct specific to their origin. A *gatekeeper* helps the researcher stay knowledgeable; however, it can be a challenge to find one. For this reason, Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest incorporating a

covert study. A covert investigation occurs when people do not know they are being monitored. This approach generates a lot of information, but it must be used with caution due to ethical issues. Overt study is also an option. In this scenario, participants agree to be monitored and are easily accessible. However, in this situation, Creswell and Creswell warn that the researcher is required to let participants know of any biases. The pair also encourages extra caution with conclusions. A research team is recommended in this scenario to cut back on legitimacy troubles (Creswell and Poth, 2018).

In addition to Creswell and Creswell's (2018) recommendations, Munhall (1988) believes it is important that all researchers define two items: objectives and intentions. Clear objectives will help the analyst focus throughout the process. Specific intentions will enable the investigator to conduct efficient research as well as relay the outcomes effectively through written word. Also, Munhall believes researchers should be aware of the culture they are creating for study participants. Does the subject matter create a sense of discomfort? Will the participants feel uncomfortable answering questions? Does the language incorporated into the interview questions contain harsh or derogatory copy? Munhall (1988) even encourages investigators to review how they refer to the study participants, going as far as to call them collaborators rather than participants. Munhall sees the term collaborators as more respectful and a real representation of their role rather than the traditional name. Is it possible the people involved will feel angry or threatened? Munhall conveys concern regarding a connection that may occur between the analyst and the collaborators. This feeling can jeopardize the findings or cause researchers to interpret something incorrectly.

### **Ethical Considerations Internally**

Munhall's (1988) perspective did influence the author of this study. Specifically, the author incorporated care and caution regarding questions about the collaborator's family. During the mock interview, the investigator noticed tone change, hesitation, and discomfort from the participants when they answered or discussed questions one through four. Question one asked for a personal definition of the word *parent* while two identified which family communication pattern existed in their home. Question three asked the respondent to elaborate on their preference of friend or family member and four inquired whether parental supplementation was necessary in their home. Although these inquiries were not harsh or deeply intrusive, they did push the students to revisit their home lives, which in some cases brought up bad memories. The investigator noticed these trends in two out of the three cases. The observation forced the analyst to incorporate more sensitivity into the interview process. Before each session, she warned the students about the nature of the subject matter and offered more patience as well as response time. In some instances, the students were processing their childhood as well as home environments: the good, the bad, and the ugly while they answered each question.

Despite all the spoken and unspoken interaction, the author did not encounter any questionable fieldwork. Munhall (1988) warns researchers of this in her article regarding ethics in qualitative studies. While communication between the analyst and collaborators is private, people are not encouraged to divulge illegal or immoral information during these sessions. According to Munhall, research interactions should be strictly about the research and not a breeding ground for gossip or secrets. For this reason, Munhall recommended upholding certain rules in every session. In this study, the researcher implemented the following customs:

- 1.) **Custom 1:** At the beginning of every interview, the researcher established a sense of

comfort.

- 2.) **Custom 2:** Throughout the interview, the investigator offered examples to help the participants understand.
- 3.) **Custom 3:** At the beginning and the end of the interview, the analyst reminded the collaborator that their responses would be kept confidential.
- 4.) **Custom 4:** Throughout the interview, the researcher-maintained control of the conversation, not dwelling exceptionally long on any one question.

The implementation of these practices was successful. The analyst did not have any issues during the research collection phase.

### **Christian Expectation**

The Lord expects Christians to be different than others. The same is required of Christian personnel. For example, dishonesty is one of the most discussed topics in the Bible (Open Bible, 2023). Even though each account is one-of-a-kind, the overall meaning is the same. God does not tolerate treachery. The Bible says Christians are expected to implement honesty in everything (*New International Bible*, 1973/1998, Philippians 4:8), specifically with intelligence and study subjects (Keller & Alsdorf, 2018). All procedures must have accurate, original data.

### **Summary**

This investigation is a qualitative, semi-structured interview approach. Since qualitative queries are better suited for sensitive subjects, this approach will work better than quantitative or mixed methodology. A qualitative study will generate genuine data in a reasonable amount of time and blends inquiry and organization well without eliminating the comfort of the participants.

Through application of *family communication patterns* theory (FCP), the possibility of parental supplementation through social media is explored. Currently, most of the information regarding FCP involves face-to-face interaction. However, it is imperative to know if the same philosophies carry over to the digital realm. To learn more, an in-depth analysis is required of the following questions:

- 1.) **RQ1:** How is digital parental supplementation present in the four family types of the FCP framework?
- 2.) **RQ2:** How is digital media being substituted as an immediate family member to supplement shortcomings in the home?

Each query is vital to determine if parental supplementation is an appropriate solution for children in non-consensual homes. Research shows that children who grow up in a low communication level home struggle with anxiety, accepting assistance, and relationships (Jiao, 2021). Innovative data from this study could eliminate those challenges and create a more balanced life structure for the offspring as they become adults.

Data came from upper-level students at UNCG who were in the departments of Media Studies and Psychology. All participants agreed voluntarily to join the investigation and fit the designated requirements. The criteria involved three primary factors. Participants had to reside permanently in the United States. Collaborators had to be between 19 and 26 years of age. Lastly, they had to operate at least one social platform a minimum of three times a week. Forty-five pupils answered a series of pre-determined questions. Each interview lasted between 15 and 30 minutes and it took a month and a half to gather all the data. The collection process occurred between November and December of 2023. The students were extremely digitally literate and used social media regularly.

## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study is to determine whether parental supplementation is possible through digital application. Even though it is apparent that traditional parental supplementation is beneficial for children (Person et al., 2021), it is unknown if the same is possible remotely. The results of this study suggest that the internet is being used as a pseudo-family member. Initially, the chapter analyzes previous topics of discussion such as the methodology, research design, setting, participant criteria, and data analysis. Then, the findings are revealed unpacking the many trends uncovered during the research. The results are centered around the core principles of *family communication patterns theory* (FCP) (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2002). The research not only defines initial parameters set by original FCP scholars but also the data outlines studies for future review (LaFreniere, 2020). The following review features innovative research intertwining FCP and parental supplementation through digital application. This study guides the reader through the correlations to FCP, while providing clear implications that the internet is a pseudo family member. The results, which are discussed in depth in this section, outline key focus points as well as the foundation of the research. The results also implied that parental supplementation through digital application is critical for children living in households where communication is low or non-existent.

### Overview

In this study, the results of the study at hand are inspected to determine if parental supplementation is possible through digital application. It is known that traditional parental supplementation is beneficial for children who do not have a



positive influence such as a mother or father in their lives (Lopresti et al., 2020; Person et al., 2021). However, it was unclear if the same outcomes can occur online or through technological assistance. For this reason, data in this study was analyzed and categorized into several groups.

### *Consistencies*

Information collected for this study came through a convenience sampling. This form of data collection was chosen simply because of availability and proximity to the university. More specifically, the researcher worked as a faculty member at UNCG, which made it easier to secure a pool of participants there rather than a different institution. The data originated from a compilation of face-to-face and remote interviews. Student information was gathered through person-to-person conversations as well as discussions online. The interviews occurred during the week from morning to afternoon and did not last longer than 20 minutes. Each participant responded to the same ten questions, but some were given substitutes, if needed. The interviewer relied on her professional experience as a journalist to determine if an interview required additional questioning. Out of 45, only six needed the alternate questions. Half a dozen required the substitutes due to deviations in their replies. In all six instances, the reporter concluded that the participants did not comprehend the inquiry. The miscommunication happened repeatedly with questions four and six. After further explanation, all six provided substantial responses, which aligned with the behaviors of other participants. While the number of sessions differed from day to day, the most meetings conducted sequentially reached six. The lowest number was one.

***Researcher's Role***

The researcher's role is necessary for supporting and upholding the core ideologies of a specific group (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Due to the essence of this query, it possesses copious amounts of participant examination. The researcher noted each student's body language, rhetoric, and tone during the interview process. Monitoring these behaviors helped the inspector gather the participants true feelings about their responses as well as the questions. Another responsibility of the researcher is to spot any problems ahead of time. In this query the only issue involved questions four and six. Six times during the interview process, the participants did not seem to completely understand the inquiries. The investigator (the author of this study) identified this issue and fixed the problem by re-stating the inquiry and offering examples.

***Data Collection***

Data gathered for this study originated from a convenience sampling. This collection of information was selected mostly because of availability and proximity to UNCG. Additionally, the researcher was a lecturer at UNCG, which made it easier to acquire a pool of participants. For this qualitative, interview investigation, the participants were involved in a fifteen-to-twenty-minute discussion about their conversation style. The interview questions came from a pre-determined list. The list focused on their communication behavior at home between siblings and or parents. The entire questionnaire is available for review in the *primary interview* passage. This type of approach works well when the participants are interviewed in a familiar setting. The comfort of their natural habitat generated a breeding ground for more thorough and organic responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, students participated from the comfort of their own home or from a familiar classroom setting on campus.

Also, it is important to note that the findings in this study are based upon the current communication pattern or patterns in the home. Koerner et al (2017) believed that multiple communication patterns could exist in the home. Also, the trio mentioned the patterns could possibly change as the child or children age (Jiao, 2021). To maintain consistency in the study, it was crucial to reiterate the focus resided around the current state or current relationship between the participant and said parents.

### ***Primary Interview Questions***

For this inquiry, the phrase *parental supplementation* involved the substitution of a biological or legal guardian in the life of a child. *Parental supplementation* is often instituted when a mother or father figure are dead, incarcerated, absent due to military service, or not active in their child's life. Based on this research, there were two types of parental supplementation discovered. The author of this study identified, defined, and named the pair *traditional parental supplementation* and *digital parental supplementation*. *Traditional parental supplementation* occurs when an individual such as a pastor, mentor, or teacher fill the void of an absent parent face-to-face, routinely (Person et al., 2021). *Digital parental supplementation* is defined as the incorporation of digital media to fulfill the role of a parent or legal guardian. The substitution allows the child to inherit emotional, mental, and physical assistance through digital application rather than a traditional human figure. This exchange provides familial support in addition to internal enlightenment (Saud et al., 2020). In this study, digital media is defined as text messaging, social networking, web searches, cyber instant messaging, online groups, and email but is not limited to those areas.

### ***Interview Questions***

- 1.) What does a parent represent to you? What would the ideal parent be like?

2.) Which of these communication environments did you grow up in?:

***Consensual: heavy communication/ heavy conformity***

A consensual family communicates heavily and implements the same amount of obedience into their daily lives and decision-making.

***Pseudo example consensual:*** In Susie's family she talks to her parents regularly about life and daily scenarios. In addition to the general discussion, Susie listens to her parents and practices obedience as well as various principles they discuss. A certain level of orderliness is expected from Susie. When Susie does not conform, punishment is possible.

***Pluralistic: heavy communication/ low conformity***

A pluralistic family talks about everything but does not expect prominent levels of orderliness in return.

***Pseudo example pluralistic:*** In Jacqueline's home, he and his parents talk every day. They discuss all things from serious situations to superficial scenarios. While Jacqueline's parent's want him to obey, there isn't a big push for obedience. It's more of a live and learn philosophy. If Jacqueline makes an unwise decision, he and his parents talk about it, but no real punishment occurs.

***Protective: low communication/ heavy conformity***

A protective family hardly speaks at all but expects lots of obedience in and outside of the home.

***Pseudo example protective:*** Blanca does not communicate with her parents about anything outside of hello and goodbye. However, she is expected to stay out of trouble and make good grades at school. Blanca knows that if she does something to jeopardize the family's good reputation, there will be consequences.

***Laissez-faire: low communication/ low conformity***

A laissez-faire family does not talk, administer, or expect communication or obedience. Each family member operates independently.

***Pseudo example laissez-faire:*** Chen and his parents operate independently in every way. He hardly ever speaks to his mother or father, and when he does it is extremely superficial. In addition, to the lack of communication, there aren't real rules that Chen is expected to follow or any punishment lying in waiting. All parties in the household live on their own, despite physically sharing a home with others.

3.) Based upon their answer to question #1, question two will be asked in one of the following ways:

(a) How likely are you to go to an immediate family member (parent or sibling) for

- emotional, mental, or physical support?
- (b) How likely are you to go to social media friends more so than a family member for emotional, mental, or physical support?
- 4.) Do you think parental supplementation is or was necessary in your home life?
- 5.) If parental supplementation were available through social media, would you use it?
- 6.) In what ways do you supplement digital media currently, rather than integrating a mother, father, sibling, or relative?
- 7.) How comfortable are you discussing personal struggles, family issues, or seeking guidance (on a secure platform) with strangers?
- 8.) What social media platforms or other forms of communication do you use regularly and why?
- 9.) Are you comfortable sharing your problems on social media?
10. If given the option, do you prefer to discuss situations in your life in person or online?

### **Alternate Questions**

- 1.) Why do you communicate little or a lot with family members?
- 2.) Why would you or would you not go to an immediate family member (parent or sibling) for emotional, mental, or physical support?
- 3.) Do you believe some social platforms are better for sharing specific things while others are not? Why?
- 4.) What are some topics you would not discuss online?
- 5.) How often do you use social media? Daily? Weekly?

Often in the interview process, participants divulge information more willingly as the process wears on. For this reason, you will notice some overlap with the questions because the participant may reveal more useful data towards the end of the process.

***Data Analysis***

The information for this review came from nearly fifty students at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). All the students were American but not all were North Carolinian. The students ranged in origin from the North, South, East, and West. All participants claimed to be between 19 and 26 years of age and selected male or female for their gender. All students maintained a superior understanding of digital media and operated profiles on social networking sites like Facebook, Discord, Instagram, Reddit, TikTok, and X (formerly known as Twitter). All students answered identical inquiries. Some were asked alternate questions as needed. The data for this review was gathered in the fall of 2023.

Once the interviews concluded, the responses were grouped according to their family communication pattern (*consensual, protective, pluralistic, and laissez-faire* (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002)). Question number two identified each participant's communication pattern, which made the data simple to organize. In addition to their communication pattern classification, the investigator noticed various trends by ethnicity, gender, and grouping. Those themes as well as others are explained further in the results section. Also, the participants were monitored for their behavior and body language during the interview. These results were reviewed for similar tendencies. The researcher did not detect any significant verbal or non-verbal responses during the interviews that would need to be examined further. All participants appeared relaxed and very willing to answer all the questions.

***Research Method and Design***

In the past, previous queries regarding FCP (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002) and technological connection (Saud et al., 2020) originated from a mixed methodological inquiry (Rosland et al., 2012). Scholars such as Jung and Lee (2017) equated the association to data

difficulties and methodology trouble. However, the path for this study is qualitative. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative techniques are best used in studies that require privacy and observation in the participant's natural environment. This style encourages authentic responses that can truly stimulate organic conclusions. These outcomes identify current trends as well as future possibilities for other endeavors regarding parental supplementation through digital application (Saud et al., 2020).

Qualitative inquiry intertwines the best usage of conjecture and organization in a realistic window of time (Elston, 2021). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), this technique developed rich insight. While many versions of ethnography exist, the most popular forms are *critical* and *realist* (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The *critical* style is given liberally to groups that are often silenced (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The *realist* approach focuses on a subject matter close to the participants. In this design, the *realist* style is implemented through the process of interview.

