New Media in Single Parent Households: Practices and Identity-Formation in Relation to the Public Discourses of Technology

By

Anna Maria Russo, M.A. (Ph. D. Candidate)

and

Lynn Schofield Clark, Ph.D., Assistant Research Professor

School of Journalism and Mass Communication

SJMC, Campus Box 478

University of Colorado-Boulder

Boulder, CO 80309-0478

U.S.A.

Phone: 303-786-0388

Fax: 303- 492-0969

E-mail: Annamaria.Russo@Colorado.edu, Lynn.Clark@Colorado.edu

Abstract

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (Fields and Casper, 2001), in 1999 around 16 million children (ages 0-18) were living in a single parent household with their mothers, and almost 6 million children were living with only their fathers or with no parents at all. These statistics mirror the proportion of single parent households in the member states of the European Union. The European Commission (2001) has reported that the percentage of children living with only one parent has grown from 8% to 13% in the last fifteen years. Population projections in the U.S. estimate that half of the children born in the 1990s will spend some time in single-parent households (Amato, 1999). In the U.S. as in Europe, the trend toward single parent households is fueled by the increase in the divorce rate and to a lesser extent the number of children born outside of marriage.

Despite the presence in Europe and in the U.S. of this sizeable and growing cohort, qualitative research on this type of family formation is at present fairly limited, especially in relation to mass media. Existing sociological studies on the family have only recently begun to consider single parenthood; and few of them have stressed the necessity of conceptualizing single parenthood as a distinct family structure and not merely as an example of a deviation from the presumed norm of the married heterosexual couple (Chambers, 2001; Dowd, 1997; Haddon and Silverstone, 1995; Smart and Neale, 1999; Stacey 1999).

In recognition of the growing number of persons within the single parent family structure, this paper focuses on the experience of media in the everyday lives of single parents and their families. Relying upon in-depth interviews, we analyze the ways in which single parents describe their household media practices in relation to the constraints of time, money, stereotypical representations, and negotiations with the ex-spouse regarding media use. We explore how new media in particular participate in the articulation of concerns regarding the familial processes of self-actualization, personal success, knowledge, accountability, and the raising of children.

The data for this paper is drawn from a large multi-year ethnographic project in the U.S. titled "Symbolism, Meaning and the New Media @ Home." This effort is interested in investigating the uses and discursive locations of old and new technologies in everyday family life, and includes interviews with persons across a variety of family structures, socio-economic backgrounds, and racial/ethnic identifications. The paper presents some preliminary findings on the narratives and practices of single parents as they negotiate their family's new media uses in relation to the expectation-filled discourses of contemporary public policies.

Introduction

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (Fields and Casper, 2001), in 1999 around 16 million children (ages 0-18) were living in a single parent household with their mothers, and almost 6 million children were living with only their fathers or with no parents at all. These statistics mirror the proportion of single parent households in the member states of the European Union. The European Commission (2001) has reported that the percentage of children living with only one parent has grown from 8% to 13% in the last fifteen years. Population projections in the U.S. estimate that half of the children born in the 1990s will spend some time in single-parent households (Amato, 1999). In the U.S. as in Europe, the trend toward single parent households is fueled by the increase in the divorce rate and to a lesser extent the number of children born outside of marriage.

In the most recent U.S. census, there were twelve million single-parent households, of which two million were male householders. According to this data, while one-third of single women were living below the poverty line, only 16% of single men were in similarly dire economic circumstances (Fields and Casper, 2001). The census also found an increase both in the number of cohabiting couples and in alternative cohorts, such as private households comprised of three or more unmarried adults with dependent children.

Despite the growing presence in Europe and the U.S. of these alternative family formations, many of which relate to divorce, separation, and widowhood, qualitative research on single parenthood is presently fairly limited, especially in relation to mass media. Nevertheless, there is much to suggest the need to explore more fully the ways in which this cohort is incorporating new media use into their everyday lives.

Recent studies on Internet and computer use have demonstrated that "family households with children under age 18 are far more likely to have computers than families without children: 70.01 percent, compared to 58.8 percent" (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2002: 43). However, families with lower income and lower levels of education, as well as African-American and Hispanic families, are more likely to lack access to a computer or to the Internet. Single parent families, many of whom are within these demographic groups, are particularly likely to lack such access:

> Two-parent households are nearly twice as likely to have Internet access as single-parent households (60.6% for dual-parent, compared to 35.7% for male-headed households and 30.0% for female-headed households). In central cities, only 22.8% of female-headed households have Internet access (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2000: xviii).

Certainly, economic limitations play an important role in this uneven distribution of computer-based resources. It is the purpose of this paper to illustrate how these limitations combine with temporal, spatial, and socio-psychological factors to influence the consumption and meaning-making practices which involve old and new media technologies in the lives of single parents.

The paper will introduce an overview of the main characteristics and issues that sociologists have highlighted in relation to single parent families. Pertinent work in the field of audience research within the domestic sphere will then be explored, highlighting possible differences between two-parent and single parent households. An analysis of in-depth interviews with nineteen single parent and alternative cohort families will flesh out some of these differences and similarities. Following this analysis, the paper will discuss the relationship between material and psychological constraints and the family's media consumption habits within the context of their everyday life. Hence, it will highlight the importance of considering social and cultural factors when the discussing the role of ICTs in the enhancement of individuals' quality of life and their impact on the future of contemporary societies.

Sociological accounts on family diversity and single-parenthood

Historian John Gillis (1996) rightly points out that the institution of the family has taken today a
central position in the cultural, economic and politic dynamics of contemporary society. As he states,

> We not only live with families but depend on them to do the symbolic work that was once assigned to religious and communal institutions: representing ourselves to ourselves as we would like to think we are. To put it another way, we all have two families, one that we live *with* and another we live *by* (p. xv).

The construction of the ideal family, the one we live *by*, can be seen as a constantly revised product of public and academic discourses, and media images. In 1965, Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1965) published a report in which the status of the American family as a fundamental institution of society was described as precarious and in crisis due to the appearance of alternative cohorts that undermined the supremacy of the traditional nuclear family. That study became a manifesto of sorts for those who believe that single women's families are the cause of all the ills that afflict American society: poverty, violence, drug addiction, and the declining standards in education and civil life. Furthermore, research devoted to child development within divorced families, and the effect on children of problematic relationships among parents, is frequently marshaled by these groups who approach single parenthood as an issue of moral choice, completely ignoring the consistent research relating problems associated with single parenting to the poor economic conditions in which single-parent households tend to reside (Stacey 1999, Coontz and Folbre 2002).

