



## Existential Field 8:

# Media, Communication and Information Technologies in the European Family

Working Report (April 2010)



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Funded under Socio-economic Sciences & Humanities



**FAMILYPLATFORM** (SSH-2009-3.2.2 Social platform on research for families and family policies): funded by the European Union's 7th Framework Programme for 18 months (October 2009 – March 2011).

## **Working Reports**

Funded by the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme and co-ordinated by Technical University Dortmund, FAMILYPLATFORM gathers a consortium of 12 organisations working together to articulate key questions about the family for the *European Social Science and Humanities Research Agenda 2012-2013*.

There are four key stages to the project. The first is to chart and review the major trends of comparative family research in the EU in 8 '*Existential Fields*' (EF). The second is to critically review existing research on the family, and the third is to build on our understanding of existing issues affecting families and predict future conditions and challenges facing them. The final stage is to bring the results and findings of the previous three stages together, and propose key scientific research questions about families to be tackled with future EU research funding.

This *Working Report* has been produced for the first stage of the project, and is part of a series of reports, as follows:

- EF1. Family Structures & Family Forms**
- EF2. Family Developmental Processes**
- EF3. Major Trends of State Family Policies in Europe**
- EF4a. Family and Living Environment**
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- EF5. Patterns and Trends of Family Management in the European Union**
- EF6. Social Care and Social Services**
- EF7. Social Inequality and Diversity of Families**
- EF8. Media, Communication and Information Technologies in the European Family**

Both full versions and summaries of *Working Reports* are available to download from the FAMILYPLATFORM website, where stakeholders are invited to comment on the findings, and have an input into the project.

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## Abstract

*Media, communication and information technologies in the European family* examines the existential field of *Family, Media, Family Education and Participation* as part of the work programme of the Family Platform project. The Existential Field 8 (EF8) report is written at a time of substantial technological and social change, resulting in a simultaneously diverging and converging media environment, strongly shaped by processes of globalisation and the recent advent of widespread access to the internet and mobile technologies. Structured according to four central themes – the changing place of the media in the European home; digital interactive and mobile technologies; parenting, media, everyday and socialisation; and mediating relations between family and wider society – the review also includes five special focus pieces on diasporic media consumptions, mobile media, new technologies and intimate relationships, digital exclusion and girl culture. Six key trends emerge:

- New, interactive, individualised and personalised media technologies are rapidly contributing to a diverse media environment in Europe. Across Europe, young people are staying at home for longer periods of time – perhaps appropriately termed an extended adolescence, where bedrooms are heavily mediated.
- Children’s use of the internet continues to grow. Striking recent rises are evident among younger children (6-11 years) and in countries that have recently entered the European Union (EU).
- Education systems across Europe, from school through university, are increasingly reliant on technology-enhanced classrooms.
- Health, ageing support and other care and support services are increasingly reliant on new technologies, especially within the home.
- Media consumption continues to provide moments of togetherness, despite the individualisation exacerbated by new technologies. Television, for instance, shapes a cultural space of commonality for diasporic families and cross-generational communication.
- There is an increasingly small difference in internet use between boys and girls in the younger age groups and gender gaps in access to the internet are mostly small and are closing in nearly all countries. Socioeconomic inequalities continue to matter.

The review recommends that research in this area needs to better converge family studies literature within sociology and media and communications literature, that more research is needed on a cross-national comparative level, and that little is known for all age groups in the population, especially the media consumption of older people. Also, little research distinguishes or compares ‘youth’ or ‘children’ by age and other sociological variables. Findings across Europe on social class, ethnicity and cultural differences remain scarce in terms of media literacy, education and civic participation and there is little research that takes into account media environments as a whole.

## About the authors

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## Executive summary

This report is written at a time of substantial technological and social change, resulting in a simultaneously diverging and converging media environment, strongly shaped by processes of globalisation and the recent advent of widespread access to the internet and mobile technologies. For many families, the digitisation of hitherto analogue and print-based media, and the proliferation of interactive, peer-to-peer, individualised means of communication internationally have transformed both communication within the family and relations between the family and the wider world.