Flexibility is another reason to pursue a qualitative path. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative studies work best with “*open-ended questions*” (p. 16). *Open-ended questions* provide a breeding ground for concept adjustment and restructuring. Plus, they're helpful when analyzing maiden content. Specifically, the openness identifies inconsistencies in the data, while flexibility enables project dialogue.

### ***Research Questions***

Under the umbrella of *family communication patterns theory* (FCP) this examination desires to learn if familial substitution is possible through digital media. FCP is a concept that scrutinizes the manners in which relatives communicate (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). Previous research suggests there are potentially four interaction patterns within the household (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). The categories are: (a) *consensual*, (b) *pluralistic*, (c) *protective*, and (d)

*laissez-faire*. A *consensual* clan integrates tons of conversation while maintaining a balance of orderliness. A *pluralistic* family talks all the time, but with little follow through. *Protective* homes maintain elevated levels of obedience yet communicate insufficiently. *Laissez-faire* families incorporate little of either. Through incorporation of FCP data alongside digital media it is conceivable to substitute traditional parental guidance digitally.

Even though present-day information confirms the benefits of face-to-face human interaction, it is uncertain if parental supplementation through digital application will produce identical outcomes. For this reason, it is imperative to delve into whether remote communication can assist as an alternate relative. In this instance, digital media would serve as a substitution for traditional human contact. To determine the answers to these questions the following were analyzed:

- 1.) **RQ1:** How is digital parental supplementation present in the four family types of the FCP framework?
- 2.) **RQ2:** How is digital media being substituted as an immediate family member to supplement shortcomings in the home?

These research questions were instituted because they examined the current reliance on digital media in the American family as well as the correlation between FCP and *digital parental supplementation*. A possible link could diminish important levels of anxiety, communication troubles, and relationship challenges for children growing up in *protective* or *laissez-faire* households (Koerner et al., 2017).

### ***Setting***

Data collection for this study took place on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). Total, forty-five participants were interviewed for the inquiry.



Everyone participated voluntarily either person-to-person in room 215 of Brown, 002 of Carmichael, or remotely through the professional platform, Zoom. The collection process commenced November 5, 2023, and ended December 5, 2023. Each interview was extremely confidential and recorded through the audio and video tools of Zoom. On average each session lasted between fifteen and thirty minutes. The interviewer asked ten preselected questions which are listed in this chapter as well as chapter three. All participants willingly answered the questions without hesitation or trouble.

The data for this study came solely from UNCG students. Initially, the dissertation was intended only for Media Studies students who were juniors and seniors in the program. However, the IRB department at UNCG asked the author to include all departments. The two most prominent collections of students came from Psychology and Media Studies.

All students volunteered for this study. They were evaluated beforehand via email to make sure the project requirements were attained. The research requirements were as follows: (a) all students must be American, (b) all students must be between 19 and 26 years old, and (c) all students must operate at least one social platform no less than three times a week. Again, forty-five students participated in the study. The subjects differed in gender, ethnicity, age, and socioeconomic status. Exact percentages are listed in this section as well as the table section located earlier in the dissertation.

### **Participants**

People who were between the ages of 19 and 26 were the target of this query. The group was selected because they are the largest users of digital media (Pfeil et al., 2008). Additionally, this age range is the most affected and connected to digital media. Also, this class of participants

has a significant connection with their relatives predominantly because of digital advancement (Jensen et al., 2021).

Even though the participants differed in age, ethnicity, gender, and academic track, all were extremely proficient in the realm of media. All students possessed high levels of knowledge in the regions of marketing, video editing, video production, copywriting, newswriting, storyboarding, media ethics, social media management, and human relationships. Also, a substantial portion of the participants were bilingual as well as first-generation college students (H.Vaughan, personal communication, April 30, 2021). These participants are a part of the college of Arts and Sciences, which is the biggest college on campus at UNCG (H.Vaughan, personal communication, July 11, 2023).

It is important to remember when reviewing the data from this study that UNCG is made of women mostly (67 percent) (H.Vaughan, personal communication, June 22, 2023). Nearly one hundred percent of UNCG pupils are North Carolinians with more than seventy-five percent attending classes face-to-face. UNCG has an extremely diverse student body. Forty percent of students are white while nearly thirty percent are black. Nearly fifteen percent are Hispanic in origin. The remaining fifteen percent is made up of students who are Native American, Native Hawaiian, Asian, and Biracial. While all the students reside permanently in the United States, not all live in or are from North Carolina. However, the majority do claim North Carolina as their point of origin. All students in the study were between 19 and 26 years of age and identified as either male or female.

### **Research Questions Findings**

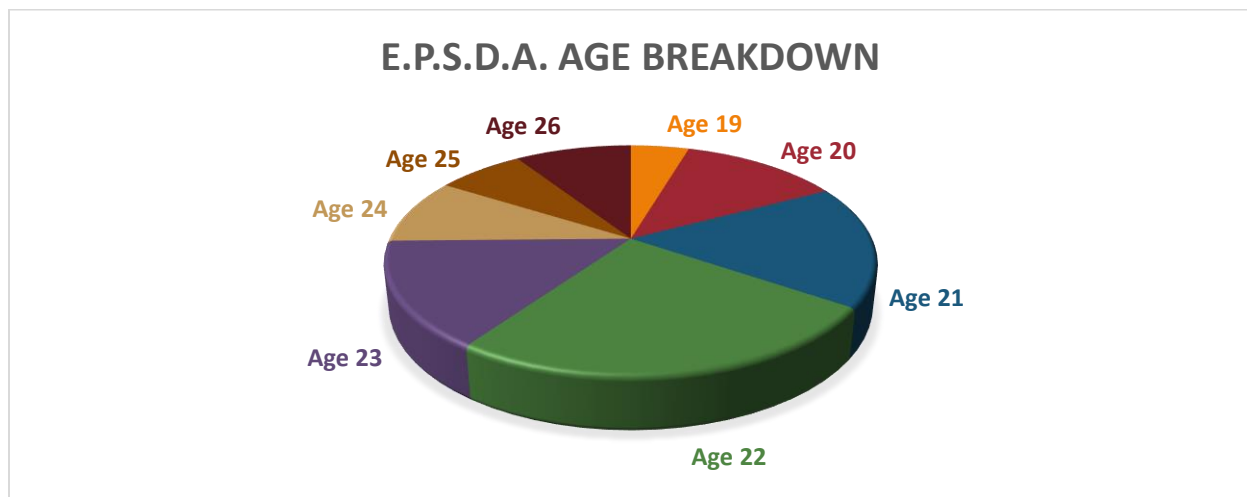
The purpose of this study was to determine if *digital parental supplementation* was possible through the application of digital media. It has been proven that *traditional parental*

*supplementation* is beneficial for children who do not have positive mothers or fathers in their lives. Exploration into the effects of *digital parental supplementation* are minimal. For this reason, examination was launched into the theory of FCP as well as in its correlation with digital parental supplementation.

### ***Participants***

Diversity was a common theme among participants in this query. Participants displayed variance in age, communication pattern, digital media usage, ethnicity, gender, point of origin, household structure and socio-cultural background. Out of forty-five students, the most prominent age groups represented were twenty-one through twenty-three. For a complete breakdown on the generation span review figure 4A listed below.

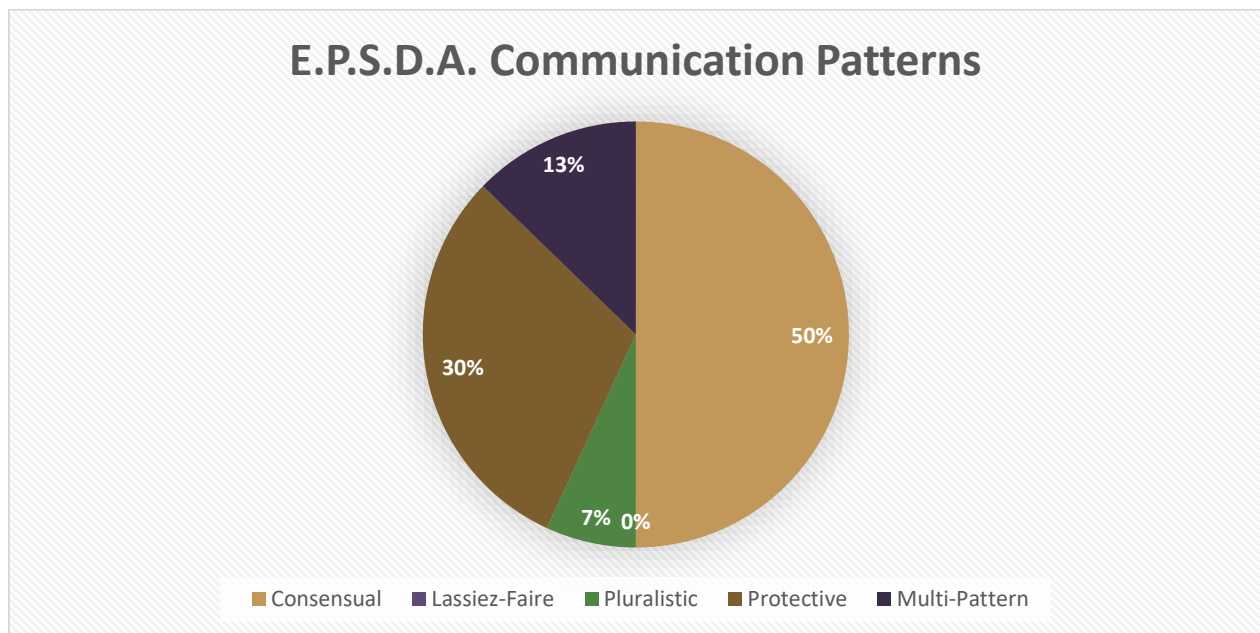
**Figure 4A: Research Age Breakdown**



The family communication patterns featured variance as well. Because of question number two, the interviewer was able to find out directly which communication pattern the participant was linked with. While the *consensual* pattern dominated the study, *pluralistic*, *protective* and multi-pattern were also showcased. The only communication style not evenly represented in this study was *laissez-faire*. *Laissez-faire* only surfaced in the multi-

communication design discussion, never on its own. It is important to note there was a distinct pattern with participant responses, after question number two. Nearly 75 percent of the study participants answered questions seven through ten similarly to others who identified with the same communication pattern. Therefore, their answer to question number two predicted their responses to questions seven through ten, almost 75 percent of the time.

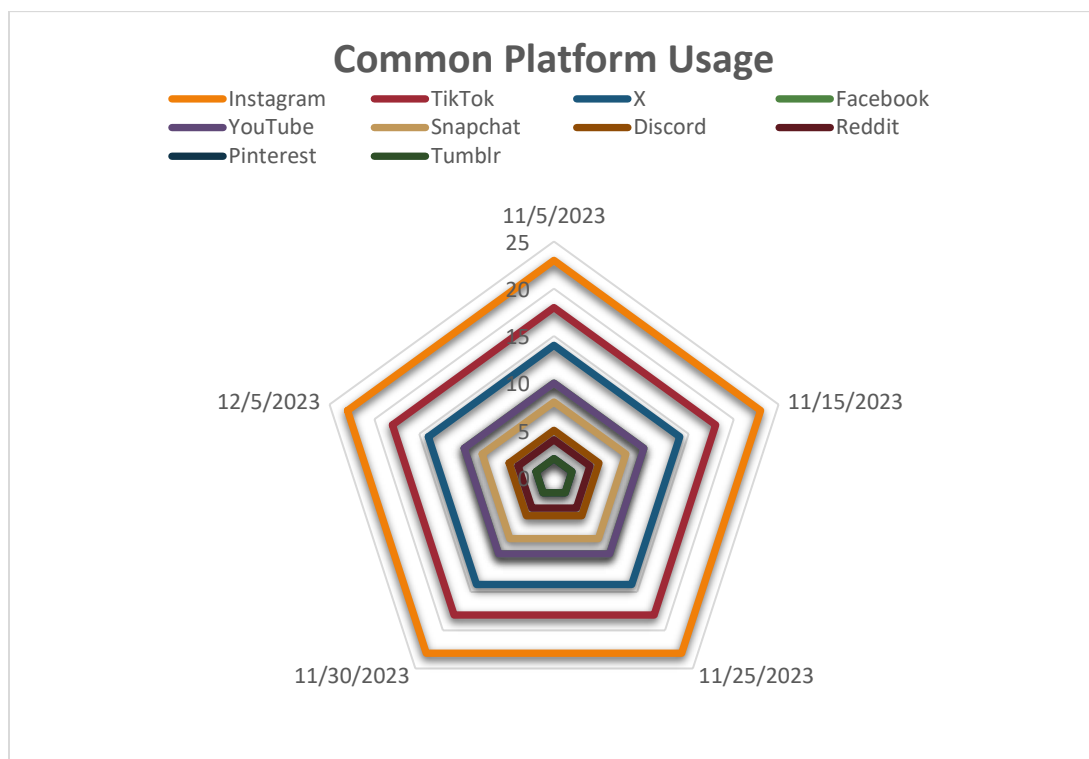
**Figure 4B: Research Communication Pattern Summation**