The negative stigma attached to single parents is also reflected within popular culture. A famous example is offered by the "Murphy Brown" show scandal that divided the public as well as the political electorate after then-Vice President Quayle condemned the actress Candice Bergen for allegedly promoting unwed motherhood (Stacey, 1999:48-9). The present study's exploration of how single parents interpret and make meaning of such popular portrayals in relation to their own self-conceptions is, therefore, particularly relevant.

In defense of single parents, Nancy Dowd (1997) argues that studies demonstrate the positive influence of this family formation on children as it stimulates independence, gender respect, equality, and self-reliance. Evidence from our data support Sara McLanahan's and Gary Sandefur's (1994) idea that poverty is an influential predictor for the success of children's development, future career, health, job-placement, and self-esteem. Indeed, income influences the time the parent spends with the children, their supervision and care, and, by extension, the lack of community ties that result from the continued and recurrent need for re-location. Furthermore, notwithstanding the economic limited condition, Paul Amato (2000) stresses that gender and racial factors overall do not affect the degree of happiness, self-satisfaction and standard of living among single parent families. However, the scholar highlights the correlation between parental education and children's economic and psychological well-being, noting that there repercussions directly related to a poverty-level wage.

An interesting theory is offered by the sociologist David Morgan (1996). In order to avoid the problematics inherent to the meanings attached to the concept of 'family,' such as the expected heterosexuality of the parents and their co-residence, he uses the term 'family practices' to recognize the fluidity of relationships and the influence of other types of practices shaped by gendered, economic, cultural, and other specific experiences. In Morgan's view, individuals are conceived as active agents involved in those practices and responsible for their transformation.

Hence, in this paper we take the view that single parent families are not different because they are distant from an established normative model, but rather we recognize that they represent an alternative form of cohort that influences its members' social and personal life experiences.

With regard to questions of single parents' identity, we rely on the approach of sociologist Anthony Giddens. Giddens argues that individuals are continuously involved in the process of self-making, in what he defines as the 'project of the self.' We are never finished products, because the self is a fluid and never-ending process influenced by the challenges and opportunities we encounter on our life-paths. Therefore, for the scholar, intimate relationships are based on a mutual negotiation of responsibilities and duties and need to allow for the continuation of the individual's self-development.

Giddens (1991) emphasizes the agency of individuals in their meaning-making processes. The sociologist (1992) identifies as the 'pure relationship' the tendency of couples to remain committed as far as their relationship provides satisfactions to each of them. Indeed couples tend to embrace a 'confluent love' based on the idea that it is contingent on the rewards of the relationship and hence not eternal or unchanging. However, Giddens does not consider the ways in which childbearing becomes an influential factor in decision-making processes that in turn affect relationships. Moreover, he does not consider the ways in which the parenting and relational choices of single parents are continuously negotiated with the ex-partner and current partner (when present), as well as with the children. In fact, these negotiations between ex-partners, current partners, and children played a central role in the negotiating of identity and practices in each of the families we interviewed. In particular, most of our single mothers and fathers expressed their frustrations at having to leave their children in an environment they did not agree with nor have any influence upon: the home of the other parent.

The way individuals see themselves as parents has a fundamental influence on their sense of self and on their actual parenting practices. Smart and Neale (1999) argue that gender plays an important role in parental self-concept and parental practices. They note that for mothers, parenting plays a central role in their core identity, an idea reinforced by the cultural myth of motherhood and the tendency of women to make sacrifices in their careers to look after their children. Even single mothers who work full-time center their identity around their motherhood roles rather than their work (Smart and Neale,

1999, p. 51-52). On the other hand, the cultural construction of fatherhood is based on the idea that financial provision is the primary duty to their children and, thus, identification with work is privileged over family involvement. Today, there are a small but growing number of men who reject such cultural roles, claiming a more active position in the lives of their children and attaching less importance to their career.

Sociologists such as Morgan (1996) and Smart and Neale (1999) argue that when couples split up they experience changes in everyday routines as well as in their sense of the self. This re-invention of one's self is clearly affected by the degree and type of engagement with the partner after the break-up. In post-divorce situations, roles and expectations become fluid and negotiation is essential in order to establish a relationship with a partner, who in some cases is no longer well regarded. In many of our interviews, this issue emerged in relation to disagreements on children's rules and habits; the parent indicated his/her constant attempt to maintain a 'civil' relationship with the ex-partner for the sake of the children while at the same time criticizing the other parent's rules and habits. In some cases, as we will show in the analysis, the experiences with the ex-partner also directly involved and affected the attitudes of the parent towards media.

Audience research in the domestic sphere

This project follows the tradition of qualitative audience research, initiated by David Morley (1986), James Lull (1980) and Dorothy Hobson (1980, 1982), that has focused on the household as an important space in which media are consumed within the context of everyday life. These scholars have pointed out that in order to understand the relationship between the private space of the house and the larger context of social structures, it is essential to achieve a thorough understanding of meaning-making processes in which media play a prominent role as symbolic sources and resources for social and cultural practices.

Audience researchers such as in Australia, Patricia Palmer (1986), and, in Europe, David Buckingham (1993, 2000) and Sonia Livingstone (1998, 1999) have been producing excellent research on children's media consumption within the domestic environment that is relevant to the present research. In particular, their studies of children show differences in consumption patterns that are related to the cultural and social backgrounds of their parents, and differences in attitudes towards media between parents and their children.

In addition, reception studies conducted by David Buckingham (1993, 2000), Sonia Livingstone (1998, 1999), and other scholars have demonstrated the ways in which new media consumption, as in the case of old media, cannot be separated from the social, cultural and economic contexts in which it is embedded. In fact, through the understanding of media consumption as a practice entangled in the web of daily routines, one can come to a more sophisticated understanding of the role computers play in the lives of young people, thereby dismissing the notion that any technology serves as either the primary cause of all the problems afflicting children — violence, sexual abuses, family disfunctionalism, etc. — or as the only solution to them. Indeed, in both approaches, technologies are invested with feelings, ideas, and responsibilities for our social and individual practices that erroneously make them the central engine of our society. Hence, when considered in the context of parenting, as tools utilized by parents to entertain or educate their children, they need to be understood within the particular condition of consumption in which they are embedded.