### Approach

This review draws on rigorous, recent, publicly available academic and policy relevant research as well as policy documents regarding the complex relations among the changing media environment, the changing family and wider societal processes.

- By **media**, we include any and all forms of media, communication and information technologies as they relate to family well-being.
- By **family**, we avoid any prescriptive or narrow specification, following Hill and Tisdall's (1997: 66) claim that "the idea of family is to some degree a fluid one, with a mix of concepts at its core – direct biological relatedness, parental caring role, long-term cohabitation, permanent belonging".
- By **well being**, we follow Family Platform's specification of family well-being as multidimensional, encompassing both an objective approach and a subjective approach.

We frame this review according to three linked theoretical foci:

- Throughout this report we analyse media doubly articulated both as **object** – items in the household, whose location, access, gendered usage, use for facilitating work at home or care and support for older people and the infirm have significance for the timetable, spatial arrangements and social relations of family life, and media as **text** – where the content and reception of media messages, the ways in which they represent dis/advantaged groups, and the symbolic (and material) risks as well as opportunities they pose influence people's perceptions of the wider world and of their place within it.
- Instead of treating the media as a somehow external or singular institution or source of influence that **impacts on** childhood, youth and the family, we instead examine how the institutions and processes of family and social life are increasingly complexly mediated (or mediatised) in diverse, culturally and historically contingent ways; this is to eschew simple cause-effect claims, along with the often extreme moral judgements that tend to accompany them, and to seek to understand people's diverse engagement with media in context.
- To understand the importance of context, we employ the concept of media **environment**, rather than focus on particular or discrete media technologies in turn. In combination, media are both part of the societal and domestic environment (they have become infrastructural, taken for granted) and they bear systematic relations to each other – thus a change to one part has consequences for the rest with, most notably, technological innovations remediating more established media.

In addition to transformations in the media environment, some important **social trends** shape the family context within which media are accorded a place in the household (Livingstone, 2002, 2009). These trends have implications for practices of media use as follows:



- **Extended youth:** as children remain dependent on their parents for longer, their teenage and young adult years are spent in the family home, creating a demand for multiple personalised media goods – in bedrooms and other rooms – to accommodate competing leisure interests.
- **'Getting older younger':** with the rise of consumerism, commerce is targeting ever younger children, expanding the commercial value of the child market and creating new markets (for example 'teenies', 'tweenies') for many goods, often consumerist, sometimes sexualised, often imported, highly branded forms of interactive or mass media.
- The **'special child':** as the number of children in each family declines, parents are able to spend more on each child (or, on a sole child), such expenditure typically including media goods, digital toys, heavily advertised fashion items and media-related bedroom décor, sometimes with consequences for parental authority and values.
- **Inside/outside:** in some countries (especially the UK and US), parental fears regarding the safety of their children in public places, even the street or park outside their house, encourage a tendency to equip the home as a place of leisure entertainment to compensate for declining public provision.
- **Informal learning:** as the period of education extends through the late teens, and as competitive pressures to gain workplace skills increase, parents are under social and financial pressure to provide household goods, technologies and toys to support informal learning at home.
- **Lifelong learning:** as the means of communication changes, requiring updated provision and, especially, new digital skills, adults too must engage in a continual process of learning – to use the technology in its own right and to use it to compete in a more flexible labour market.
- **Extended and reconstructed families:** for diverse reasons, from the growth of an elderly population, increased migration, limits on state welfare provision and more diversity in family structures, family communication must extend over time and place, positioning communication technologies as increasingly valuable.
- **Individualisation:** the shift from top-down state provision (whether of education, health, welfare or democratic engagement) to a consumer-led model of governance places more emphasis on informed choice and varieties of technological mediation, this requiring the accessible provision of information, choice and networking opportunities for connecting within and beyond communities.