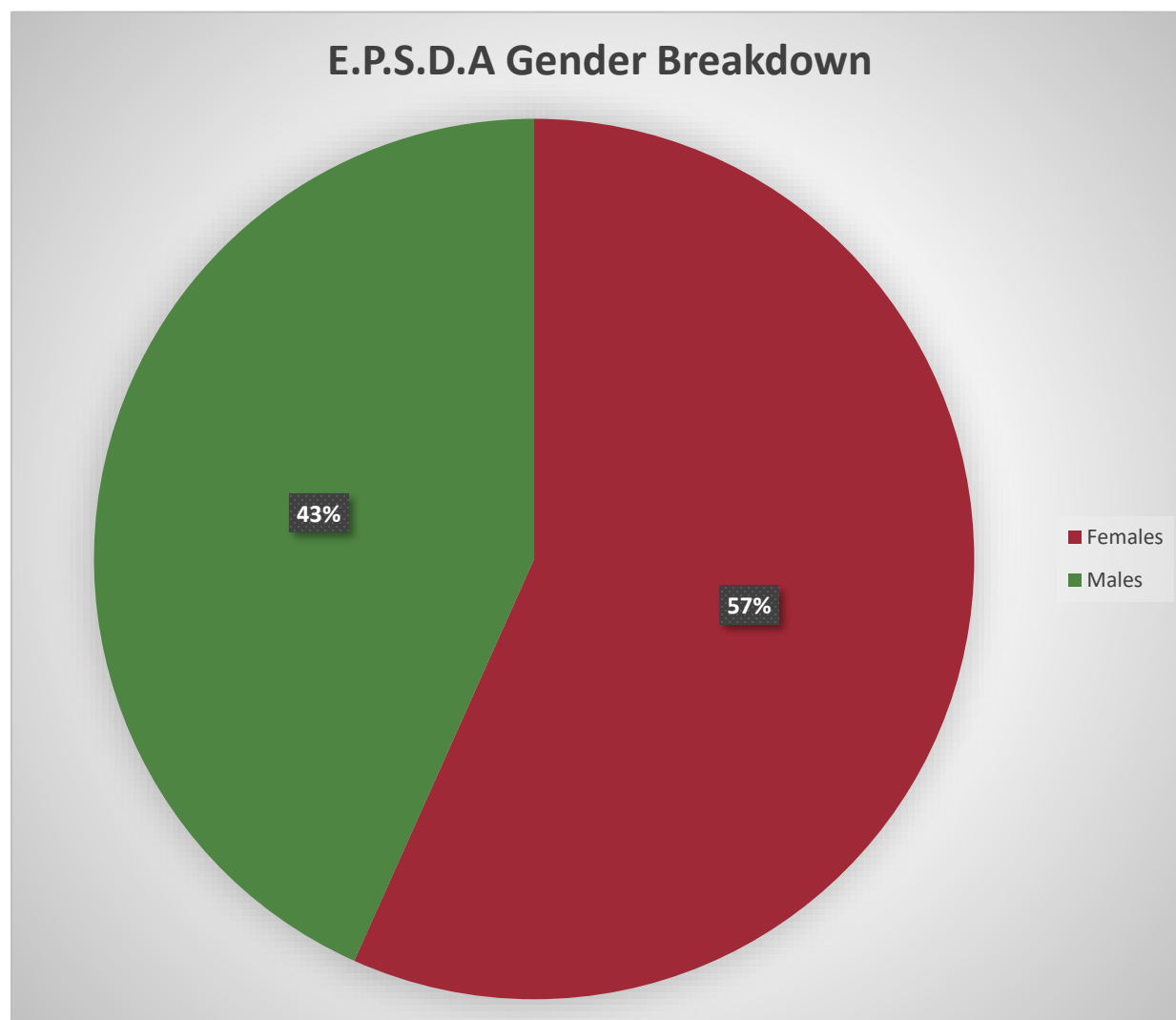
To participate in the study, students were required to operate platforms on social media at least three times a week. However, one hundred percent admitted to using at least one platform daily. While usage did not fluctuate, the platform of choice did. Most participants networked on Instagram, TikTok, and X. Other online outlets such as Discord, Facebook, Pinterest, Reddit, Snapchat, Tumblr, and YouTube were mentioned too. The numeric value or popularity of each site is listed in Figure 4C. Instagram was the most used social network by this age range. TikTok finished second with X in third. The sample group claimed that Instagram is popular for image sharing and keeping up with friends, while TikTok is used for humor or education about a topic.

According to study participants, X is their primary resource for news (H.Vaughan, personal communication, November 5, 2024). However, study participants also view Discord and Reddit as news sources. In this study, it is important to note that only males felt that way about those platforms. Facebook and YouTube are considered education resources or places to view content in longform. Even though Pinterest, Snapchat, and Tumblr are waning in popularity, members of this study still visit them to keep up with friends or for creative inspiration.

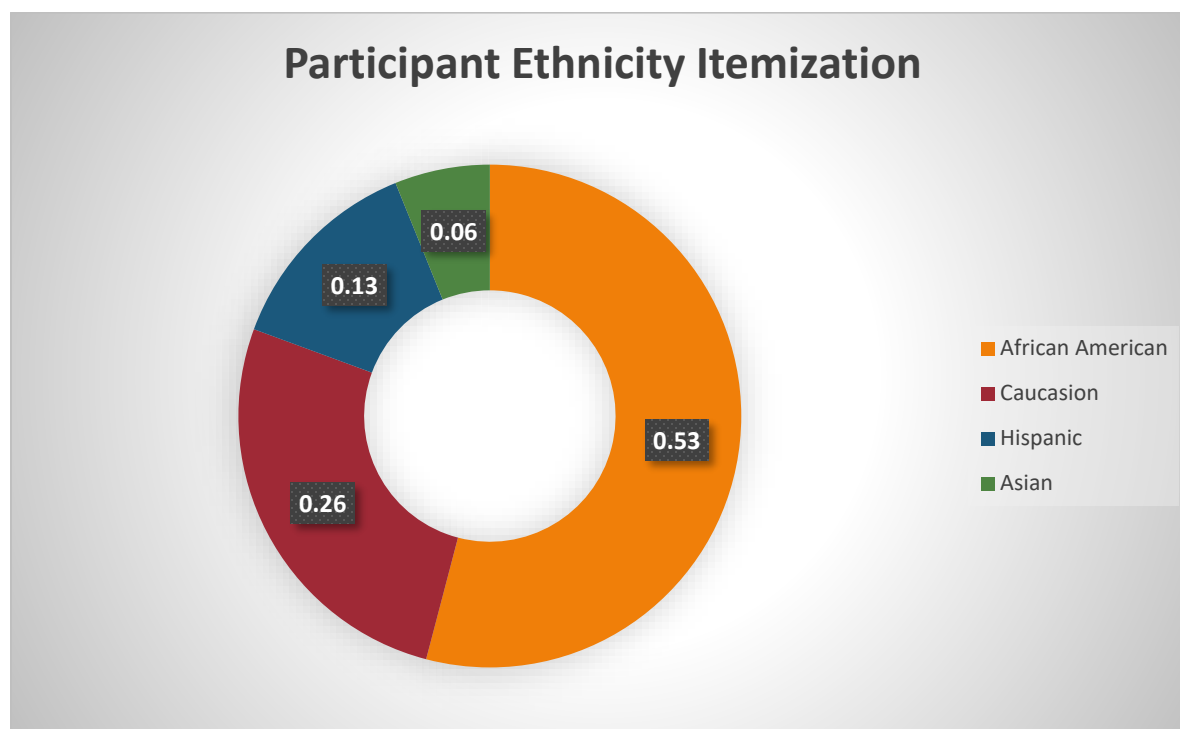
**Figure 4C: Common Platform Usage**



Another key difference noticed in the study involved gender. In the sample group, nearly sixty percent of the population was female. A little over forty percent was male. These figures were not unusual since UNCG's member base is mostly women (H.Vaughan, personal communication, April 30, 2018).

**Figure 4E: Research Gender Breakdown**

UNCG possesses a very ethnically varied student body (UNC Greensboro, 2024). Forty percent of the university is Caucasian in background (UNC Greensboro, 2024). Thirty percent of the respondents are from African American descent, fifteen percent is Hispanic, and fifteen percent contains a mix of Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, Asians, and Biracial (UNC Greensboro, 2024). The research sample conveyed a similar spread. The participant ethnic itemization is found in figure 4F. There was also a significant trend discovered regarding communication patterns, ethnicity, and gender. In figures 4G and 4H, these commonalities are highlighted for further inspection.

**Figure 4F: Participant Ethnicity Itemization**

The biggest highlights include a correlation between African American households and Consensual as well as Protective communication styles. This conclusion partially supports earlier discussion mentioned by Cooksey and Fondell (1996, p. 15). Cooksey and Fondell believed that African American fathers are more apt to talk with their children than other ethnicities. The result also supports the narrative that Black homes focus more on obedience. Even though the project author did not find a peer reviewed source to support this hypothesis, over half of the African American participants (both female and male) stated this during their interviews. Cooksey and Fondell also discussed relationships regarding White fathers and Hispanic dads. Their research declared that White fathers and Hispanic dads build relationships at the dinner table. However, White fathers are not as prone to strike up conversation. This research supported their conclusions in White females but not in White males. The White male participants skewed higher in communication and lower in obedience than their female counterparts. Even though

Asians were not mentioned in the Cooksey and Fondell study, in this review their families only presented as consensual.

Figure 4G: Ethnic Female Communication Patterns

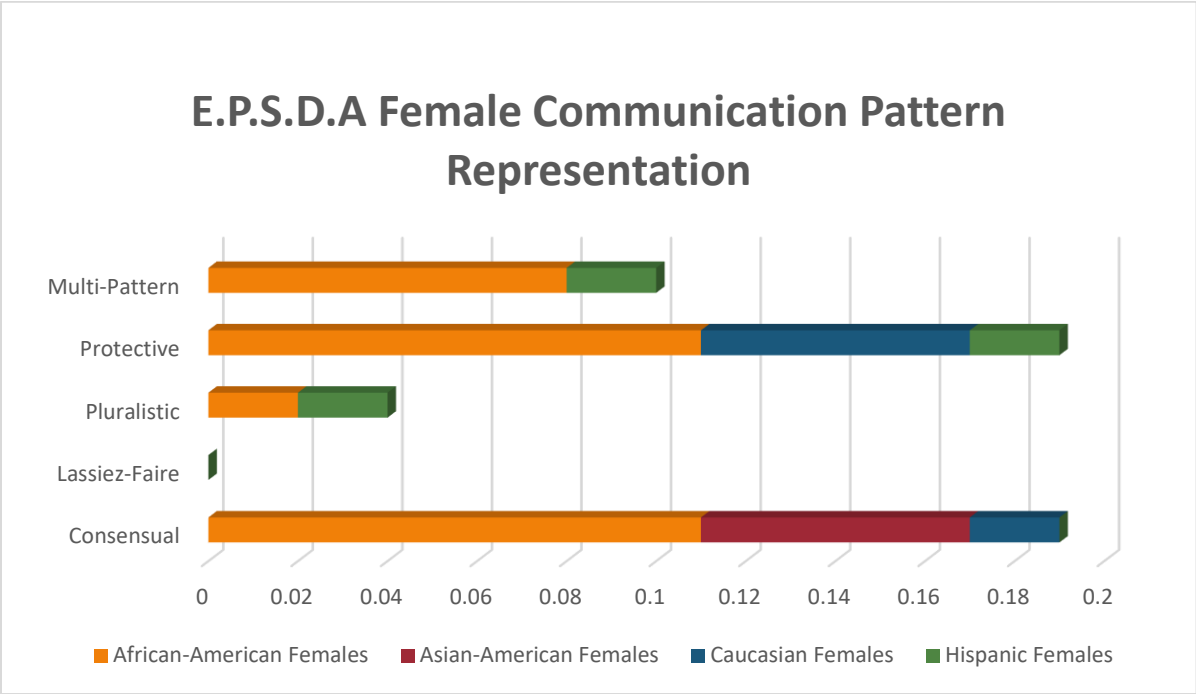
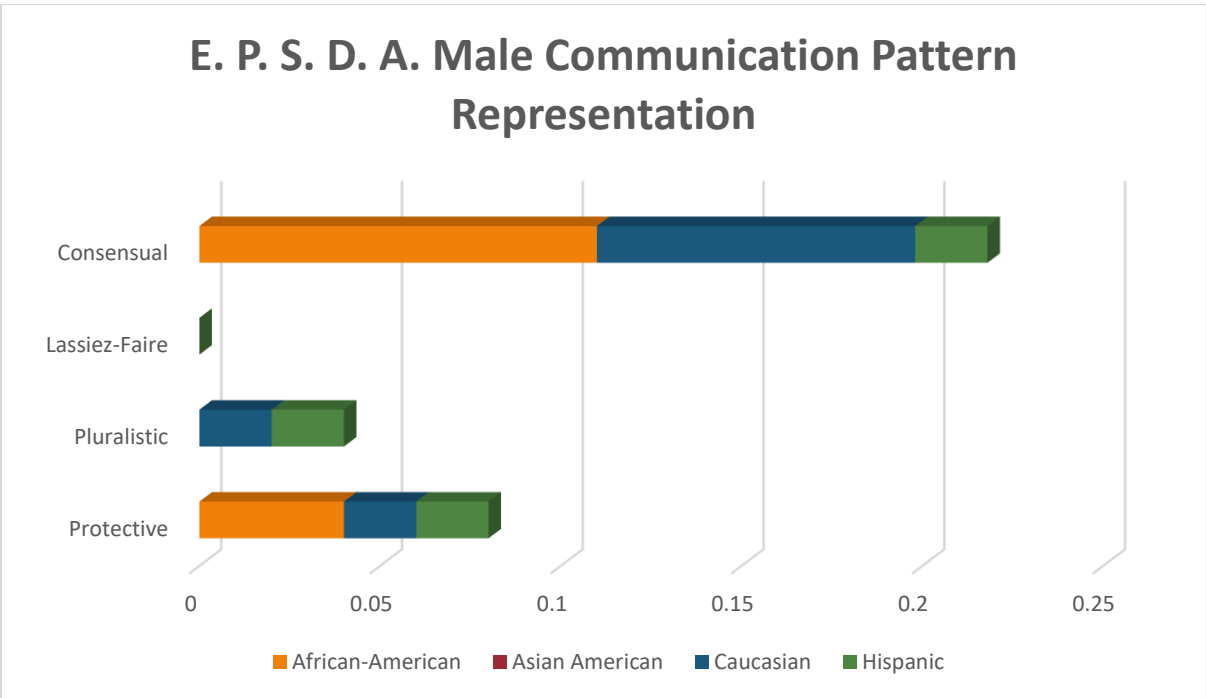


Figure 4H: Ethnic Male Communication Patterns

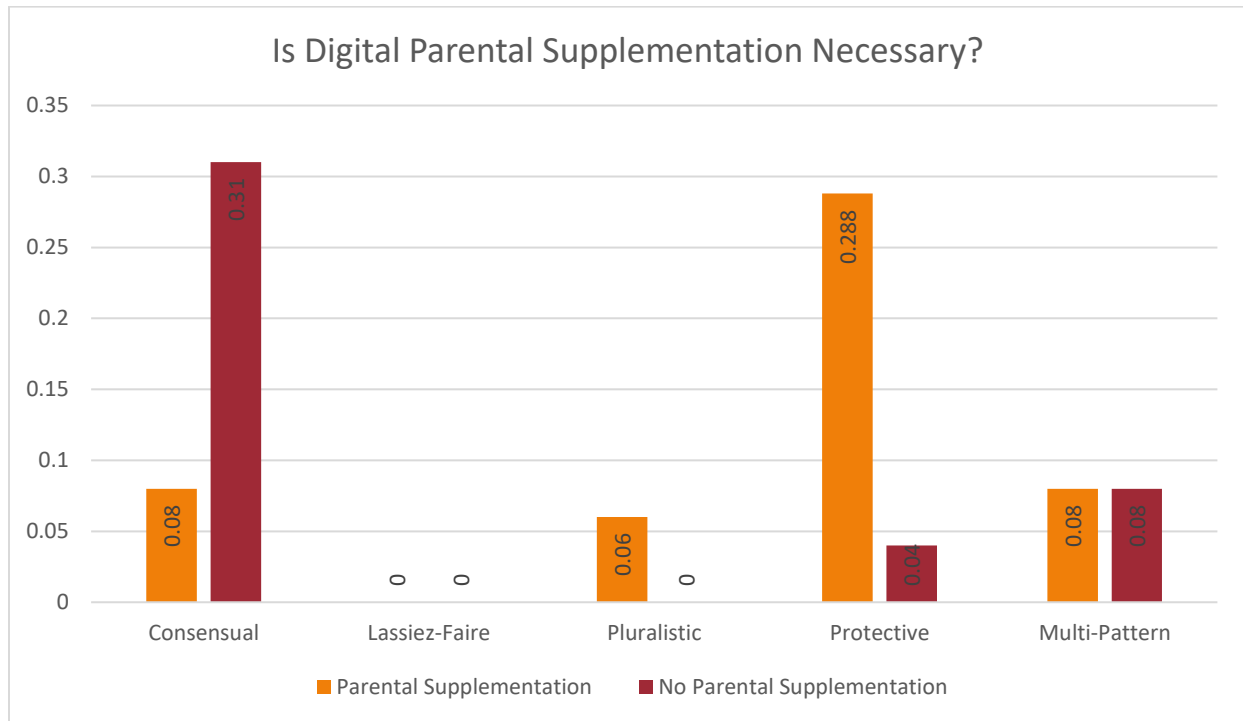




Even though the sample group displayed significant variance, there were many similarities uncovered too, especially regarding question number one. The inquiry asked students what an ideal parent represented. In general, all participants repeated the same basic phrases: (a) parents give guidance, (b) parents provide protection, (c) parents are caretakers, (d) parents are supportive, (e) parents are mentors, (f) parents love unconditionally, (g) parents are dependable and (h) parents are stable. Additionally, the interviewer recorded extra routine words like leader, compassionate, employed, happy, biological, nurturer, teacher, responsible, and authoritative. These expressions were compiled together to make up the word cloud in figure 4I.