Several studies on family use of new media and its relationship to self-identity are currently underway (Livingstone, 2001; Bird and Jorgenson, 2001; Hoover, 2002; Clark, Demont-Heinrich, and Webber, 2004). The experiences of single parents have not been parsed out as a topic for exploration, although these experiences have appeared within larger studies of familial use of new technologies. As part of a larger project on the use of information and communication technologies within British households, for example, Leslie Haddon and Roger Silverstone (1995) included single parents in their study of the importance of class, gender and developmental stages of the family-cycle in the culture of

consumption of technologies. The single parents in their study formed the basis of one aspect of the study, and findings for this group were based on in-depth interviews with 20 adults, two of which were men, within the time-frame of 6 months in 1993. Despite the fact that their research was based in England, was focused primarily on television and telephone use, and was limited to an economically disadvantaged population, their findings are relatively consistent with the preliminary patterns that we discuss in this paper. Following Haddon and Silverstone, we consider ICTs as embedded in parents' everyday practices, which are primarily devoted to the project of making a 'home.' Furthermore, consistent with our findings, the British scholars stressed the significance of television and telephone as means of communication and entertainment for their families due to economic constraint that limits the possibility of alternative recreational activities; and, in the case of the telephone, for social network and daily arrangements. In addition, in findings similar to ours, these scholars noted that space and time constraints were affecting the patterns of media consumption as well as the degree of privacy afforded to individual family members.

Therefore, in light of the literature here presented, the patterns that emerged from the interviews considered in this paper contribute to the understanding of how temporal, spatial, economic, and social arrangements influence the uses and meanings drawn from old and new media technologies; and how these arrangements also mediate parenting practices and meaning-making processes.

Methodology

This paper is based on the narratives of nineteen single parents within the context of an on-going, multi-year research project based on in-depth interviews and observations of a demographically and culturally diverse range of over fifty families. The "Symbolism, Meaning, and the New Media @ Home" project has its theoretical and methodological roots in cultural studies, social constructivism and interpretative symbolic interactionism (Clark, 2001). The assumption underneath the present research, following such theories, is that the technologies shape and are shaped by their users and their roles and meanings are always negotiated, re-interpreted according to the particular socio-historical and cultural conditions in which the processes of consumption are embedded. As a reaction to technological deterministic notions, constructivism and symbolic interactionist approaches to the study of new and old technologies aims at highlighting the complexity and subtleties that surround their uses and their role in the individuals' symbolic universe. By looking at the processes by which old and new media are incorporated into people's lives, we are able to understand their received impact and value that they develop within the interaction process.

The project uses a 'maximum variation sampling' approach which aims to roughly mirror the demographic characteristics of the American population (Lindlof, 1995). Families have been recruited through the snowball technique of asking respondents to introduce the researcher to other potential interviewees, and also through organizations that are involved with families.

Almost all of the members of each household have been interviewed twice, once together and once individually. In some cases, focus groups and further studies have been conducted. The interviews are then transcribed and discussed collectively by the whole team of researchers. We granted anonymity to our informants by omitting some personal information and changing their names.

The purpose of the "Symbolism, Meaning, and the New Media @ Home" project is to understand the ways in which individuals select and adopt symbols and values from media for meaning-making purposes, and for defining and presenting themselves, both privately and publicly, as families and as individuals. In addition, a vast range of topics are also included in the interviews in relation to discourses on the new technologies, digital divide, success, media rules and beliefs.

In order to investigate these topics, in-depth interviewing appears as the most appropriate methodology to gain insights into how large-scale issues of social change, reflected in single parents' access to and use of new media, are played out in particular contexts. Furthermore, following constructivist and interactionist paradigms, this project acknowledges the presence and role of the

researcher in the interviewing process. Hence, it considers each interview as a multi-layer discourse in which the biographies of the researcher and the respondent intersect within the space of their interaction creating a narrative in which both play a part in authorship.

For the purpose of this paper we have chosen to discuss the preliminary findings that emerged from nineteen single-parent households, four single fathers with joint custody and a minimum of 40% of the time with the children, and fifteen single mothers with primary, joint or solo custody of their children. All of them were at the moment of the interview living with no significant other in the house. Two parents had a high-school degree; the others had some years in college, an associate's, bachelor's, or a graduate degree. In terms of income, the families ranged from $15K to $75K in annual earnings. However, it is important to remember that in divorced households the measure of income is rather different than in two-parents families. The interviews have been conducted by the project's team of investigators, including the authors, during the 2002-2003 academic year[1].

Finally, it is important to stress that each family is unique in terms of the material and cultural resources available, and the parent's occupation and biography. These elements shape the way each family constructs its ideas and use of media. Nevertheless, from the families here considered it is possible to discuss some preliminary emerging trends in life experiences that involve the way media are perceived and used. In particular, for this paper, we will concentrate on discussing how the major material constraints for single parents—money, time and space—affect their experiences with media. Further, in relation to children's up-bringing, we explore how this particular family group is reflected in the continuous negotiations between ideas and beliefs about media and the ways these technologies are adopted and adapted to the necessities that each day brings.

Analysis of the interviews

The following section presents some excerpts from our interviews illustrating how time, space, economic and socio-psychological issues of single parenthood affect media consumption within the context of everyday life practices.

Temporal and spatial constraints affecting media use

As noted in other studies (Livingstone, 1998; Haddon and Silverstone, 1995; Rogge and Jensen, 1988), the limitations derived by economic and time constraints, as well as the size and shape of the household, affect media consumption. This issue is very well illustrated in the story of one of our interviewees, Katy Cabera. Katy, at the time of the interview, was living in the family housing complex of the University she worked at as administrative assistant, while studying for a bachelor's degree in social work. She is 32 years old, Hispanic, and the primary guardian of two children. Her husband is in the Navy, as she was previously, and currently he is stationed in Japan. He rarely sees the children but supports them financially. The Caberas live in a two-bedroom apartment. They own one television and VCR, which are located in the living room, whereas the computer sits in the kitchen. When asked about her use of the computer, she noted that she adopted a different pattern of use when the children were present and when they were not, while also noting her felt need to adapt her media consumption habits to a very hectic schedule of activities of her family.

> Interviewer: How many hours each day do you think you use the computer?
> Katy: I don't know that there's an average. I can go a week without it. It just depends, really, on what's going on. The entire time the kids were gone, I was out, I was shopping, I was having dinner with friends, I was going to happy hour [Katy's ex-husband, was in town recently and took Jake and Helena for a long weekend]. I was very busy. Ah, when they're here, since this is

---

[1] The research team is composed by: Prof. Stewart Hoover, Scott Webber (Ph. D. Candidate), Michelle Miles (Ph. D. Student), Denice Walker (Ph. D. Student), Monica Emerich (Ph. D. Student), Christof Demont-Heinrich (Ph. D. Student), Jin Kyu Park (Ph. D. Student), and the authors.

our only television -- if they're watching TV, then I'll log on. I'm not necessarily e-mailing. I may be looking for recipes. Or if something sparks my curiosity, I'll look it up online.
Interviewer: So you go in spurts [in terms of your usage] then.
Katy: Right. So today, just know when you were talking to Jake [It's about 7 p.m.], that was the first time I was on it all day. We were busy. We were out. We were running errands. We went to Chuck E Cheese. We were out doing various things today. We got home. I used the telephone while the kids were outside playing [unintelligible]. So if they're watching TV, I'll catch the news, see if there is any late-breaking news (online), or if I just heard a new song and I don't know what the lyrics are, I'll look that up. Just whatever.