#### **Key findings on the changing place of media in the European home**

- Research shows a range of functions performed by media in household and familial spaces, including provision of a common focus for leisure and conversation, provision of symbolic resources for family myths and narratives, the regulation of family time and space and a means of separating or connecting family subsystems within and beyond the home.
- Overall a tension is evident between two trends. On the one hand, media experience still tends to be shared with other family members, with many relying on media to generate and reinforce communal experiences, values and discussion. On the other hand, media are becoming more personalised, used in private spaces, with the rise of a media-rich bedroom culture for children, mobile phones enabling more personal communication and the diversification of media goods and services supporting individualised taste cultures and lifestyles within the family.
- The longer trend, however, is not that of collectivity around the media (especially, television) but rather of individualisation within the home as well as within communities, stimulated in part by the availability of ever-cheaper and more personalised versions of once-communal goods. This has particular benefits for certain groups: the telephone has particular significance for young and older

people, television for those who are house-bound and the telephone at work for single parents and parents returning to work.

- For parents, media pose considerable challenges regarding values, competences and authority. But they also bring considerable advantages in terms of leisure, shared interests and pleasures. While parental education and income both have a part to play, their effects may be opposed, and it is certainly not simply the more affluent who have more. Rather, those in lower-income households are more likely to have a television or television-linked games machine in their bedroom, while highly educated parents are less likely to put a television or video recorder in their children's bedrooms, but are more likely to provide them with books, or a computer in the household, if not in their bedrooms
- Further, two-parent households (and households with working mothers) are more likely to provide a media-rich home, reflecting their higher incomes, yet single parents are just as likely to provide media-rich bedrooms for their children, suggesting considerable efforts made to provide for children in single-parent families.
- For children and young people, one of the most important contributions of research – whether observing young people hanging out on the street corner or, more recently, going online in their bedroom (Livingstone, 2009) – has been to challenge the moral panics that commonly associate youthful media use with fears regarding their vulnerability and victimisation or, on the other hand, their engagement with new forms of mediated 'hooliganism'. Their pleasures vary across Europe: a 'screen entertainment culture' is particularly strong in the UK, with Denmark following close. Households in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands are 'pioneers' of new technologies, including for children. Spain maintains a strongly family-oriented culture where children spend comparatively little time watching television alone in their bedroom.
- Household use of the internet varies very widely across Europe. It ranges from 25% in Bulgaria to 86% in the Netherlands. Gender differences in internet and computer use remain inconsistent, although present, across Europe. Younger users are more likely to use Web 2.0 services on their phone, compared with older users; men browse more for news and information although games and music are evenly used by men and women.
- Many European citizens have recently gained a mobile phone, and the age at which children first acquire mobile phones has been decreasing into the pre-teens for a decade, although there is national variation in levels of adoption. Meanwhile, the rise of texting, use of the camera on the phone and internet access via the mobile phone have given rise to concerns about what children do with these facilities (for example cyberbullying, 'sexting') and what they can access (online).

#### *Key findings on digital and interactive media technologies*

- With 75% of European children using the internet,<sup>1</sup> a figure that continues to rise although it may soon plateau, societal hopes for new opportunities are considerable. Accompanying these are equally prominent concerns regarding online risks, raising new research questions with pressing policy implications.
- The evidence across Europe shows that, notwithstanding considerable cross-national differences in children's internet use, the more parents use the internet, the more children do so also. Several patterns are emerging: (i) gender gaps in access diminish as home and school internet access becomes common; (ii) there is a growing bedroom culture for teenagers and solitary use of the internet is increasing, particularly for boys; and (iii) the amount of time spent by boys and girls online has been increasing in all countries.