One hundred percent of the participants answered question one immediately without any hesitation. Question two as well as four and six tended to stimulate slight pauses in the students. However, question one never caused any trouble. Even when the students alluded to challenging home environments, they provided a timely response to the first inquiry. According to Durante et al. (2022), these responses are indicative behaviors of truth-tellers. Durante et al. (2022) claimed that forensic interviewers can discern a child's level of truthfulness by their word choice and body language. In fact, body language discernment is more useful than linguistic analysis.



**Figure 4J: Digital Parental Supplementation Status**

### Data Visualizations

**Chart Selection.** *Visualization* is one of the most important parts of any research study. According to Kirk (2019) *data visualization* is the visual depiction and demonstration of brilliance. The display is overrun with creativity (Moriarty, 2002) and oozing three key ingredients: (a) *perceiving*, (b) *interpreting*, and (c) *comprehending* (Kirk, 2019). *Perceiving* is associated with comprehension. *Interpreting* converts the data into measurable means while *comprehending* collectively ensures the audience gets it.

Data visualization is usually a complex process that starts with the inspection of a specific intel (Ward et al., 2015). Munzner (2014) believed the application began by inspecting the *semantics* and was followed by information *categorization*. According to Munzner, there are five main ways to group information: (a) *items*, (b) *attributes*, (c) *links*, (d) *positions*, and (e) *grids*. An *item* is a definite thing in a file like a noun, whereas an *attribute* is an amount that

cannot be tabulated, repeated, or documented. A *link* produces an intersection between an item and something else. A *grid* impacts the sampling approach while the *position* administers terrestrial elements. As soon as these facts are determined, the *dataset* is chosen which helps the project creator decide how to visually display the information. Munzner (2014) labeled a dataset to regulate knowledge. The primary types of datasets are listed as follows: *tables*, *networks*, *fields*, and *geometry*. *Tables* possess rows and columns. *Networks* showcase correlations among nouns. *Fields* contain specific clear-cut characteristics and *geometry* suggests the basics about the design.

A *network* is the best form of representation for the data within this review. Inside a network, investigators uncover *nodes* and *links* (Munzner, 2014). *Nodes* are the pieces within a dataset while *links* highlight the connections amongst the items. Affiliations exist in many ways. They can be complicated, basic, full, indisputable, or disputable (Ward et al., 2015). Networks contain many approaches to spotlighting connections. *Hierarchies*, *space-filling*, *non-space filling*, and *graphs* are just a few of the techniques frequently applied. As soon as the visualization is selected- hue, information, design, and copy portrayal are administered (Munzner, 2014; Ward et al., 2015). Networks are represented in figures 4A through 4I.

**Information Flow.** In *data visualizations* the flow of intelligence is critical. The flow forms the audit of a research study. Flow is helpful in recognizing the core principles of an investigation (Saket et al., 2015). Flow is also important in wiping out visual chaos and minimizing repetition. In this study, the flow of information focuses on *family communication patterns theory* (FCP) (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002) and whether digital parental supplementation is possible. These concepts are conveyed in various figures throughout this chapter using designs that move from top to bottom. Bold hues are implemented to represent the

degree of influence and accentuate awareness (Kirk, 2019). Traditional eye movement is required to visually digest the visualizations. In all the representations ocular development goes from left to right. The data is highlighted in figures and copies.

**Figure 4K: E.P.S.D.A Communication Patterns**

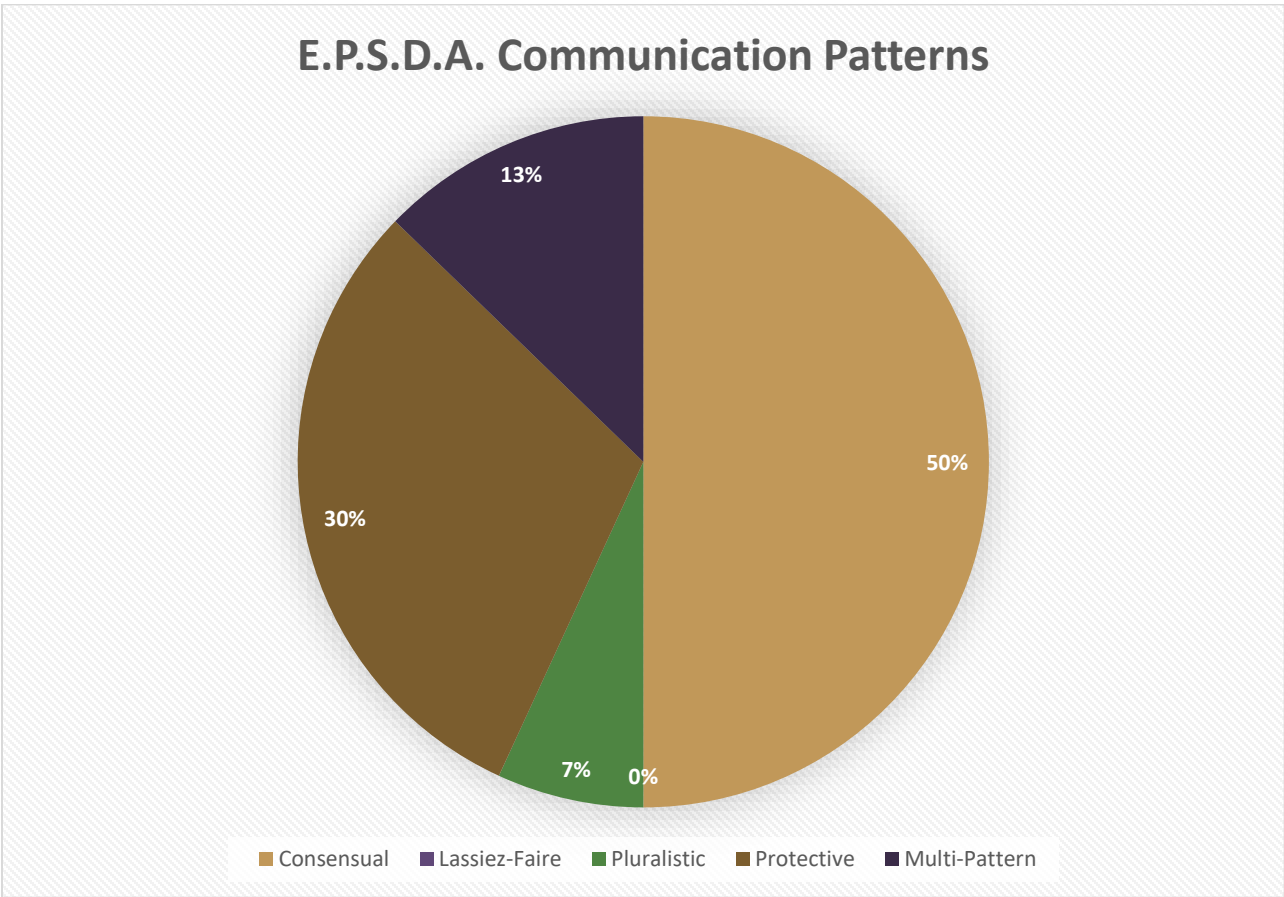


Figure 4L: E.P.S.D.A Multi-Communication Pattern Breakdown

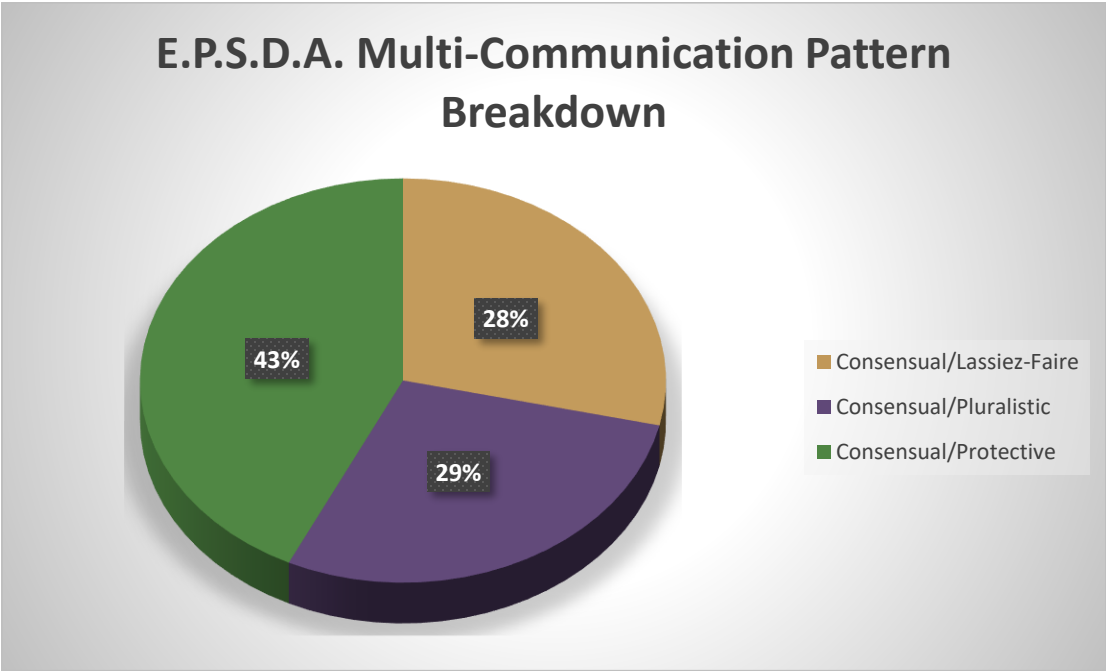
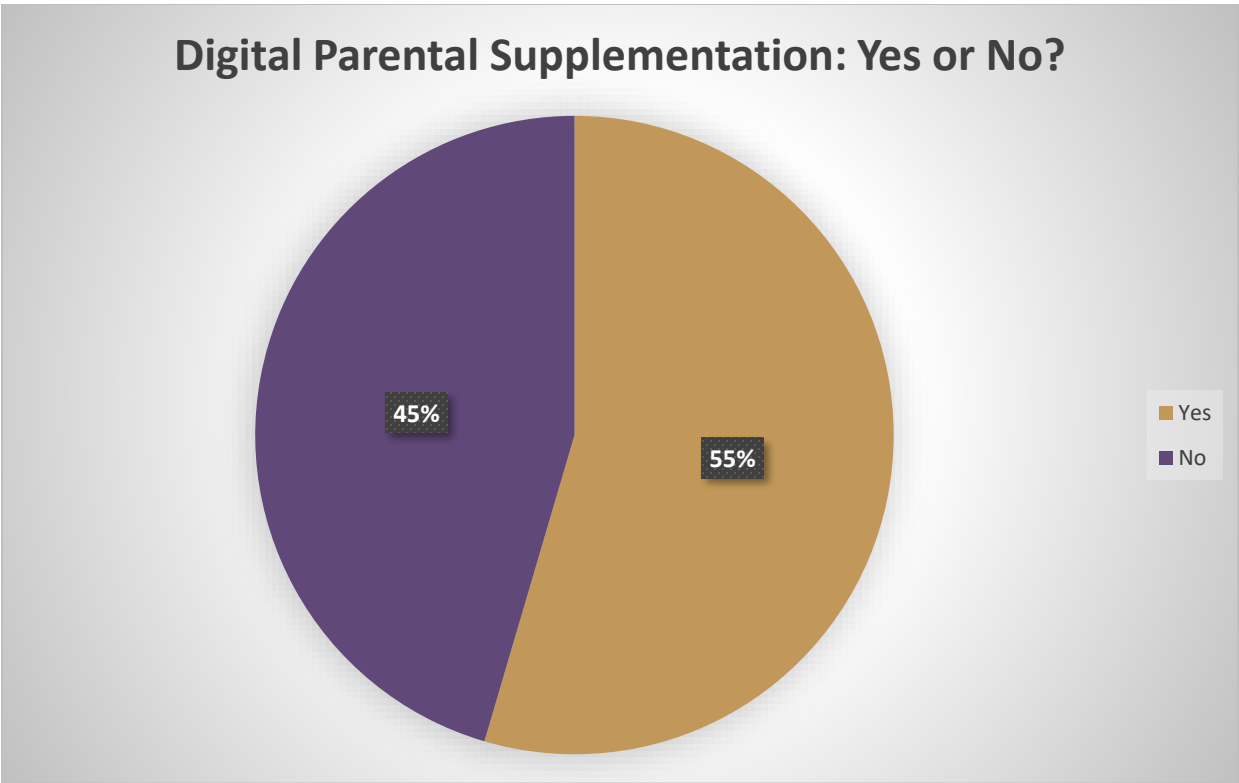


Figure 4M: Digital Parental Supplementation



## Summary

The reason behind this study was to learn whether parental supplementation was possible through digital application. Although it is certain that traditional parental supplementation helps children, it was previously unclear if the same is possible through technology, yet the findings in this review suggest it is possible. The results of this investigation concluded that the internet is considered (by this population of Generation Z participants) to be a dependable member of the family. Currently, people between the ages of 19 and 26 are using digital media to navigate life in some capacity. Specifically, this study detected a correlation between their family communication pattern and how much cyber-soothing occurred. Study participants who grew up in households that implemented prominent levels of communication did not use the internet for digital parental supplementation. However, participants who lived in homes with low amounts of communication were more likely to substitute with cyber therapy. Overall, study participants determined that digital parental supplementation is necessary and extremely helpful for children living in low communication level families. Ironically, participants who grew up in a unit with multiple communication patterns were not sure if digital parental supplementation is critical.

In addition to the conclusion that digital parental supplementation is possible, this chapter also analyzed the methodology and research design behind the study. The core principles were built upon *family communication patterns theory* (FCP). The study discussed foundational theories as well as future exploration. These endeavors clearly guide the reader to outcomes highlighting the need for digital parental

supplementation. The results in this query also implicate the internet is a real member of the family, whether wanted or unwanted.