This brief excerpt represents one of the many cases we have encountered within our families in which *time* pressures are structured both by the need to oversee the children when around, as well as the need to share media technologies by dividing up time among them. Furthermore, in the same conversation issues related to *space* emerged in relation to the computer and its uses.

Interviewer: I'm curious why you decided to put the computer in the kitchen rather than in here (living room). Or upstairs.
Katy: I wanted it upstairs eventually. But I haven't bought a desk yet. So it was in the kitchen until I was able to have the funds to buy a desk. And I never have the opportunity (to buy a desk). I don't want it in here (living room) because I think that there would be too much chaos going on [both Jake and Helena are playing on the floor in front of this as she says this]. At least in the kitchen, it's just off to the side.

Here the mother explains the computer's somewhat unusual location (in the kitchen) in relation to her need to both oversee the children's Internet activities and to simultaneously engage in other tasks of food preparation.

The *time* pressures of single parenting, combined with the burden of child care, affect both the way media are utilized and rules are negotiated in the home, as well as the way the computer is used to keep in contact with existing social networks or to make new friends. The negotiation of rules for the children was a common practice in our families, having to do with their often hectic and changing daily routines. Cliff Young, for example, explained that his children had a time limit of an hour a day regardless of what medium they decided to use. However, there were several exceptions to the rule, such as when he has to go to work in the afternoons and the kids are back from school, which is often. Moreover, when he has one of the neighbors' daughters as baby-sitter, the children are free to use any media they want as long as they have done their homework. In addition, during weekends when there are friends around, their use of media also increases.

In relation to *time* pressures and the use of computers to communicate, there are two different situations that best illustrate how parents negotiate their necessities with the structural constraints touching their live are subjected. On one hand, there is the case of Cliff Young who uses the computer for work, for retrieving information of any kind, for listening to the radio, and checking the news. He also supports his children's use of the computer by teaching them how to surf the Internet and also by giving them extra time if they are playing on it. However, he admits that using the computer takes away a lot of time and hence, for example, he doesn't like to chat or use instant messaging and limits his e-mails to the closest circle of friends and family. The same feeling of the Internet as a potentially time-wasting activity is expressed by Rayna Hancock. Rayna lives with her 7 year old son in a mobile home. She is in school trying to earn an associate's degree. She owns a refurbished computer donated by a member of her church congregation. She uses a free Internet connection offered by K-Mart. Although the plan allows for only 12 hours a month, for Rayna this is enough since she doesn't have much time at home to be online, and she can use the computer at school with a better connection if she needs to. As she explained:

Rayna: Just...because of the time. You know, when I'm sitting on the computer trying to do stuff..and you...hours can go by (snaps fingers) like. And I need to spend time with Wes. You

> know, he...you're kind of like, your focus is right there, you don't get anything done. And I'm a kind of a 'I have to get stuff done' person. I can't just be sitting doing that.

Despite her reservations about the Internet and her extensive childcare commitments, however, Rayna habitually visits the LDS [Latter Day Saints] singles' site.

> Interviewer: Well that would be cool. I've heard about the LDS-site itself, someone was just telling me about that. But they have a side kind of singles' site.
> Rayna: Uh-huh. With pictures and everything.
> Interviewer: So it's a chance to meet people...from the church...
> Rayna: All over. Yeah.
> Interviewer: Wow, interesting. Every time I interview somebody (laughing) they tell me something I've never heard before.
> Rayna: I don't really have time to date, but, you can still have a relationship over the Internet.
> Interviewer: So you can actually meet people and that's the service that church has kind of...
> Rayna: I don't know that they would [say] that's their thing, but...it's a group of...well, somebody that's in the church came up with that. You know, it's a service, you pay 35 bucks and you become a member and they have thousands of people on there...
> Interviewer: And so you can e-mail...
> Rayna: Uh-huh.
> Interviewer: ...and communicate?
> Rayna: Uh-huh.

Therefore, in contrast with Cliff Young, Rayna uses the computer to socialize notwithstanding the fact that it might take away a large portion of her time. For her, it is the only avenue to talk to other adults and to engage in a conversation with people that understand her problems. Cliff, on the other hand, does not need to do that because he is surrounded by a large network of single parents who are very active in the process of raising their children by using each other as resource and help. Therefore, when such a social network is missing, and when single parents are not able to go out because they need to supervise their children and often don't have money to pay for a baby-sitter, the computer represents a useful tool for keeping in touch and meeting prospective mates. As a matter of fact many of our interviewees told us they used e-mail to keep in touch with family and friends that live far away. They found it convenient financially and also, in some cases, emotionally, as it enabled easier communication with people with whom they have problems communicating in person. For example, Katy Cabera finds it easy to keep in touch with her mother via e-mail because when together they tend to fight. Hence, like the telephone for Haddon's and Silverstone's respondents (1995, p. 40), our parents use the computer for social networking. In this case, our single parents find computers as enabling them to overcome the challenges offered by temporal and spatial factors that can limit their contact with others. Yet computers can also be seen as an obstacle to their relationship with their children. When the parents sense that the latter is the case, computer use becomes coupled with the temporal and spatial constraints that affect their parenting practices.

Economic and temporal issues affecting entertainment choices and attitudes towards media

Along with space, lack of time and money are also responsible for a rather limited amount of recreational activities outside the home and for the scarcity of media within the household.

Almost all the families claimed that did not have money to invest in either computers, cable, stereo systems, or a second or new TV set. Indeed, they tended to stress the desire to fulfill other necessities if they had had the economic opportunity. An example is represented by the case of Anna Lally, a single mother since the age of 16, who never received any financial help from her family nor from the father of her son. When asked about her computer, this is what she said:

> Anna: It's a useless computer, but it's a computer nonetheless (laughs).
> Interviewer: Oh really? What's useless about it?

> Anna: It's just too slow. It's too slow to get on the Internet. It's too slow to do e-mail. It's just old.
>
> Interviewer: How old is it?
>
> Anna: I don't have a clue. It's a mutt computer. I got it from and old friend of mine. He built it. Basically, he's a computer freak. And when I first got it from him, I could still do e-mail and the Internet. But everyone's upgraded to higher speeds and this one just doesn't cut it. But I couldn't even tell you what it is…
>
> Interviewer: Is it a Mac or a PC?
>
> Anna: I think it's a PC. But, you know, I don't have the money to put into it. And if I had the money, I'd probably find something else more useful to put my money into than a computer.