- Giving out personal information is the most common risky behaviour at around half of online teenagers. Findings from the Eurobarometer survey (2008) suggest that, according to their parents, children encounter more online risk through home than school use (although this may be because parents know little of their children's use at school).
- There is evidence supporting a classification of countries based on the likelihood (also low, medium or high) of children experiencing online risk. This classification suggests a positive correlation between use and risk. High use, high risk countries are, it seems, either wealthy Northern European countries or new entrants to the EU. Southern European countries tend to be relatively lower in risk, partly because they provide fewer opportunities for use.
- It seems that children's internet-related skills increase with age. Such skills are likely to include children's abilities to protect themselves from online risks although, perhaps surprisingly, this has been little examined. There are cross-national differences in coping, it seems. Children's perceived ability to cope with online risk reveals higher ability to cope among children in Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany and the UK, and lower ability to cope in Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Portugal and Spain (intermediate countries are the Czech Republic, Ireland, Poland, Slovenia and Sweden).
- The economic and educational resources of the family are replicated in digital environments. To create societies in which all families are equal, it is important to understand how we can break this vicious cycle for disadvantaged families so that access to services, social relationships, education and information is not limited by cultural, social or economic background.

#### *Key findings on parenting, media, everyday life and socialisation*

- Widespread use of ICT could change who we meet and who we form intimate relationships with. ICT can be expected to change where we meet and who we meet. However, the rule seems to be that offline sociability and intimacy will be extended into the online world and not replaced by it. In families of the future, spouses might rely on information gathered through all kinds of ICT to demand that their partner acts accordingly.
- Traditionally, infants and toddlers have engaged little with the media, although television, radio and music are often in the background. During primary school years, children are generally not major media users, although television and electronic games are highly popular. Over the teenage years, young people begin to broaden their range of media uses and tastes, often seeking to individuate themselves from their friends via media tastes while simultaneously being absorbed in the (often normative, even coercive) culture of their peer group. By their late teens and early twenties, young people are negotiating a wide range of information, communication and literacy demands as they manage the transition from school to further study and/or work.
- Generally, much of the available literature on media and socialisation addresses questions of media exposure and effects. Overall, the research literature points to a range of modest effects, including effects on attitudes and beliefs, effects on emotions, and, more controversially, effects on behaviour (or the predisposition towards certain behaviours). However, there are many methodological qualifications and contestations accompanying these conclusions, especially the critique of cause-effect assumptions in much socialisation theory, and the concern that such research neglects the child's own agency.
- In terms of family reception of media content, and questions of values and tastes, the context of family viewing is a crucial determining factor in what causes offence. Research suggests that audience concern most often focuses on terms that stereotype or marginalise. Buckingham (2005) suggests that children may adopt their taste judgements from adults, including finding swearing,

sex or violence distasteful or embarrassing. On the other hand, they also consider that such content in reality television, game shows and soap operas has value in offering them a kind of a projected adult future. Thus Buckingham and Bragg (2003, 2004) found that children may value sexual material as a means of gaining information otherwise difficult to obtain or as providing a pretext for discussing difficult issues in the family.

- In studies on the family, media and diaspora, family appears both in the background and the core of research. The family is often the assumed context for the migrant and diasporic media consumption, but it is rarely treated as a significant analytical category per se. Research on diasporic media consumption reveals intergenerational tensions around the use of the media – especially television. At the same time, it shows that significant elements of family bonding and communication take place around shared viewings of television. Young diasporic subjects' media consumption tends to be diverse and cosmopolitan, as it often includes media of various cultural and linguistic zones, and shared and individual media and communication technologies' use.
- While productive media technologies offer opportunities for the development of (feminine) identity and may empower girls with the means to 'speak up' and disrupt hetero-normative ideals, girls' cultural activities nonetheless take place in the broader commercial and societal structures; it is therefore necessary to acknowledge the forces that extend but at the same time limit the possibilities of their online activities.
- Parental mediation strategies for children online can be classified as active or instructive mediation, rule making or restrictive mediation, and parental modelling or co-viewing. Research on parental mediation of the internet in fact reveals that mediation is fairly widely practised, albeit with substantial cross-national variations. The effectiveness of time restriction in European countries shows that the significance of the strategy differs with the socialisation cultures of the countries. However, evidence of 'a regulation gap', impeding parental mediation especially for the internet, shows that since parents are willing and ready to mediate television more than the internet, even though they worry more about the internet and television, it is lack of skills rather than lack of concern that results in lower levels of internet mediation.