## Chapter 5: Discussion

### Overview

*Digital parental supplementation*, in this study, is thought of as the integration of digital communication to replace a parent or guardian. In this chapter, discussion regarding the results of the study will take place. In the previous chapter it was determined that *digital parental supplementation* is necessary. It was also concluded that *digital parental supplementation* is associated with homes that administer low levels of communication. Conversation in this chapter analyzes potential areas of future research and a summation of the study's findings.

### Summary of the Findings

The basis for this study was to determine if parental supplementation was achievable through digital application. While the benefits of traditional parental supplementation for children are clear it was unknown if similar capabilities existed through digital media. However, the findings in this review suggested they are. The outcome of this study revealed several key conclusions. First, the internet is viewed by participants interviewed for this study as a suitable family member of American households. Second, this analysis uncovered a connection between the family communication style of each participant and cyber-soothing. This connection emerged in individuals between the ages of 19 and 26 who are applying digital media to their lives in some manner. Third, research participants who experienced considerable amounts of family communication did not seek out the internet for familial support or supplementation. Fourth, participants who received less communication in the home were more apt to seek digital parental supplementation. In general, study participants

concluded that digital parental supplementation is vital and beneficial for children living in low communication level households.

Additionally, the methodology and findings of this study were linked to *family communication patterns* theory (FCP). Initially, the foundation of the study was centered around FCP. Then later the focus progressed to correlations between participants in consensual and pluralistic homes versus those in protective or laissez-faire households. Together these observations displayed the necessity for *digital parental supplementation*. The findings in this analysis also implicated the internet is a pseudo-family member, a concept original to this study. While research conducted by Sharifian & Zahodne (2021) and Bennett et al. (2020) discussed the usage of media for social supplementation, no other research was analyzed in which the participants acknowledged the internet as a pseudo-family member.

## **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to learn if parental supplementation was possible through digital application. While *traditional parental supplementation* was clearly positive for children (Person et al., 2021), it was unclear if the same occurred through the usage of digital media. For this reason, it was important to research remote communication and the possibilities further. To determine if digital media was indeed a valid substitute the following questions were investigated.

- 1.) **RQ1:** How is digital parental supplementation present in the four family types of the FCP framework?
- 2.) **RQ2:** How is digital media being substituted as an immediate family member to supplement shortcomings in the home?

These questions were implemented because they analyzed today's dependence on digital media in the American household in addition to the potential relationship between FCP and *digital parental supplementation*.

The findings of this study indicated *digital parental supplementation* was possible. Through a qualitative, semi-structured interview approach, the examiner discovered *digital parental supplementation* was already happening, specifically in the lives of those who participated in the research. While some of the participants surfed the internet more than their peers, collectively they all agreed *digital parental supplementation* was helpful. The participants also all agreed it should be accessible for children who live in low communication level homes.

Other scholars affirm the findings of this study. Even though Biagianti et al. (2018), Wenig and Janetzke (2022), and Zheng et al. did not focus on *digital parental supplementation*, their work acknowledged its existence throughout. Biagianti et al. (2018) conveyed the concept through the effects of social media. Wenig and Janetzke (2022) as well as Zheng et al. (2022) focused on the social support aspects. These acknowledgements encourage future exploration of this topic.

## **Implications**

In this study, several implications emerged that affected both the methodological and practical elements. The methodological aspects contained information regarding changes to the foundation of *family communication patterns* theory (Koerner et al., 2017). These components focused on sibling differences and pattern metamorphosis. The practical aspect involved an unexpected outcome rooted in African American homes. These findings are laid out in the following sections.

***Methodological***

For this study, a qualitative semi-structured interview approach was selected, due to the sensitive subject matter of the study. Also, qualitative studies allowed for scholarship to materialize quickly in an organized manner. Additionally, a qualitative study helped generate original information about the subject matter, which for this study worked exceptionally well. This methodology and design were considered predictive, meaning the potential outcomes were discussed in depth and their likelihood pondered ahead of time. Plus, the researcher offered reasoning for the findings in the discussion section as well as the future queries portions.

**Approach Process.** In this study, a qualitative approach was beneficial because of the cross-cultural nature of the participants. This study contained a blend of Black people, Whites, Hispanics, and Asians. Although the participants were different culturally, they all shared unity in being members of Generation Z (Pew Research Center, 2022) and students of UNCG. Goulding (2005) said this type of approach was one of the best techniques to truly capture a group's mental, physical, and social status. A qualitative approach also allowed researchers an authentic glimpse into a specific realm, free of filters or alienation (Borman et al., 1986).

**Future Queries.** Even though the qualitative path for this study was extremely successful, future researchers should consider mixed methodological endeavors. Generally, scholars who studied or combined FCP (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006) with technological research incorporated mixed methodological (Saud et al., 2020). A mixed methodological approach makes the study more well-rounded (Rosland et al., 2012) and aligns better with previous investigations (Jung & Lee, 2017). Mixed methodology was not selected for this study because of time and numerical concerns. Since the researcher did not have an extended period to collect data, the qualitative approach fit better into the designated timeframe. A lengthier study

of four to six months should be conducted. Not only should the study interview people who range in age from 19 to 26 (Pfeil et al., 2008) but also, it should observe individuals in and outside of college. Also, a study with more time and greater resources should analyze people from all over the United States, not just the south. Also, more investigators are necessary to manage the amount of data collected from a mixed methods study.

**Sibling Variance.** In this study one pair of siblings was interviewed. The siblings were interviewed at various times and at separate locations. However, their answers were identical yet extremely varied in nature. These tendencies might be a beautiful place for future research, specifically in sibling communication and multi pattern family communication. For example, both siblings selected a consensual home environment (Koerner et al., 2017) and discussed their family in the same capacity as the other but the likenesses stopped there. After question two, the older sibling preferred face-to-face interaction while the younger preferred online interaction. One felt comfortable discussing life subjects with their parents, yet the other desired *digital parental supplementation* instead. The shift was abnormal for consensual children. According to Jiao (2021), children in high communication homes tend to have open relationships with their parents. In this study, this was not the case with the younger sibling. Further investigation is necessary to determine if this was a fluke, individual difference, or a true area of future exploration. Also, it is important to investigate any relationship between sibling birth order and family communication patterns.

Variance in family communication patterns is an interesting topic of debate amongst FCP scholars. Initially, Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) thought there was only one pattern prevalent per home; however, information from scholars such as LaFreniere (2020), Marks et al.

(2009), and Koerner et al. (2017) now proclaim there can be multiple patterns per home. Koerner et al. (2017) even acknowledged changes between parents and children. Whereas Marks et al. (2009) discovered variance in communication patterns among siblings. There is even evidence to support that family communication patterns change as the relatives age (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). Again, research in this study supported some of these concepts. Many participants in this study discussed the evolution of their communication with their parents. They also acknowledged that they communicated differently with their parents than their siblings. Additionally, study participants recognized varied conversation styles with their mother more so than their father, which aligns with previous research (Marks et al., 2009).

Future exploration could involve pattern change as well as further examination into sibling differences including the effect of birth order. It would be interesting to determine what or who (I.e., mom or dad) created each family's pattern. Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) initially thought the parents and their marital status determine the family communication pattern. However, discussions in this study point more towards the child or children. It would be interesting to know more about the effects of a child's individualism.

Multi-communication pattern homes made up nearly fifteen percent of the participant basis, in this study. African American households featured more design variance than any other ethnicity. While there is not any FCP previous data to support this outcome, there is data to support the existence of multiple communication patterns in the same family (Koerner et al., 2017). In fact, Koerner (Koerner et al., 2017) and Fitzpatrick (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990) have both deviated from their original conclusions that one pattern exists per household. Scholars like LaFreniere (2020) have furthered their hypotheses, demanding more concept development. The development includes the analysis of non-biological family members, rather than just blood

relatives. Since the average American household, as of 2020, contains at least one, if not multiple, non-biological family members, LaFreniere felt these modifications reflected a more modern American household (LaFreniere, 2020).

**Pattern Metamorphosis.** Disparity in communication patterns between relatives is a trending topic in research about FCP. Marks et al. (2009) as well as LaFreniere (2020) noticed a correlation between prominent levels of conversation in the home and mothers. Fathers are commonly associated with elevated levels of obedience and less communication. While Marks et al. (2009) attributed this behavior to gender authority dispersion, in this study, participants linked it to availability. In this research, most participants claimed their mother was around more than their father.

Age was also a factor in pattern metamorphosis. Specifically, in this study many participants mentioned a style change in communication behaviors with their parents. It is important to note that this trend was noticed across all households (I.e., consensual, pluralistic, protective, and laissez-faire). Participants in this study linked metamorphosis to maturity. Nearly 75 percent associated the switch with the natural aging process whereas 25 percent credited the change to fear dissipation. Adulthood gave them a certain confidence to stand up or openly disagree with their parent's perspectives or requests. These findings support research conducted by Neill and Coyne (2018).

At least three students who were connected to this investigation mentioned toxic family relationships. These relationships ended because of unexpected death. Additional discussion could analyze the effects of toxic connections as well as the impact of death. Rosland et al. (2012) discovered that family members tend to disassociate or lessen conversation when toxicity occurred. Rosland et al. (2012) also recorded disassociation or a change in family

communication when mothers, fathers, or siblings suffered chronic illness. None of the study participants linked sickness to their family conversation behaviors.

This analysis examined the value of *digital parental supplementation* and it's association particularly with family communication styles. *Digital parental supplementation* is the application of digital media to take the place of a mother or father. The substitution provides children with the opportunity to fill emotional, mental, and physical needs through the internet rather than through traditional person-to-person interaction. *Digital parental supplementation* can happen through social media, web searches, instant messaging, online groups, text messaging, and email but is not defined by or confined strictly to those areas.

### ***Practical***

The results of this study implicated parental supplementation is possible through *digital parental supplementation*. The findings also highlighted that participants in this study believed the internet to be a part of the American family. Additionally, this research uncovered a connection between study participants, their family communication pattern, and the level of cybersoothing. Participants who grew up in homes with low levels of family communication tended to use the internet more for *digital parental supplementation*. On the other hand, those who grew up in homes with prominent levels of family communication hardly used the internet or digital media at all to supplement. Research also revealed a need for *digital parental supplementation* and the benefits for children living in low communication environments.

Children drenched in obedience-based principles did not operate the same in adulthood as kids saturated in communication (Jiao, 2021). Jiao (2021) claimed children from conformity-oriented families dealt with anxiety as grown-ups. These individuals struggled maintaining



friendships and romantic relationships (Jensen et al., 2021) whereas children in high conversation homes did not battle the same issues. It is possible children from conformity-oriented homes (Reuter & Koerner, 2008) experience emotional, mental, and physical milestones (Wang, 2019) through *digital parental supplementation*.

Certain levels of communication are fundamental for children as they age (Wang, 2019). Sufficient levels are vital from birth to adulthood (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2019). Based upon information collected in this research process, families that maintain elevated levels of communication fall under either the *consensual* or *pluralistic* conversation styles (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Families that integrate important levels of conformity operate *protective* or *laissez-faire* communication patterns. Low communication homes tend to produce individuals who struggle emotionally, mentally, and physically (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2019). Through *digital parental supplementation*, it is possible this pattern could change.

**Obedience in Black Homes.** More than fifty percent of the participants in this study were African American. The protective communication style (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006) was the second most selected pattern among Black participants overall. The protective pattern shared the top spot with the consensual pattern (Koerner et al., 2017) among African American females and ranked second in Black males. These findings support discussion raised by Adams (2020).

**Cause.** According to Adams (2020) obedience is a measure of safety in most Black households. Ferguson (2018) agreed, citing a cloud of fear and inferiority that has subconsciously engulfed African Americans in the United States since the country's inception. Zaveri (2018) labeled the darkness structural racism. According to Zaveri (2018), racism has caused constant injustice and embarrassment for Black people over the years. To shield their children from these experiences, many African American families implemented the tool of

obedience to protect their children (Ferguson, 2018). This tool paired with respect is thought of as the key to preventing future black hardship (Patton, 2017).

Participants in this study alluded to similar home ideologies. Nearly 100 percent of the students who were in the protective group claimed they were told to do something because a parent said so. Nearly one hundred percent openly discussed the prominent level of conformity in their home environment, with little communication. Nearly 100 percent mentioned a high association between conformity and religion in their family units. Nearly 100 percent appeared frustrated or disgruntled when church or religion was mentioned in some capacity. Specifically participant number nine described his unwanted association with God like this, “My mom is super-duper churchy. So, I was like no, I’m not going to talk to my mom because this is going to go super far left.” Participant ten alluded to something similar about her grandmother. Participant ten described the grandmother using these words:

She was religious and like, being raised in a religious household, you know, you would have to abide by like the commandments. In the Bible. I thought always why I got to do this? She look at me, she's like you. You don't ask those questions, and she'd always say the little phrase “Curiosity killed the cat, so stop asking questions.”

**Effect.** Patton (2017) pointed out that in many African American homes it is perceived that disrespectful children and disobedient individuals are not only at risk for punishment from society but also from anxiety-ridden parents. In this study, participant thirteen confirmed Patton’s (2017) hypotheses. Participant thirteen stated that, “Culturally, a lot of families who are people of color or are specifically Black, it is very much so that children know their place and fit into a box. They don’t talk about things. Culturally, communication is much lower.” Sadly, Gershoff (2002) uncovered some startling revelations about this cultural practice. Gershoff’s

research revealed this type of parenting placed unachievable expectations on Black children, deafening their organic behavior and creativity, which unfortunately limited their overall success in life (Gershoff, 2002). Participant ten affirmed this practice while describing her experience:

I would always post stuff on social media. Like quotes and like text my friends and stuff a lot like on Snapchat, make videos and stuff just talking to them like I would express my emotions through them. And like sometimes, people would tell me in school like, “Why do you post a lot on social media like why do you? I was like, well, who do I express it to? I can’t express it. Yeah. You know, in my home.”

Also, Gershoff (2002) discovered this format generated harm in African American kids which evolved into aggressive behavior as grownups. Although none of the study participants in this analysis exhibited or discussed the onset of adult violence in their lives, at least three students mentioned emotional trauma because of it. In fact, participant ten said the following regarding digital parental supplementation:

I would prefer online because since growing up in that type of protective household, I wasn't allowed to show like my emotions and stuff like that, because my grandmother had to raise me. It kind of looked like if I was crying like she would always say there is nothing that I should be crying about it.

**Trends.** Despite ethnic influence, Adams (2020) linked elevated levels of obedience with American homes in general. Adams attributed the behavior to the local and federal government branches as well as the education system. According to Adams, in the United States, physical punishment is an accepted measure to ensure conformity. Zaveri (2018) concurred referencing the usage of school suspensions, expulsions, and police intercession in American institutions. While these attempts to regulate obedience are used for all types of students, Adams (2020)

shared they are unjustly focused on people of color more than other ethnicities (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

**Conflicts.** Even though research in this study provided great support, it also generated deep conflict. For example, Cooksey and Fondell (1996) supplied data claiming that African American fathers are more willing to talk with their children than other ethnicities. However, the participants in this study altered that claim. The prevalence of protective and multi-communication pattern participants in this study suggest alternate findings are possible.