Anna is very critical of all media as inhibitors of creativity, and as mostly a waste of time. She tries not to let her son watch television because she thinks it promotes passivity and brainwashing. She admits that when really tired or depressed she uses it, but prefers to spend her time and money elsewhere.

Another similar case is represented by Jeff Stein, a father of a nine year old girl. While he acknowledges that watching television is a waste of time, he recognizes that he watches it quite a lot. In relation to the computer, he explains that is daughter is slowly using it for entertainment more than the television. However, although he is concerned about the potential dangers of the medium in terms of content, he admits that it is a useful way to keep his daughter entertained while he is running errands, in the house, or has some work to do.

Television is viewed as a waste of time and a negative source for entertainment for children among both two-parent and single parent homes. The difference lies in the fact that among the single parents interviewed, those who do not have cable often justify this decision referencing a moral view of the medium and only secondarily by the fact that is a financial burden they cannot sustain. Nevertheless, in our families that do not have cable there is a VCR and often a large amount of videotapes that the children watch repeatedly. This practice is justified as being useful because it allows the parents to select the program for their children and to show it whenever necessary, thus affording greater control for the parents. Whereas, in relation to the computer use of the children, our parents do not show the same moral concerns and tend to trust their children's use in terms of sites they visit.

Furthermore, another interesting pattern that emerged from the interviews is the relation between the parents' experience with media when growing up and the attitudes towards them for themselves and their children. As Rogge and Jensen (1988) point out, as a result of their interviews with families,

> Styles of media use are not merely related to the present, but are always also biographically determined. The way in which the media are perceived in the present is always influenced by previously acquired knowledge about the media. Thus, when it is a question of integrating new media into everyday lives, people can be open toward these new media or erect barriers against them, and this too is biographically determined. (p. 85)

In the case of our families, the practice of passing on media habits learnt when growing up was often experienced as difficult because of generational changes. The majority of our parents grew up without computers, sometimes without a VCR, and with less television programs available. In addition, whenever they tried to enforce media rules or family habits that they had, they explained how they had often to negotiate their desires with the economic constraints and particular necessities that the single parent's daily life requires. Using Cliff Young's words:

> Cliff: …Like so many things didn't come up when I was growing up. We didn't have the Internet, we didn't have a car so much, we didn't have…just a lot of things, we didn't watch TV, we were out riding our bikes around and you know being raised differently and so what my parents knew to do then may or may not be appropriate for what I have to do now, and how I raise my kids.
>
> Interviewer: Because they were together and you are divorced or because…

> Cliff: That's part of it too. That society is changed, all society is changed. We are much faster paced now, everything is moving zing zing zing, you know there is tantrum [outburst] from all kinds of crime, you have to protect your children from all kinds of things that we never worried about.
>
> Interviewer: But when you were growing up what did you guys use to do as a family together?
>
> Cliff: Oh, we did a lot of outdoors stuff, a lot of outings, bicycle rides, hiking, go to the beach, a lot of family things. My father had a lot of hobbies, and we would build things and make things, he did carpentry. And my mother was a stay at home full-time homemaker, she didn't work so she could focus on teaching us a lot of other things. She had a lot of traditional homemaking skills, baking and sewing, all my sisters learnt how to sew you know things like that and those are good things to be able to pass on even nowadays but I just don't have the time to you know. […] I just don't have enough time to do all that stuff.

Hence, sometimes they are forced to compromise and be more flexible in revising their children's consumption patterns when necessary, such as letting them watch television when the parent is cooking or working at home, or when they can't take them outside to play and are afraid to let them play outdoor by themselves.

Negotiating media habits with the absent parent

An important issue that single parents have to face relates to their constant need to negotiate children's rules with the other parent. Both two-parent and single parent households generally claim to have guidelines regarding both the types of material and the amount of media they allow their children to consume (Hoover, Clark, & Alters, 2004). Yet we found that there often seemed to be notably differences between the media practices of the single parent and those of the ex-spouse. Thus, media rules were often a source of conflict and tension with the other parent, which in turn affected the children's' relationships with both parents.

For example, when Rayna Hancock was asked about the type of videos and games that she rented for her son, she replied:

> Rayna: (animated) See, I don't even buy that...I don't even want him playing that, his dad bought him that his dad buys the games and his dad buys him stuff that I think is too violent.
>
> Interviewer: You mean movies...or games?
>
> Rayna: Are you talking about the games? Because I'm talking about the games. Yeah, and they have...like...this wrestling one he's talking about, they have the girls walk out that...
>
> Interviewer: Kind of scantily clad.
>
> Rayna: Yeah. Wiggling their butt and stuff and I don't want him watching that...and he's at his dad's house and...that's what they do over there, so.
>
> Interviewer: How do you deal with that. Do you ever talk to him about it, or do you just say, "Well, that's his decision."
>
> Rayna: See, it was about four weeks ago I went over there and they had a movie on that, I don't know if I walked in at the worst part, or what, but it was, like a horror movie. And I said, "You need to turn that off, he doesn't need to watch that." And so they did, and they...but...I was too, um, upset at that point to talk to them about it, so I just kind of left and they turned it off and Wes said that "They were mad after you left mom," (laughs) 'cause, yeah, I am the heavy, and...
>
> Interviewer: Yeah, you're the one who...makes more...
>
> Rayna: Like, I don't really have to tell him, he knows, he knows that I don't agree with this and that and this and that, but, also I can't expect him to change everything...he's had to change a lot to meet my expectations. So, Wes, knows enough, and I stood right there and said, "Wes, you know you're not supposed to watch that," and he says, [little boy voice) "I know mom." And so he knows.

In some cases, conflicts do not only reside in differences about viewing content but also in availability of media to consume. In many of our families, the fathers had not only cable television but also computers; and the children, according to their mothers, were using them without much parental

oversight or restrictions.   Indeed, this inclination reflects the economic disparity that is typical in single parent households between mothers and fathers, as mentioned above. The economic situation for single parents is even more precarious when the divorce has not been settled and child support has not yet been mandated. This is the case for Vanessa Miller who, after twenty years, left her husband twelve months before the interview and had by then already moved three times. She explained that the divorce had been 'tough' on the children, whose grades at school had dropped since she left her husband.   Their life had been completely transformed as their household income had dropped dramatically. In relation to media, they no longer could afford cable television or a computer. Yet Vanessa rationalized this lack as a positive development, claiming that it meant that she did not have to worry about what her children were exposed to on the Internet or on television. Nevertheless, their drastic lifestyle change was felt by the entire household.