#### *Key findings on media and wider society*

- Integrated policies for supporting healthy ageing are now an EU-wide priority. One of the clear benefits identified by initiatives for using ICT in healthy ageing is cost reduction by providing care at the early stages of illness rather than waiting for a fully developed condition, and increasingly integrated home care for older people and the infirm are being encouraged, which makes use of a variety of assistive technologies. The take up of eHealth initiatives remains uneven across the EU. Further, eHealth is accompanied by a significant number of challenges dotting the way to sustained and successful take-up. Older people do not yet enjoy the benefits of the digital age.
- The use of ICT in education and learning at school and also at home is the site of attention and action at the policy level as the use of ICT for positive impacts on learning outcomes, achieving potentials, acquiring job skills and enhancing lifelong learning is indicated. In terms of utilising full benefits of ICT in education and learning, Livingstone (2009: 64) identifies two hurdles: "one is attitudinal, for parents must share this educational and technological vision for their child; the other is material, for parents must possess the resources (time, space, knowledge and money) to implement this vision". Recently, there has been optimism that mobile phones may help to overcome digital divides between learners with home broadband access or that it may improve feedback from teachers. However, mobile learning necessitates a good amount of technical training, preparation and planning, production of learning material and a sequence of other many time-consuming activities. It must be admitted that, as with ICT and education, the advantages of this are still unclear, and as always these are bound to vary by demographic factors.

- Participation, like everything else, is impacted by the social location of individuals within specific contexts. The UK *Children go online* final report (Livingstone and Bober, 2005) found that while many children use the internet for a minimal level of participation (for example 44% of 9- to 19-year-old weekly users have completed a quiz online, 25% have sent an email or text message to a website, 22% have voted for something online and 17% have sent pictures or stories to a website), and while many have used the internet to visit sites concerned with political or civic issues, such participation varies by demographics. Age, gender and social grade make a difference: girls, older and middle-class teens visit a broader range of civic and political sites. More significantly, findings from this and other studies show over and over again that new technologies are primarily used by those who are already civically engaged rather than drawing in new participants to civic or political activities. This finding – of technologies reinforcing rather than reducing existing knowledge and participation gaps – holds across studies of both young people and adults. Thus experiments in e-governance are not yet showing positive benefits.
- Although debates over media literacy are far from new, media literacy is increasingly occupying a prominent place on the policy agenda. Once a rather specialist issue for media practitioners and educators, although drawing on a longer, contested history of print literacy, media literacy is now a central issue for everyone concerned with people's – especially, but not only, children's – critical, participatory and creative engagement with all forms of media and communications. Notably, media literacy is increasingly prominent on the European 'digital agenda', reflecting a widespread sense that today's technologically convergent, globalised market is increasingly difficult, perhaps impossible to regulate by individual states, but that it is crucial for individuals to manage this changing environment so as to participate in all spheres of society.