### **Delimitations & Limitations**

The purpose of this study was to determine if *digital parental supplementation* was possible and if the internet is considered a pseudo-family member. The following research questions were considered to discover answers:

- 1.) **RQ1:** How is digital parental supplementation present in the four family types of the FCP framework?
- 2.) **RQ2:** How is digital media being substituted as an immediate family member to supplement shortcomings in the home?

These questions were integrated into the study because they analyzed society's dependence on digital media as well as the connection between FCP and *digital parental supplementation*.

### ***Setting***

Research in this study was gathered on the campus of UNCG. Forty-five students were interviewed. All participants were interviewed voluntarily either face-to-face or through Zoom. Each participant answered the same ten questions within a period of fifteen to thirty minutes. Each participant studied in either the Media Studies Department or the Psychology Department. All were evaluated beforehand to make sure they fit the research requirements. The requirements

for the study were (a) all students had to be American, (b) all students fell between ages 19 and 26, and (c) all students had to operate at least one social platform a minimum of three times a week.

### ***Participants***

Individuals between the ages of 19 and 26 were the focus of this study. They were chosen because this group uses digital media more than any other generation (Pfeil et al., 2008).

Also, people in this age range were selected because they possess a distinct connection with technology (Jensen et al., 2021). Additionally, a sizable portion of the participants were first generation college students as well as bilingual. They ranged in ethnicity and gender.

All participants were students at UNCG and either media majors or psychology majors. All participants possessed a prominent level of digital literacy. Despite the generation's knowledge of digital media (Jensen et al., 2021), this could be considered a limitation of the study. Their familiarity with digital media could slant their responses slightly in favor of *digital parental supplementation*. Also, it would be interesting to see if familiarity with a different communication medium changed the outcome of study.

### ***Additional limitations***

Although some researchers preach the benefits of an ethnographic study, others claim it introduces significant issues to the study. Scholars like Atkinson and Hammersley (1995) believed the qualitative approach was full of faulty techniques. Atkinson and Hammersley felt a lot of issues involved the investigator. The pair shared their concerns about the investigator's experience level—too much or too little could help or harm the study. Atkinson and Hammersley also voiced issues regarding the investigator's flexibility. Qualitative studies can require a great deal of flexibility (Creswell and Poth, 2018). However, too much could destroy

the study. In future investigations, a mixed methodological approach should be considered for more well-rounded findings.

### **Future Research**

The focus of this investigation was to acknowledge the existence of *digital parental supplementation* in addition to its association with family communication patterns. This analysis investigated the demand for digital media, which is often generated because of low communication levels in the home. Although this study focused on *digital parental supplementation*, the study discussed *traditional parental supplementation* as well. The differences and similarities were mentioned but not distinguished. Also, in this investigation, digital communication or media is defined but not limited to social media, surfing the web, email, text messaging, instant messaging, Facetime, and any other way to communicate.

Through qualitative study and ethnographic technique, a pair of fundamental concepts were developed. *Family communication modification* was built initially with *family communication supplementation* constructed next. *Family communication modification* focused on adjustments American families will integrate because of the analysis in this research. These people talk consistently in and out of the household, face-to-face or through digital media. Groups in this space relate to the *consensual* and *pluralistic* communication patterns developed by Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2006). Families that are classified as *protective* or *laissez-faire* will implement *family communication supplementation*. This concept will give guidance for kids who are living without beneficial parental advice or sufficient levels of conversation (Wang, 2019). *Family communication supplementation* will offer opportunities for emotional, mental, and physical requirements through digital media. Exploration into the development of *family communication modification* and *family communication supplementation* is necessary

for future research.

### ***Sibling Communication Patterns***

Variances between sibling communication patterns is a solid starting point for future research. Two siblings were interviewed for this study. Their responses sparked several original hypotheses and confirmed some others. Although the siblings were interviewed separately, they had some remarkably similar responses. Ironically, they also gave completely different answers about subject matter that ordinarily would be identical. Children in high communication level homes have an incredibly open relationship with their parents (Jiao, 2021). Jiao claimed these individuals talk in depth about varied subject matter to their mothers and fathers. Yet, in this study Jiao's claims held up with only one of the siblings, despite both affirming they lived in a consensual household (Koerner et al., 2017). To be clear, out of the two children who were living in the same consensual home environment, only one felt comfortable talking to their parents. The other preferred digital parental supplementation to face-to-face interaction. According to Jiao (2021), this behavior is unlikely.

In future sibling endeavors, the effects of individualism should be explored as well as the influence of schemas. Koerner et al. (2017) acknowledged that siblings can maintain different communication patterns with each other as well as their parents. Marks et al. (2009) concurred the children can even possess a different communication style per parent. However, limited research exists regarding the impact a child's personality has on the family discussion design.

While there is more research about schemas in FCP, there is minimal information regarding their impact on sibling communication variance. Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) claimed that schemas are memories. In their research, Koerner and Fitzpatrick found that family

members often based the way they communicated with one another on memories, good and bad. This behavior monopolized communication within the home (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). In this investigation, *schemas* were relevant because they may have determined what communication pattern study participants selected. However, they may also affect comfort level and whether one child shares with the parentals while the other does not.

Koerner and Schrodts (2014) explored a similar topic, but not entirely the same subject matter. Koerner and Schrodts focused on the impact obedience and communication had on family communication. The pair believed *conversation orientation* had greater influence overall. However, Schrodts et al. (2007) felt *schemas* (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002) impacted not only the behavior of children but also their self-esteem as well as mental health. Schrodts and Ledbetter (2007) analyzed more of the influence schemas have on parental conflict resolution.

### **Sibling Pattern Variance**

This study featured two siblings who acknowledged the same communication pattern in the home, yet they experienced different comfort levels with their parents. One child felt comfortable sharing openly and readily seeking advice from his parents while the other child preferred digital parental supplementation instead. According to Jiao (2021), such a preference is unusual. Typically, consensual (Koerner et al., 2017) children enjoy speaking with their parents about anything and everything. However, Miczo et al. (2021) believed sibling variances occurred for two reasons: hierarchy and conflict. When siblings are growing up and feeling out their level of power, they often use the communication structure or tactics modeled by their parents (Buehler et al., 2022). Yet as they age and develop their own conversation techniques, they tend to form their own way of speaking with their parents and their sisters or brothers (Miczo et al., 2021).



Research conducted by Miczo et al. (2021) outlined the role schemas truly have in sibling pattern variance. According to Miczo et al. (2021) schemas affected how helpful and transparent siblings are towards one another. Additionally, their behavior stemmed from the example set by the parents (Buehler et al., 2022). If the parents displayed a kind, supportive yet autonomous nature towards one another and the children, the siblings acted accordingly. However, if the parents encouraged a dependent or sheltered home environment, sibling rivalry as well as competition was likely common internally (Miczo et al., 2021). Golish and Caughlin (2002) noted this communication style may create more harm than good. This conversation design bred negative behaviors that evolved into adulthood.

Future research should investigate the correlations between family schemas and sibling schemas. Also, investigators should check into the impact schemas have on individualism. Researchers should monitor the effects schemas have on sibling communication variance. Plus, the weight individual schemas administer onto the overall communication pattern should be explored.

### ***Multi-Patterns Presence***

In this study, nearly fifteen percent of the participants claimed they lived in a multi-pattern household. This number is expected to rise (LaFreniere, 2020) as researchers begin specifically looking for multiple communication patterns within the home. Since Koerner and Fitzpatrick (Koerner et al., 2017) publicly acknowledged the existence of many communication patterns in one home, research about the theory change has started to evolve. Initially, Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) believed only one communication pattern presented in each family. Researchers such as LaFreniere (2020) have explored Koerner and Fitzpatrick's hypotheses (Koerner et al., 2017), confirming the existence of multiple patterns inside the family. Lee and

Dworkin (2023) agreed highlighting four different patterns at once inside the same family. Not only did Lee and Dworkin identify multiple communication patterns between the parents and children, but also they discovered variances among the family members and their friends.

While Lee and Dworkin (2023) did not find anything alarming regarding gender and family communication patterns, they did detect slight differences involving the amount of conversation. Future research involving multiple communication patterns should explore variances involving gender. Scholars should inquire about talk time, with hopes of finding some kind of correlation between the two. Additionally, investigators should research the relationships between friends and family members. It would be prudent to know if there is a form of *traditional parental supplementation* that emerges through a friend group rather than a public figure such as a teacher or pastor.

### ***Split Home Communication***

Communication patterns in split homes was a prevalent topic in this study. Over fifteen percent of the students grew up in or came from a split household, meaning their biological parents were not together. In these households the common communication combination tended to be either *consensual/laissez-faire* or *consensual/protective*. Despite Cooksey and Fondell 's (1996) research about mothers and fathers, both parents displayed absenteeism (Zhang, 2014). For this reason, future research could not be tied to absent fathers or solely absent mothers. Both guardians would need to be studied equally.

Lee and Dworkin (2022) uncovered a connection between marital status and positive communication patterns. The pair noticed if parents were living together or at least married, there was a high probability face-to-face communication was administered in the home on a regular basis. Lee and Dworkin also noticed that face-to-face family communication generated

parental involvement in daily communication. Future research regarding split home analysis should investigate several key topics. First, it is important to know how much a child, parent, or ex-partner influences the communication pattern. Second, in a split home, it would be valuable to identify certain circumstances that trigger specific conversation styles. Third, while mothers and fathers (Cooksey and Fondell, 1996) both play a role in the family communication model (Zhang, 2014), it would be ideal to know if one conducted good or harm more so than the other.

### ***Communication & Ethnicity***

Earlier in this study, correlations between the African American participants and conversation patterns with high conformity emerged. Over fifty percent of the participants in this investigation were African American. Out of Black participants, the protective communication pattern (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2002) was the second most common style denoted. In black females the *protective* (Koerner et al., 2017) pattern shared the top spot with the *consensual* pattern (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). While these findings support claims that Black families administer lots of obedience (Adams, 2020), it is unclear whether that theory is transcendent among ethnicities. Additional research is necessary regarding the likelihood of ethnicity and high conformity or high conversation.

There are also more investigations to administer regarding communication in black families. Ferguson (2018) blamed fear and inferiority for the current climate in black homes. It would be insightful to dive into a post-COVID world or a post-Black Lives Matter world and see if these elements have lessened or worsened. With the discussion of critical race theory prevalent in American education, (Zaveri, 2018) it would be valuable to investigate the impact on family communication. Also, Adams (2020) theory about American conformity tendencies should be evaluated more.

### *Christian Integration*

Even though several participants linked Christianity or religion negatively with the *protective* communication pattern (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002), participants two, eleven, twelve, and nineteen associated Christianity with a *consensual* home environment (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). In a consensual home environment, parents maintained prominent levels of communication and elevated levels of obedience. Participants two and nineteen attributed their high communication home environments with modeling a true relationship with God. They described it like this, “Pray without ceasing.” All four participants attributed Christianity with healthy levels of communication and obedience.

Additionally, extensive study on *family communication patterns theory* (FCP) (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002) could be essential for Christian households. The extra knowledge on conversation in the home could triumphantly achieve the Apostle John’s recommendation. In the New Testament (*New International Bible*, 1973/1998, John 17:14-16), the Apostle John encouraged Christians to live in the world, but not to be of the world. Contemporary information incorporating the advantages and disadvantages of digital media can illuminate a pathway to helpful discussion in the house. This data can also do the same for the church.

**Digital Guidance.** Further research on *digital parental supplementation* can enable the body of Christ to conduct James’ request in the New Testament regarding the care of orphans (*New International Bible*, 1973/1998, James 1:27). The biblical author encourages Christ followers to guide, protect, teach, and uplift children who have been abandoned temporarily or permanently, either physically or emotionally. Innovative information will give members of the church proper insight to assist appropriately and effectively. Currently, most of the knowledge about *family communication patterns theory* (FCP) stems from person-to-person connection in a

non-digital world. It is vital to investigate whether the same principles can be emulated in a cyber domain.

High-tech breakthroughs have assembled several modern barricades for families to navigate. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul accentuated the Lord's light, implying it supplies wisdom which honors God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ, the Son (*New International Bible*, 1973/1998, 2 Corinthians 4:6). This light stimulates relational growth with the Lord as well as with each other. Similarly, fresh intel correlating digital communication and parental supplementation could do the same inside homes that are grappling to relate. Likewise, original inquiry could present additional stability, principally to the classic household clan. With up-to-date knowledge about discussion styles, guardians would be able to tutor their children more competently about *digital literacy* as well as the dangers of digital communication.

**Secular Direction.** Outside of the Christian community, this study would benefit the field of communication and the healthcare industry. In the communication sphere, this study could potentially produce something positive from digital communication rather than a legacy of negativity. Unfavorable elements regarding the internet and its technological tools are commonplace. Online issues like *cyberbullying* (Langmia & Tyree, 2017), *sexting*, suicide, *digital illiteracy* (Kim & Yang, 2015), *digital deception* (Litt & Hargittai, 2014), and confidentiality concerns (Clarke, 2016) consistently plague people using and perusing digital communication. Parental supplementation through cyberspace could provide an alternate viewpoint for people to enjoy.

As far as healthcare, parental supplementation could encourage familial caregivers to stay the course and advocate for themselves better; not so much in a parental manner but more in a self-preservation means. According to Bevan et al. (2021) familial caregivers often sacrifice their

own lives to administer care to a family member. These individuals choose to not receive payment yet battle emotional, financial, mental, and physical hardship. Although they might have a lot of family members, often a small number step up to contribute, leaving the sole caregiver feeling helpless and alone. Krause and Markides (1990) affirm this behavior will not work. The scholarly pair confirm that multiple relatives must administer support, to successfully provide care to a loved one. Since this does not usually occur, according to Krause and Markides, an alternate form of support, offered through digital communication could encourage sole caregivers. Parental supplementation could meet the trio of support necessary for healthy human existence. The components of the trio are *emotional*, *tangible*, and *informational*. *Emotional* aid is vital to quench burnout. *Tangible* involves financial support as well as physical aid (Goldsmith, 2004), while *informational* includes dialogue. Communication is imperative for the best outcomes. Some of the dominant themes identified include ethnic association with specific communication patterns, and the reasoning behind social media usage, age, platform preferences, and multi-communication pattern existence in the home. These conclusions examining family discussion styles will revitalize present talks about FCP and equalize opportunities for all children (Albrecht & Goldsmith, 2003).

### **Summary**

Digital media is one of the most used communication mediums of all time. Although some scholars call digital media the main communication source, it is the main form of conversation for young people. Social distancing issues related to the pandemic of 2020 encouraged the need for remote relationships. During this time, investigators analyzed the techniques families used to communicate. Their research revealed that families integrated regular

interaction, remote assistance, and emotional support all through digital media (Jensen et al., 2021).

The study in this investigation through a qualitative, ethnographic interview approach examined connections between remote technology and *digital parental supplementation*. Progressive research about the ability to receive support through digital media paired with principles of *family communication patterns theory* (FCP) made up the foundation of this study. FCP is a concept based on the ways parents, partners, and children communicate. Through a qualitative methodology, an interview was administered, examining current data about FCP, remote conversation between family members, and the advantages of *digital parental supplementation*.