Another interesting pattern emerged within three of our families, echoing an argument raised by Rogge and Jensen (1988).   Those authors claimed that women tend to recognize computers as pertaining to the male domain and thus consciously or unconsciously reject them because they serve as reminders of the conflicts they have with their male partner (p. 95). One woman, Meredith Ricci, a nurse and mother of three daughters, voiced a similar experience.   Her ex-husband works in the computer business and always had many computers in the house. When asked if she discussed media rules with him, she explained that she did not. Computers in particular were not discussed, she said, because they had always been a 'sore spot' in their relationship. Meredith bemoaned the fact that her ex-husband had been constantly on the computer for work and for fun, causing a great deal of tension in their marriage. As a reaction she said that she had not even wanted to touch one when they had been married, and now barely uses them for the same reason. When asked if the cause of her infrequent use of the computer was related to her experience with her computer-user husband, she answered:

> Meredith: Uhm (yes) Because I felt like it was taking away from personal time or being able to do anything else you know. It's, it's a scapegoat. It's like the people that read all the time because they can't talk to somebody, you know they sit (miming somebody reading a book).

Two of our interviewees, Sarah Taber and Eugene Arrington, both similarly blamed excessive television consumption as one of the reasons for their divorces. In both cases, the husband was watching too much television and not devoting enough time to the family in the view of their ex-wives. As a reaction, both of these single parents do not watch television and try to instill in their children the same habit. Sarah Taber notes the tensions involved when she has to discuss media rules with her ex-husband.

> Sarah: About rules ah (yes) you know and setting boundaries and homework have been huge issues and you know he is very very, he is very different than I am. He is very much a disciplinarian through fear and I am more of a disciplinarian through, you know, talking and holding boundaries but, you know, trying to connect with them more than [he does] himself.
> Interviewer: Yeah, because in the first interview the girls were mentioning that they have computers there and so I had the impression that for example they were using lot more media at their father's house than here and you had, you were pretty concerned about certain things like violence on TV and I was wondering if that one is actually carried on over there or…
> Sarah: That is and it was actually a huge issue when they were young, for me, that was another mediating [issue] because he, he didn't have any boundaries. He would let them watch r-rated movies and…he doesn't have, that's, that's the part of the parent that he doesn't have. He doesn't pay attention to what they are doing, and what they are watching and…I mean, even a couple of months ago we made a joke about something, with Samantha, and Samantha is 17 now so she is kind of older, and I was talking about…something came up about a porno flick and she was like "Oh I have seen lots of porno flicks" "oh my God you have!" (laugh) and they go "well, dad has the whole range of cable and you can get porno movies on TV and we have all watched mom" and I was like "Oh my God" (laugh) "Thank you, thank you for sharing that

with me", so that's the kind of situation over there and he is a TV-holic and that's why I don't, you know, I felt like that I lost my marriage actually to TV.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Sarah: Ah (yes) it was a huge…

Interviewer: Because he was watching too much TV?

Sarah: He turns, wakes up in the morning he turns the TV on and goes off when he goes to bed you know and basically our conversations ended and TV was what filled that void so…so I went through years and years without even having a TV at all.

Interviewer: As a reaction to…

Sarah: Right, and I was just like (laugh) I have had ten years of watching so much TV that I just got to the point where I saw that I just I couldn't handle it anymore, commercials and the media and you know what they were trying to program…so I do movies, I like movies but now I am very selective of what, you know, when I watch TV so…but yeah he [the ex-husband] has always been somebody that has, so they have been very exposed to a lot of things that I was very against to, especially when they were younger. As they have gotten older they have gotten, because of me I think, where I come from, I finally realized through single parenting that I couldn't protect them. I can't protect them from their environment, I can't protect them from what's going on over at his house…in many ways they were still getting what they needed, they needed a father and he was there for them so I do hold that for him and he really has been very strong out saying "They are gonna be part of my life" so that's in the good part, the other side of the coin was that I couldn't protect them from the influences that happens over there. So…really where I come from is more about giving them the tools to make a decisions for themselves, you know, and I think that's been probably the best approach that I have found because now they don't watch TV very often, they don't really sit down, they never watch TV here, very very rarely unless it's a movie or something, but as far as sitting down and watching TV. I mean they like "Friends" and they kind of went through their little programs, that they go through but…you know, I think in today's world too, in school, and the older they get that's very demanding, they have a lot of activities and they have a lot of things that they do so they don't have time to sit down and watch TV that much so.

On the other hand, in relation to computers, both Sarah and Eugene did not express the same type of issues with their ex-partners. Indeed, Eugene's wife had actually asked him to introduce the children to the Internet and other resources that the computer offers because, although she has a computer at home, she explained that she doesn't know very much about it.

Discussion

As noted in the literature, single parenthood has been stigmatized in public discourses because of the popular belief that poverty results from a lack of character, responsibility and hard work on the part of parents. On the contrary, most single parents live under or slightly above the poverty line due to a series of factors that include gender, education, job opportunities, legal and welfare policies. In addition, studies have demonstrated that in terms of child development, the structure of the family is not a determining factor (Dowd, 1997). However, these discourses are still present and affect the way single parents perceive their roles within society. As one of our interviewees, Cliff Young, voiced in relation to how he felt single parents were represented in public and political discourses:

C: There is a very tainted view though [in political and public discourses about family]. It's a very moralistic perspective, most weddings are still religious events, there is a minister or pastor or priest or rabbi, and you are not just legally joined but you are joined in the eyes of your God and your community, and you make these promises. And so then people who are divorced, or single parents who have children out of wedlock somehow are on the other side of that moral or that accepted morality, you know, you are external to it. And there is, I think, still a lot of misrepresentation and even some ahm…discrimination about, I mean, that fact is that half the

kids are being raised in single parent's households. So let's get beyond the morality and let's just really look at the actual demographics and the social phenomenon, not be judgmental about it but just recognize that that's, is that what happens. You know there is this, and I remember that during the Bush campaign, there is this real…moral majority sort of perspective that…charities will take care of poor people and tax law should be written so that parents can stay married and…it is just this denial that, that half of the kids are not in intact homes anyways.

Hence, following Gillis (1996), the family we live *by*, the ideal that is promoted within our public culture does not reflect the reality of contemporary society. Yet this has a considerable psychological impact on family practices and on the role of parenting, which are still modeled around the purported two-parent ideal.