More data regarding *family communication patterns theory* (FCP) is valuable for the security of the new American family. Fresh information about the existence and relevance of *digital parental supplementation* can create vital discussions inside the family. Discussions can occur if the family communication pattern contributes to the necessity of *digital parental supplementation*. Sadly, much of the data about FCP was gathered before the digital revolution. More information particularly centered around digital media and *digital parental supplementation* could help broaden or even strengthen FCP's core principles. Also, modern information could aid families that are currently having a rough time communicating.

This study sought to fill in the space between *traditional parental supplementation* and *digital parental supplementation*. The focus was also to decide if *digital parental supplementation* was possible, efficient, sufficient, and necessary for children living in low communication homes. Information in this study broke down the theoretical framework of FCP as well as the foundation of this research. This research fits best in the *sociopsychological*

tradition because of the emotional, mental, and physical aspects that make up the tradition. In the *sociopsychological* tradition, cause and effect as well as principles are a part of the foundation. In this study, the cause identified was lack of parental involvement, and the effect was *digital parental supplementation*. These concepts contained the four standard communication patterns of FCP: consensual, pluralistic, protective, and laissez-faire. FCP worked well with this tradition because of the various emotional, mental, and physical components intertwined into the family communication process.

While it is known that *traditional parental supplementation* helped kids, it was unknown if the same was possible through digital media. However, the outcomes of this review suggest it is likely. The findings of this examination were broken into pieces to determine that the internet is thought of by Generation Z as an additional familial resource. At present, individuals between the ages of 19 and 26 are using technology to manage life in some manner. This study found a connection between their family conversation style and how much they used the internet. Study participants who lived in families that provided important levels of communication did not see the internet as an alternate family member. However, students who existed in families with low amounts of conversation were more apt to substitute with the internet. Overall, study participants concluded that *digital parental supplementation* was critical and beneficial for children living in high conformity homes.

This study determined that emulating parental supplementation through digital application is possible. Additionally, the research discovered a distinct connection between individuals raised in low communication level homes and the desire for *digital parental supplementation*. Just the opposite was identified in homes



with elevated levels of communication. In homes that exhibit the *consensual* or *pluralistic* pattern (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2002) there was a much lower (if any) desire for *digital parental supplementation*. These outcomes reinforced the study's hypotheses that *digital parental supplementation* is present in the four family types of the FCP framework. Also, study participants confirmed that the internet is viewed as a pseudo family member in the digital age, whether it is wanted or unwanted.

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## Appendices

### Transcript 1A: Audio Transcription/ Participant 29 (Consensual)

((00:01:34 Interviewer))

One thing that we're talking about today is digital parental supplementation, and for this study, it is important that you remember what digital parental supplementation means.

Digital Parental supplementation is the replacement of a parent a physical parent or a legal guardian by using digital means like social media, web searches, instant messaging, online groups? e-mail. Rather than having a physical person there. So, if I say digital parental supplementation, that's what I mean through a digital means, OK.

So, like for kids that don't have parents around all the time, they can go on the Internet, or they can go to social media and get all their needs met in a digital manner rather than a physical parent. OK. All right, so I'm going to ask you a few questions while we talk today and take some notes and I want you to answer as best as you can. The questions will be up on the screen and if you need me to clarify or give you another example. I'm happy to do that. OK, just let me know.

((00:02:37 Interviewer))

OK, So what does a parent represent to you?

((00:02:41 Participant 29))

Well, a parent represents to me like somebody that you have an emotional attachment to, whether it be physically or be or online. It might not even be your actual parent because I know sometimes people. their parents might not be the greatest, so they find other means like other people's parents or family friends or social media people that they relate to and can be to the best and have like a connection to in some way shape or form.

((00:03:23 Interviewer))

In America, we have four different types of communication patterns that are present in the home. A consensual pattern sometimes is present, which means that there's lots of communication and lots of obedience in the home. Then there's a pluralistic pattern, which means that there's lots of communication, but low levels of obedience. Then there's a protective household, which means that there's little communication. There's some, but it's not a lot, but high levels of obedience in the home. And then there's a laissez-faire home, which means there's low levels of communication and low levels of obedience. Which of these four represents the household that you grew up in or are in?

((00:04:23 Participant 29))

It was very high in communication and obedience due to the fact that for a while my mom was the only one that created cause. My dad worked the night shift at his job so we would always like to be obedient. With that, and we constantly communicated with each other. Even if there was a problem, or if we were going to do something, go to somebody's house, go next door. We would always communicate that first before we do it. And if they said no, we wouldn't just sneak off through the back door running. We would actually listen to them and say, like, OK, I understand why we can't do that and just do something else instead.

((00:04:55 Interviewer))

OK.

How likely are you to go to a family member or your parent to talk about things? Or are you more likely to go online to social media groups or friend groups?

((00:05:09 Participant 29))

I'm very likely to do it through a family member due to the fact that my family, like I said, was pretty open and we understood each other very well. Where we understand each other's issues

and that we when we go to them with our issues. They took them seriously whether that be my immediate family at my house or if I call one of my relatives, then too they will always help give me advice. Someone to talk to and all that stuff.

((00:05:34 Interviewer))

OK, thank you. So, does that mean that you think that digital parental supplementation would have been necessary in your home like in a digital aspect or no?

((00:05:43 Participant 29))

For me, no.

But I could see how it could be useful to some people, like my sister's friend, for instance. She has supplemented her parents and stuff like that due to the fact that her parents are not the greatest people, so she need would need something like that in order to have a positive impact on her life and be surrounded by positivity instead of negativity.

((00:06:04 Interviewer))

Gotcha. OK. So, in what ways do you currently supplement digital media rather than integrating a person or family member relative?

((00:06:13 Participant 29))

Well, for me, I watch a lot of YouTube videos and stuff or streamers that are positive impacts that help me when I'm either feeling down or just need something to watch and laugh at funny jokes and stuff like that, or just hang out with my friends and stuff through online meetings and stuff like that.

((00:06:33 Interviewer))

OK.



Are you comfortable discussing issues or things that you have going on in your life with people online like Reddit or some of these other platforms or no?

((00:06:48 Participant 29))

It depends on what it is, because sometimes I would and other times I would. It depends how personal am I getting that. That's the key for me is like if it's details that can help that they can find me with or stuff like that, then I probably wouldn't share it. But if it's generic stuff like...Generic stuff like that I would probably share it.

((00:07:11 Interviewer))

OK.

If you had the option of discussing things in your life with a person face-to-face or online which would you prefer?

((00:07:23 Participant 29))

I'd rather prefer a person due to the fact that I know for a fact who they are or what they are, and they could possibly help give me feedback due to the fact that they could, seeing this in their life or in their career, depending on what it is. So that way I could get instant feedback from them.

((00:07:38 Interviewer))

What platforms do you use socially?

((00:07:43 Participant 29))

I use X formally Twitter, Reddit, TikTok, Instagram and Facebook. Those are the five that I would use.

((00:08:32 Interviewer))

How often do you use it?

((00:08:37 Participant 29))

Every day daily.

((00:08:52 Interviewer))

Do you communicate a lot with your family members?

((00:09:12 Participant 29))

Oh yes, every night at dinner, which is good that we have family dinner and we all eat at family at the exact same time all together.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Because I know a lot of families don't do that sometimes. Sometimes it's scattered due to work reasons or. Just because there's bodies balances off, but it's nice that we all talk together as a family. We have conversations, laugh, joke, do all that at the dinner table.

((00:09:36 Interviewer))

Absolutely. OK. You are done. Thank you.

((00:10:23 Participant 29))

Thank you.

Ohh, thanks so much. Bye bye.

### **Transcript 1B: Audio Transcription/ Participant 34 (Pluralistic)**

((00:03:18 Interviewer))

I want to talk to you today about digital parental supplementation

And I will explain those things and I'll explain communication patterns and you'll see them on your screen at the same time. So if you don't understand the question or you want me to give you an example, you know, just let me know. Just stop me and I'll I'll do it and I'll make sure that you understand, the best way possible.

((00:03:46 Interviewer))

So it's important to know that when I say digital parental supplementation, what I mean by that is the usage of digital media to substitute a child's emotional, mental and physical well-being, rather than a traditional parent substitute. So you know in the past we've had parents fill that void, but now it seems like we're at a place, technologically speaking to where if the parents not there, the children can get their same needs met, but through a digital component rather than a physical, tangible person. OK, so when I say digital parental supplementation, that's what I'm referring to.

((00:04:22 Participant 34))

OK.

((00:04:23 Interviewer))

I'm going to put my dissertation questions up on the screen for you.

Let's share this where you can see it.

I've talked to you about digital parental supplementation already. What does a parent figure represent to you and you hear that word? What do you think of?

((00:04:22 Participant 34))

OK.

Probably just like someone.

Someone who is like a role model, somebody who can teach you things but also gives like kind of a nurturing energy to them.

((00:05:50 Participant 34))

I don't know, like at least for parents, to me, uh parent figures. To me, they're just people that I trust, people that don't have, like any ill intent and the advice that they give you. They're trying, like, not leading you in like a negative way.

If that makes any sense.

((00:06:14 Interviewer))

Of course.

Said communication environments here in America typically present in one of four ways.

And I want you to tell me which environment you grew up in.

The first one that we see is a consensual home environment, which means that there's lots of communication and there's lots of obedience. They kind of go hand in hand. So you and your family, you talk, talk, talk, talk, talk.

Because you guys have talked about it and it makes sense.

You understand that? You know, there could be a consequence if you don't obey, but it's not like, you know, like punishment or it's just like, hey, we, we talk about these things. This makes sense. So it's a balance of obedience and communication. Then there's a pluralistic communication pattern, which means that there's lots of communication.

People talk a lot in this household, but there's not a lot of obedience expected. If the children don't obey or they don't follow the rules, they're not really worried about a consequence or punishment, and the parents are just kind of like "You know, we we told you that may happen", , but it's not really like an iron fist or anything like that. But again, lots of communication and lower levels of obedience per say in a pluralistic you have a protective home environment.

Low communication and high levels of obedience. In that home.

The kids know they've got to obey and they're expected to obey, but they don't really know why, because they don't really talk to the parents. There's no dialogue about what they do or their day, or how does this go? How does this work? They just know it's kind of like when people say I

was told to go to church. I didn't really know why I went to church and I didn't know what the benefits of church were. But I just knew that we had to go.

((00:08:15 Interviewer

And then you have laissez-faire, which means low communication and low conformity. In these households there's not a lot of talk. There's not a lot of obedience expected.

There's not a lot of anything as far as togetherness. It's merely everybody's operating independently. Which type of communication environment did you grow up in?

((00:08:45 Participant 34))

I feel like I definitely grew up in a more of a pluralistic, UM environment.

((00:08:53 Interviewer))

OK.

With that said, are you more likely to go to your family members if you have, you know, the needs for emotional, mental, physical support, whether it's positive or, you know, maybe something negatives happen or are you more likely to go online to friend groups or web chats, things that you've digital spaces that you have? On the internet?

((00:09:45 Participant 34))

Definitely my parents first.

((00:09:53 Interviewer))

Remember, we talked about what digital parental supplementation was at the beginning of our conversation. Do you think that that was necessary in your home life or not at all?

((00:10:05 Participant 34))

I feel like when I was a teenager and I actively didn't want to talk to my family because I did think that they would understand. I probably went on social media more and like.

Well, I know I went on social media more and watched like.

I would like to type into the search bar on like.

How do you deal with the loss of a friend like or different things like that? Because I didn't want to tell my parents like "Ohh well, I'm not talking to Sally today because yeah, she told me I can't sit with her at lunch like so."

So definitely, I feel like there's probably stages. There were stages where I would rely more on social media than I would my family, but now I'm more. I'll just talk to my family about the things that are going on.

((00:10:54 Interviewer))

OK. In what ways do you currently supplement digital media? You said, you know, now you're at a stage to where you just talked to him about anything and everything. But are you supplementing in other ways? You know, it doesn't have to be just like personal or for entertainment, it could be career, you know, media, how are you supplementing digitally rather than you?

((00:11:18 Participant 34))

I definitely think probably for my career, I think they're like.

Because of what I want to do, I know there's not many people in my family that kind of have that same path. They're like more traditional, like the women like are housewives, which is a job in itself, but just not really what I want to do. I know that. I need to like if I want to get the things that I want, I need to like go the extra mile and so I'll research go on TikTok or go and on things like LinkedIn and stuff and like meet with people and set up like coffee dates and stuff and ask about people's fields and stuff. So yeah I would say definitely probably use that more for like career based stuff now.

((00:12:10 Interviewer))

OK. And are you comfortable at all discussing personal struggles or things that you have online with strangers? And I mean people that you physically never met or you know, you have your privacy, your autonomy in place and people don't know who you are because it's anonymous. Are you comfortable doing that or not at all?

((00:12:31 Participant 34))

I think I can understand why some people would do it, but for me I don't think so just because it's like. If I'm dealing with a certain type of emotion, it's probably like.

I'm like a relatively private person, so I don't want to outwardly like I wouldn't tell like all of my friends about those things. So why would I go and tell strangers on the Internet cause like my thought process?

((00:12:57 Interviewer))

I got you that makes total sense and you mentioned TikTok earlier, what other platforms do you use regularly?

((00:13:05 Participant 34))

TikTok. I'm really big on YouTube. That was my really big one.

And then like I guess, Twitter are like the basic ones that I use pretty frequently daily.

((00:13:23 Interviewer))

And I feel like you've already answered this one, but I need to ask you this again, just to be clear. So if you had something that you were working through your processing trying to figure out going through in your life, you would prefer to discuss that with an actual person, a person who know and trust rather than going online to someone?

((00:13:54 Participant 34))

Yeah. I I I think I've, I've cut down a lot more than what I used to. I used to, like, call them like a lot, especially when I was abroad last semester because I never knew. Like if I called them today, like, would they be able to answer because of the time differences. So I feel like I called them more often then.

So yeah, I would say I do.

((00:14:22 Interviewer))

Do you think that those platforms that you mentioned, Twitter X or Twitter X to to copy you to, is there one that you prefer over the other?

((00:14:36 Participant 34))

I I would probably say TikTok now, OK you know.

((00:14:44 Interviewer))

Is that just because you prefer short form content?

((00:14:49 Participant 34))

No, I feel like the search bar is a little bit easier and it's like easier to preview videos. Yeah, like I like the UM.

The interface a little bit better than YouTube.

((00:15:26 Interviewer))

You are done. Have a great break.

((00:15:24 Participant 34))

Thanks you too.

### **Transcript 1C: Audio Transcription/ Participant 10 (Protective)**

((00:00:26 Interviewer))

I can't hear you yet.



Can you hear me? Give me thumbs up. OK, I can't hear you.

((00:01:30 Participant 10))

Like, Oh my gosh, not the technical difficulties.

((00:01:34 Interviewer))

No, you gotta love technology, don't you?

Let's get started, I want to let you know what digital parental supplementation means for this study, so that when I referenced that later on, you know exactly what I'm talking about. So, for this study, digital parental supplementation, when I use that terminology means the usage of social media to help children give children emotional mental.

And physical support through digital means rather than traditional face to face methodologies.

OK, that can involve that digital interaction or stimulation can involve social media, web searches, instant messaging, online groups, e-mail. But it's not limited to those areas, OK?