Haddon and Silverstone (1995) purposely distinguish between the household and the home among single parent families. The first concept relates to the practices concerning the management of everyday life in terms of material resources, which are also connected to environmental and social ones. Conversely, the term 'home' stands for the emotional and conceptual idea of having a place of residence, a place one belongs to that, at times, confers security or anxiety. In particular, the authors (Haddon and Silverstone, 1995) stress that:

> Feeling at home, with all that signifies (and which many of us take for granted) has to be seen, in the context of this research on lone parents, as an achievement. It involves the management of space as well as time. And it involves the management of all that is necessary to imprint on what can sometimes be over-crowded, limited and temporary accommodation a set of meanings through which an individual finds his or her own private and personal security. This involves, among other things, the appropriation of both objects and machines, meanings and media – making what is publicly and generally visible (if not very often within reach) in the world outside, one's own (1995:15).

The making of a 'home' is the major challenge for parents in our study as well. Parents struggle to create a stable environment for the children by maintaining rules and habits that the children had before the divorce, or by establishing new rules in light of the new situation. At the same time, single parents have to accommodate these rules to the larger demands and responsibilities the parent confronts as a single parent. In agreement with the literature, our study suggests that social and material factors heavily shape the everyday dynamics occurring in single parent households, and by extension, the way ICTs are used as means of entertainment and communication in these homes. The narratives of our families are filled with examples of how lack of income and time affect the way single parents interact with their children and thus the ways in which ICTs are used within these households.

As Smart and Neale (1999) have argued, moral decisions are always negotiated within the context of specific situations. Thus, individuals tend to act according to the circumstances and do not necessarily follow established or stated norms. As we found in our cases, social and cultural guidelines are taken as a basis for media use but are continuously negotiated in light of the particular conditions in which the family is embedded. In relation to ICTs, our interviewees face the constant need to negotiate between their desires and the necessities that parenting entails when it comes to new and old media. All voiced their belief that child-rearing requires time; time that is taken away from their personal life. Moreover, in this paper, we have discussed several ways in which the lack of time affects the parents' use of ICTs for communication. On the one hand, computers are recognized as useful, convenient, and affordable tools for maintaining contact with friends and family or for making new acquaintances. On the other hand, time for socializing is rather short, having to do with the need to oversee the children or running a household's chores.

Another area in which time and economic factors are evident in affecting the choices the single parents' families make is in the leisure sphere. In terms of entertainment, our interviewees demonstrated the rather limited set of choices that they have for themselves and their children. In many families, the lack of money was responsible for the scarcity and limitations of technologies

available in the household. Some of our parents also described the ways in which their lives underwent radical change after the separation, and, thus, even media consumption habits changed accordingly. Similar to Haddon's and Silverstone's findings (1995), we argue that single parents use television and computers not only as companions but also as central to entertainment practices the whole family enjoys together because they do not have many other choices at their disposal.

The negotiation between desires and actual practices in relation to the children's media consumption is also complicated by the relationship between the parents themselves. The type of custody arrangement affects the level of control single parents have in these decision-making processes. Smart and Neale (1999) distinguish three different typologies of post-divorce parenting: co-parenting, custodial parenting and solo parenting. These three categories primarily reflect changes in the degree of involvement of both parents and, thus, their relationship after separation. Co-parenting refers to an equal time division among parents and a shared involvement in the children's development. This type of relationship requires a large amount of time on the part of both parents, as well as both emotional and structural flexibility. Indeed, both parents must accept the needs and social arrangements of their ex-partners while also respecting their lifestyle choices. For these reasons, it is a very fragile and difficult type of relationship especially in relation to educational decisions regarding the children. Custodial parenting differs from the previous category mainly in legal terms that state that the children have a primary residence and one parent is the primary care-taker. Thus, on the one hand children tend to have a more stable living arrangement, yet on the other, they experience living in two separated families, which entails different rules and habits. For parents, this typology can offer a less stressful condition and the possibility of constructing a more solid and independent life on their own. Solo parenting may offer the greater stability to children, but it also causes the heaviest burden on the parent's life.

Our parents tended to have primarily joint or primary custody of the children. In both situations, however, they expressed the difficulty in having to accommodate the other parent's ideas and habits in relation to their children's media habits. In most cases, the ex-partner was depicted as a heavy user of ICTs and as being overly thoughtless about the children's media consumption.

Finally, all the issues here examined have stressed the importance of understanding media consumption within the social and cultural contexts in which individuals' life is embedded. However, in discussing the future of new media technologies in contemporary society, policies have often devoted their attention to issues related to access to ICTs, overlooking the importance of social and cultural factors as determinants in the actual use of media within the context of everyday life. There is a tendency to assume that these media are necessarily desired by all. Conversely, in many cases, individuals are not interested in pursuing these technologies because they are not really felt as necessary for them, or are not viewed as a choice due to economic or cultural reasons. As Haddon and Silverstone (1995) ponder:

> …The very horizons of lone parents can be more limited by the experience of low income. They can evaluate the benefits of technology in an interview, and go through the exercise of discussing in principle whether it would be useful or desirable. But they do no necessarily think about such ICTs in their day-to-day life. Even where they do, technologies which are desired often have a much lower priority than other aspirations. For instance, if they had extra money, many would talk of preferring to spend it on childcare so that they could have more of a break from the home and increase their leisure options (1995:27).

For our informants, making a 'home', as mentioned before, is the most important focus in their lives, while ICTs are not necessarily a priority, and in some cases they cannot be. Hence, old and new media technologies are used and conceived of as useful tools and resources to the extent they are perceived as relevant to their family and individual practices. In the case of single parents, the presence of such devices in the household and their impact on their everyday lives is largely affected by the economic and social conditions in which these families are embedded. This has implications for the contemporary public discourses around the digital divide. Policymakers need to consider the

importance of other intervening factors, such as the ones here illustrated, that affect the uses and attitudes towards ICTs in contemporary society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the attention to single parents and their media consumption practices stems from the interest in meaning-making practices within contemporary society, in which old and new technologies of communication are not simply means but also environments for these practices, and important sources of the symbols utilized within our culture to understand the world we live in.

On the one hand, our study reveals the awareness of our informants of the stigma that is attached to single parents in contemporary culture (Chambers, 2001); a stigma that they have to cope with while trying to make a 'home' for their children. On the other hand, our research illustrates how temporal, financial and spatial factors influence the uses of technologies within single parent households. Indeed, in terms of media use, we found many commonalties with Haddon's and Silverstone's (1995) findings in relation to the impact of spatial and temporal constraints on the interviewees' use of media; the large adoption of media as entertainment resources due to economic constraints; and in many cases the justification of not owning at all or not wanting to upgrade the technologies because they do not represent a priority in their lives, or are believed to be detrimental to the children's development. However, in the households we studied the computer had a rather prominent role for communication and entertainment as well as when discussing parental practices; and, most of the findings that emerged from our interviews, especially in relation to temporal and social factors, involved families with different income levels headed by both women and men.