The questions I'll be asking you are on the screen at the same time. If you want to visual reference, you can do that and if you don't understand or need me to re ask the question, then just let me know and I'll do so, OK.

((00:07:11 Participant 10))

OK.

((00:07:12 Interviewer))

Tell me what a parent is. Or what the ideal parent looks like to you.

((00:07:21 Participant 10))

I would say to me a parent represents someone who is a caretaker who unconditionally loves and takes care of like what they've created, what they've produced without being. Let's see overbearing. And just being there as a protector. Someone that that child can go to and depend

on be dependent that child can be dependent upon their parent. And like, show them and actually guide them and teach them how the way. Like the world works. I would say what not to do in the world once they get out there on their own. What would an ideal parent be like? I would say an ideal parent would be like. They would, it would be a mom and a dad. I would say taking care of their child together. Teaching them things that they should learn outside of school. I would say like what's going on in the world? Whether that be like the way how people act in the world how people treat you, how you should treat others, and a parent that supports their child. Both... both parents, the mom and dad, is supportive of their child. Whatever road that, that child takes that parent isn't, I would say judgmental of their own child. They like welcome them with open arms. They take care of them, they feed them, clothe them. Even past the age of 18, because even when a child is past 18 like, parents should still be supportive and children should still be able to depend on their parents. And I'll just say like an ideal parent, they're always like, they don't take out any frustration on their child. They're outgoing and they are open to hear, like, what their child has to say. I would say that would be the ideal parent what the ideal player look like.

((00:09:37 Interviewer))

Thank you. I want to know which communication environment you grew up. We currently have research that lets us know that in America there are four different types of communication patterns, consensual patterns, which means lots of communication and lots of obedience. We have a pluralistic pattern, which means that there's lots of communication and low levels of expectation when it comes from obedience. Then we have a protective home environment, which means that there's low communication but high levels of obedience expectations there from the parents. And then we have laissez-faire environment, which means. Low communication and low obedience. So out of those four, and I'll go back through them if you need me to. And if you

need me to give you examples, I'm happy to do that also. So out of those four, which do you think you grew up in?

((00:10:35 Participant 10))

I would say definitely protective.

Mm-hmm. Yeah. I was raised by my grandmother and she recently passed two months ago so. but yes, she's a very, very strict woman. Very strict. And she be like, growing up with her. She was religious and like, being raised in a religious household, you know, you would have to abide by like the commandments and stuff. In the Bible, stuff like that. We grew up and I was a very curious girl growing up. So I thought always why I got to do this? She she look at me, she's like you, "You don't ask those questions" And she'd always say the little phrase curiosity killed the cat, so stop asking questions.

((00:11:40 Interviewer))

OK. All right. So, with that said. How likely are you to go then to an immediate family member, parent sibling, or some for emotional, mental or physical support? Or do you prefer going to social media for that? Maybe a group that you are friends with on social media, you know, chat room or blog or something. Which would you prefer?

((00:12:08 Participant 10))

I would prefer online because since growing up in that type of protect protective household, I wasn't allowed to show like my emotions and stuff like that, because my grandmother had to raise me. It kind of looked like if I was crying like she would always say there is nothing that I should be crying about it, but I would always post stuff on social media. Like quotes and like text my friends and stuff a lot like on Snapchat, make videos and stuff just talking to them like I would express my emotions through them. And and like sometimes, people would tell me in

school like, “Why do you post a lot on social media like why do you?” I was like, well, who do I express it to? I can’t express it. Yeah. You know, in my home. And I’m like my my close friends online, they didn’t mind.

((00:13:18 Interviewer))

Knowing what you’ve said today, do you think that parental supplementation was necessary in your home life?

((00:13:45 Participant 10))

Oh, yes, ma’am. Yes, definitely, yeah.

I would say like, you know, going to social media.

((00:14:21 Interviewer))

What ways do you currently supplement digital media rather than integrating an actual person?

((00:15:16 Participant 10))

Oh God, it’s TikTok, I definitely.

Yeah, I swear. I’m like, I don’t get no sleep because I get on there and it just randomly, the algorithm is insane. I don’t know who creates that. What is it saying? But yes, I use TikTok.

Definitely, I was like. I’m really fond of poems like poetry and stuff, and even like motivational like speakers on there but. Preferably specifically I meant quotes and stuff like poetry, so whenever I like one tick tock post like the algorithm just keeps going and I can’t stop. Like I’ll just like, you know, and a lot of times the poetry would be about like, abandonment issues from parents and stuff. So I kind of sense to go that.

((00:16:14 Participant 10))

You know, it kind of makes me feel like I’m not alone in the world when it comes to, like, abandonment issues from parents because literally, like, over like a million other people going

through the same thing. And then I'll post the content on social media. And then you'll have people in the comments that say they went through the same thing. So yeah, yeah.

((00:16:32 Interviewer))

Is TikTok the only platform that you use consistently?

((00:16:37 Participant 10))

TikTok and Instagram, I definitely use those two. Sometimes Twitter, Twitter. Sometimes I'll share like the little quotes that people put on there, but not as much as TikTok. If I had to rank those three, it would be TikTok first. Twitter, then Instagram. Because I'm slowly getting away from Instagram.

((00:18:18 Interviewer))

If you were given the option to share things about what's going on in your life in person with someone or online. Which would you prefer?

((00:18:30 Participant 10))

Well, I would do online due to like transportation and due to it already been like being on hand, so if I need to like, hear him get like in a therapy session, I can just pop up my phone and get on one. So I would say definitely online.

((00:22:15 Interviewer))

Well, thank you for your time.

I hope you go get some sleep now.

((00:22:29 Participant 10))

Thank you. Thank you. You have a great holiday as well as nice speaking with you.

((00:22:32 Interviewer))

Yeah, you too. Bye.

**Transcript 1D: Audio Transcription/ Participant 8 (Multi-Pattern)**

((00:03:32 Interviewer))

I want to talk to you about family communication patterns and terminology that I created called parental supplementation, so I'm going to ask you a series of questions. I want you to answer them to the best that you can. And then if you don't understand or you think, oh, I need to hear that again, then just let me know and I'll restate the question.

But I want you to know that from this moment on, it's important that you understand that digital parental supplementation is the usage of social media to replace a parent or a guardian? This replacement, meaning social media, gives the child emotional, mental and physical support through digital means rather than through a traditional parent.

This comes not just in social media, but through everything digital. So instant messaging, online groups, e-mail, but it's not necessarily limited to those groups. OK, so that's what digital parental supplementation means for this.

I want to know, what does a parent mean to you?

((00:05:05 Participant 8))

In my eyes, in my opinion, it's pretty similar into being a. elder brother with a significant age gap of being a a role model and someone to give guidance. Someone to confide and trust with everything.

((00:05:35 Interviewer))

There are four different patterns that communication usually comes in inside a American household. So there's a consensual type which is lots of communication, lots of obedience. Then there's a pluralistic type, which means that it's lots of communication and low, obedient.

And then there's a protective type, which is low communication and lots of obedience. And then there's a laissez-faire, which means low communication, low obedience.

Do those make sense to you? Kind of grasping that in your head.

((00:06:22 Participant 8))

Yes, OK.

((00:06:26 Interviewer))

OK, there's examples on the screen and I can always scroll up. If you need me to. I want to know which types of these environments did you grow in grow up in? Did you grow up in one where there was lots of communication and lots of obedience? Or lots of communication. No obedience. Neither. No communication, no obedience.

((00:06:49 Participant 8))

Well, I come from a split household, so it's.

I'd say one would be.

I want to say not a lot of obedience, but won't be definitely a lot of communication and.

Middling obedience.

So not necessarily disobedient, but not exactly obedient.

((00:07:17 Interviewer))

So probably more of a pluralistic lifestyle, you think?

OK. Or like you for your family, you talk about everything, but you don't. They don't expect a lot of obedience in return.

And then if you make a mistake, then you kind of talk about it. It's not necessarily that you get punished, but you might, you know. But it's like

I know I'm going to get punished. If I do this. It's that sense then it's it's consensual.

Consensual. So you grew up, you're saying that and I've had parents, I've had students rather who are from a blended household and they say, which we do know that data supports this now too, that parents, different parents have different communication patterns. So like your mom could be consensual, but your dad could be laissez-faire or vice versa?

Do you think that's what you were experiencing?

((00:08:07 Participant 8))

I see you.

Yes, my dad and I were consensual, and my mom and I were laissez-faire.

((00:08:22 Interviewer))

Was that hard on you? Or did you just kind of get the hang of it?

((00:08:28 Participant 8

Wouldn't really say I got the hang of it, but it wasn't exactly hard.

I had. I had a lot of resentment for my mom at first for a while.

So being in a split household, my mom actually lives out of state, so I live with my dad most of the time, so it really wasn't a whole lot of communication unless my dad had to convince me or the very few times I was in need of a mother and reached out.

((00:09:09 Interviewer))

How likely are you to go to an immediate family member for emotional mental physical support, or how likely are you to go towards social media and your family that you have online?

((00:09:32 Participant 8))

I would say immediate family in person rather than online. Online is this very dangerous place in my opinion, to do something like that, because especially now with how a lot of social media platforms can tend to what's the right word? I guess for a lack of no, it's not manipulate, it's



social media content. So if I have a feeling of like. I hate my mother, which I don't hate. My mom, my mom and I are good now, actually, but. In the aspect of, let's say, hate, my mother and I see one post on Instagram or or TikTok about how someone else does and I hit the like on that. Well then a lot of that social media feed starts revolving specifically around disliking mothers, and it reinforces wrong feelings and that there's no one there. Yes, yes, its the algorithm will change to. Yes, so the algorithms.

In a way, support you, but it's. It's an algorithm. It's not.

really telling you what's right or wrong is, hey, we saw you like this post about hating mothers.

So we're going to continue sharing that post since you interacted with it. And in reality, it's.

That can cause a lot more damage than it can good.

((00:11:11 Interviewer))

OK.

((00:11:14 Participant 8))

Because it's not really, you know, it's not really like.

As as an immediate family member or even a friend would like.

You know, well.

Take a look try the algorithm. Social media is not going to try to understand even online. They can only get a piece of it while. People that you interact with in person and family that interact with the person, they can kind of guide you more into they can have a discussion with you where it's like, OK, your your feelings are valid or they can be like your feelings aren't not valid, but they're definitely can be pushed into a better direction, which is what I had to deal with with my with my parents, my dad was constantly trying to, you know, get me to repair my relationship with my mother for a long time. And I was so against it, and I actually had social media kind of

support my antagonist and tag being antagonistic towards my mother. But then I had just had to really listen to what my dad was saying, and I started working on it with her.

((00:12:22 Interviewer))

That's a good story. I feel like maybe I'll know your answer to this one, but do you think digital parental supplementation was necessary? Meaning that if there was, you know, like you mentioned your mom, for example? Would you have? If there were a vehicle or an opportunity for you digitally for you to consult and consult like this dialogue or this problem that was happening between you and your mom. Would you have used that if they were licensed and not? And I'm just talking about like I mean, like a licensed counselor. But yeah, she's also a parent. And let's say This site is.

Parents are us. You know, I don't know. And it's a great way for it's a great way for people like you and I, who grew up in unique homes to go to and say.

Hey, you know, for you as your mom for me was my dad. So. OK. How does this like I have no idea what a dad should be like. I have no idea what a dad should act like. I I have no idea. I have no examples. Do you think that was necessary?

((00:13:58 Participant 8))

To answer your question I think back during then.

Yeah, I probably would have used a form like that.

((00:14:14 Interviewer))

OK.

((00:14:17 Participant 8))

If I were to have an issue with my parents now. Just because everyone's situation is different, it's. I could give you my life story and that's purely off of my perspective. And you know.

You, you and I don't know each other on a personal level for you to be like. OK, what you just, you know, you shouldn't have said to your parent. There's a lot of context that's missing, so now I think I would have handled it in person rather than going to a forum, but definitely back then.

((00:14:52 Interviewer))

You would have. What ways do you currently supplement digital media rather than going to a family member? And what I mean by that was I saw a post on LinkedIn where there was a girl that was talking about she's graduating from college, and she was looking for work and looking for a job. But she talked about her story and that the whole reason why. She picked her major for her university was not because of she was a legacy at university or her. Her grandpas Dr. and she was a doctor. Her dad was doctor. You know, et cetera. She picked it because she googled like the top grossing and so the Internet helped her pick her career and pick her major rather than go into a family member and saying, you know, can you help me with this or going to a guidance counselor? It was the Internet. So what ways are you currently using digital media in that capacity rather than going to traditional routes like a parent or a sibling or somebody that's close to you, that's a real person.

((00:15:59 Participant 8))

In that sort of context, in that way more of to get in a better idea, something some kind of not necessarily pick out my career path but more to get a better idea of a career that I have interest in really looking at you know, what's the average pay, what's the highest pay? What?

What's the maneuverability? So if you get promoted to what what's next? And then having an idea of what the job actually entails? Something like actually my job. Now I'm a purchasing manager for a UM. Endoscopy repair company. And I tend to use like Google Scholar to kind of get an idea better understanding of like how purchasing works, how do people of other

companies of the same or the same fields? Do their purchasing. How is purchasing season done on something in like a dealership for cars getting a better idea of how? What my position and my company works and how I can get better at it?

((00:17:22 Interviewer))

OK. Right. So how comfortable are you discussing your like, personal things with strangers?

((00:17:38 Participant 8))

I definitely have some chapters that.

((00:17:42 Participant 8))

I strongly prefer not to talk about, but I also have a lot of chapters that I'm for. Feel free to give every detail of.

((00:17:50 Interviewer))

With strangers?

((00:17:53 Participant 8))

With strangers, I'm very picky about what I.

((00:17:58 Interviewer))

On a secure platform but just people that you've probably never ever seen.

((00:18:04 Participant 8))

Yeah. So sometimes, yeah, there's there's definitely things of my life, like personal stuff, of course, that I'm very guarded with, even with people that are close to me, you can give the I do know, but there are also a lot of other personal things that I'm not so guarded with. I have no problem sharing.

((00:18:26 Interviewer))

OK. What platforms do you use?

((00:18:33 Participant 8))

Honestly, primarily. Snapchat, really? Actually trying to stay off of social media as much as I can. Yeah, I tend to find it. Not a great thing to go to.

The only reason I even have my social media now is like Facebook's requirement so we can have a global connection I shouldn't say necessarily a requirement, but it's highly encouraged.

Uh to have a Facebook or LinkedIn.

UM.

I'd say mostly Snapchat, and that's really just to communicate with my friends. It's.

Just a different way of texting for me.

LinkedIn's a really prime example for me. Where I made it because I'm a purchasing manager within a company, so it's I have to have a link in so I can start making connections and.

People tend to share their personal opinions of certain matters on LinkedIn, and in my opinion it's like that's not what LinkedIn's used for. That's you can use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, whatever for that. But LinkedIn should be strictly business.

And then there's in concept of linked is a great idea to make connections and professional relations with people. I guess I guess my answer would be it depends on how the person's using it.

((00:21:45 Interviewer))

OK. Well, thank you for your time. That's all the questions that I have.

((00:23:39 Participant 8))

Thank you. Bye.