Furthermore, we found that when the ex-partners have an active role in the life of the children our interviewees tend not agree with their ex-partner's parenting methods. Indeed, as Haddon and Silverstone noted (1995), when children are split between households they often have to cope with two completely different caring environments, rules, and habits regarding media use. Hence, parents are forced to negotiate their ideas and rules about media use for their children by acknowledging that the ex-partner might issue an opposite worldview on such concerns. Our study also revealed that the relationship with the other parent was very important not only in the child-rearing practices but also in their personal project of identity-construction and practices of the parents interviewed. In particular, the experiences with the ex-partner's media habits influence the attitudes of the parents after the divorce in relation to ICTs which burden their already difficult process of negotiation between their desires and the social and economic conditions of their lives.

In conclusion, children's up-bringing is a hard and complex practice for all parents. Managing housekeeping duties and responsibilities as well as the demands and pressures of the work environment and contemporary consumer culture also place a strain on parental demands. We argue that the temporal, financial and spatial constraints that impact single parents' households create a particular life experience that, in turn, affects and is affected by the consumption of information and communication technologies. Hence, as the number of this particular cohort grows, it may in turn reshape previously accepted norms of family life and the relationship between family life and the entertainment media. It becomes, then, crucial to consider the life experiences of single parents and the constraints they face in their everyday lives when theorizing about the quality of life for these individuals and their families.

References

Amato, P. R. (2000) "Diversity Within Single-Parent Families", in D. H. Demo, K. R. Allen and M. A. Fine (eds.) *Handbook of Family Diversity*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Associated Press (1997) "President Clinton's Message to Congress on the State of the Union", *The New York Times* (Feb. 5), A20.

Atkinson, K., Oerton, S. and D. Burns (1998) "'Happy Families?': Single Mothers, the Press and the Politicians", *Capital and Class* 64: 1-11.

Bird, E. S. and J. Jorgenson (2001) "Closing the Rural/Urban Divide: Cultural Context and Educational Computer Literacy in Rural Florida." Paper delivered at the 51st Annual Conference of the International Communication Association, Washington, DC, U.S.A., May 24-28, 2001.

Buckingham, D. (2000) *After the Death of Childhood: Growing Up in the Age of Electronic Media*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Buckingham, D. (1993) *Children Talking Television: The Making of Television Literacy*. Washington, D.C.: The Falmer Press.

Carey, J. W. (1989) "Introduction", in J. W. Carey (ed.) *Communication as culture*. Boston: Unwin & Hyman.

Chambers, D. (2001) *Representing the Family*. London: Sage Publications.

Clark, L. S. (2001) "Constructivist Methods in the Symbolism, Media and the Lifecourse and the Symbolism, Meaning and the New Media @ Home Projects." Paper available at http://www.colorado.edu/journalism/mcm/mrc/symbolism/symbol-method.htm.

Clark, L.S., Demont-Heinrich, C., and Webber, S. (2004) "Ethnographic Interviews on the Digital Divide," *New Media & Society*, forthcoming.

Coontz, S. and N. Folbre (2002) "Marriage, Poverty, and Public Policy: A Discussion Paper from the Council on Contemporary Families" (Prepared for the Fifth Annual CCF Conference, April 26-28, 2002), *The American Prospect Online*, March 19, 2002. Available at http://www.prospect.org/webfeatures/2002/03/coontz-s-03-19.html.

Dowd, N. E. (1997) *In Defense of Single-Parent Families*. New York: New York University Press.

European Commission (2001) *The social situation in the European Union 2001*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Fields, J. and L. M. Casper (2001) *America's Families and Living Arrangements: Population Characteristics*. Population Report 2000, June 2001, U.S. Census Bureau.

Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (1992) *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gillis, J. (1996) *A World of Their Own Making: Myth, Ritual, and the Quest for Family Values*. New York: Basic Books.

Haddon, L. and R. Silverstone (1995) *Lone Parents and their Information and Communication Technologies*. SPRU CICT Report Series No. 12, Brighton: Science Policy Research Unity, University of Sussex.

Hobson, D. (1980) "Housewives and the Mass Media", in Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis (eds.) *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies 1972-79*. London: Hutchinson.

Hobson, D. (1982) *'Crossroads': The Drama of a Soap Opera*. London: Methuen.

Hoover, S. M. (2002) "Religion and Meaning in the Digital Age: Field Research on Internet/Web Religion." Paper delivered at the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) International Conference, Maastricht, the Netherlands, October 13-16, 2002

Hoover, S.M., Clark, L.S., and Alters, D., with J. Champ and L. Hood. (2004). *Media, Home, and the Family*. New York: Routledge.

Lindlof, T. (1995) *Qualitative Communication Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Livingstone, S. (2001) "Making the Transition from ICT Access to Use in Low-Income Households." Paper delivered at the 51st Annual Conference of the International Communication Association, Washington, DC, U.S.A., May 24-28, 2001.

Livingstone, S. (1998) "Mediated Childhoods: A Comparative Approach to Young People's Changing Media Environment in Europe", *European Journal of Communication* 13, 4: 435-456.

Livingstone, S. and M. Bovill. (1999) *Young People New Media*. London: London School of Economics and Political Science.

Lull, J. (1980) "The Social Uses of Television", *Human Communication Research*, 6, 3, Spring.

McLanahan, S. and G. Sandefur (1994) *Growing Up with a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Morgan, D. (1996) *Family Connections*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Morley, D. (1986) *Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure*. London: Comedia.

Moynihan, D. P. (1965) *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*. Washington, DC: US Department of Labor.

Palmer, P. (1986) The Lively Audience : a study of children around the TV set. Boston: Allen & Unwin.

Rogge, J.U. and K. Jensen (1988) "Everyday Life and Television in West Germany: An Emphatic-Interpretive Perspective on the Family System", in J. Lull (ed.) *World Families Watch Television*. London: Sage Publications.

Smart, C. and B. Neale (1999) *Family Fragments?* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Stacey, J. (1999) "Virtual Social Science and the Politics of Family Values", in G. E. Marcus (ed.) *Critical Anthropology Now: Unexpected Contexts, Shifting Constituencies, Changing Agendas*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.

U.S. Department of Commerce (2002), *A Nation Online: How Americans Are Expanding Their Use of the Internet*. Economics and Statistics Administration, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, February 2002, www.ntia.doc.gov.

U.S. Department of Commerce (2000) *Falling Through the Net, Toward Digital Inclusion*. Economics and Statistics Administration, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, August 2000, www.ntia.doc.gov.