### *Summary of key trends in the media environment with implications for family well-being*

Earlier we outlined key social trends that, by shaping family well-being also shape the role of media within the family. It is also possible to identify the converse – key technological and market trends that, by shaping the media environment also shape the communicative possibilities for family. We identify the following:

- New, interactive, individualised and personalised media technologies are rapidly contributing to a diverse media environment in Europe. Across Europe, young people are staying at home for longer periods of time – perhaps appropriately termed an extended adolescence, where bedrooms are heavily mediated.
- New media are exacerbating multiple processes of change within and outside the family – de-traditionalisation, individualisation, rise in peer cultures and consumerism. Yet cultural differences remain across Europe, for instance, in perceptions of how much leisure time should be spent alone.
- Children's use of the internet continues to grow. Striking recent rises are evident among younger children (6-11 years, and possibly younger) and in countries that have recently entered the EU.
- New media bring about new risks. Online risks high on public, research and policy agendas include exposure to inappropriate content (for example pornographic, self-harm and violent content, racist/hate material), unwelcome contact (for example grooming, sexual harassment, bullying, abuse of personal information and privacy) and, attracting growing attention, inappropriate conduct by children themselves (for example bullying, abuse of privacy). Also, parental worries about risks online are leading to diverse patterns and strategies of parental mediation across the EU as are hopes and expectations evident of the range of opportunities the internet has to afford.
- Education systems across Europe, from school through university, are increasingly reliant on technology-enhanced classrooms.

- The significant amount of training required to make the hardware 'work' leads to ambiguous results around the effectiveness of high use of ICT, especially at school.
- Health, ageing support and other care and support services are increasingly reliant on new technologies, especially within the home.
- This has significant health and cost benefits and also an additional social implication that seeks to make older people feel independent and self-sufficient within their own homes.
- Media consumption continues to provide moments of togetherness, despite the individualisation exacerbated by new technologies. Television for instance, shapes a cultural space of commonality for diasporic families and cross-generational communication.
- Around the television set a process of cultural and linguistic translation often takes place, with parents translating diasporic televisions' language and meanings to their children and children fulfilling the same role in the case of national television.
- There is an increasingly small difference in internet use between boys and girls in the younger age groups and gender gaps in access to the internet are mostly small and are closing in nearly all countries. Socioeconomic inequalities continue to matter.
- In terms of nature of activities and the implications thereof, it seems that gender differences are the (mainly) unintended consequences of the choices that girls and boys make regarding preferred online activities. In terms of internet use, household inequalities in socioeconomic status (SES) have consequences for risks as well as opportunities.

### *Research recommendations*

Based on our critical review of the available research linking family well-being and media environments, our recommendations for future research are noted below:

- Research in this area needs to better converge family studies literature within sociology and media and communications literature. Much of the research reviewed here has been from media and communications studies, although all questions at the heart of family priorities (generational communication, parenting, child-raising practices, relationships within the family) are intensely mediated questions. Hence, we recommend a stronger cross-fertilisation of the two fields.
- While a number of projects have been conducted, primarily funded by the European Commission that compares media consumption across Europe, more research is needed on a cross-national comparative level. As yet little exists for us to make claims that are pan-European in scope.
- There is little known especially the media consumption of older people.
- While media use, especially digital media use of young people, is being heavily researched, little research distinguishes or compares 'youth' or 'children' by age and other sociological variables.
- Findings across Europe on social class, ethnicity and cultural differences remain scarce in terms of media literacy, education and civic participation.
- Much research focuses on the consumption of digital media (especially by young people), while there is little research that takes into account media environments as a whole (across broadcasting, online, print, etc) so as to reveal wider patterns of media consumption across families.

## 1. Introduction

This report examines the existential field of *Family, Media, Family Education and Participation*, as part of the work programme of the European Commission (EC)-funded Family Platform project.

In order to provide a foundation for further research and recommendations, the report reviews contemporary academic research and policy regarding communication and information media in the changing European family, incorporating a critical review of what we know and what we do not know so as to identify key gaps in the evidence base.

Building on this, the next stage of this work will consider the major trends and key drivers in this existential field as the basis for a foresight process to anticipate media-related factors likely to shape family well-being over the next few decades.

### 1.1. Aims, definitions and scope of the report

#### Aims

- To provide an up-to-date review of available empirical research on the role of the media in European family life.
- To focus on specific themes of contemporary academic and policy relevance which address the Family Platform's agenda regarding family well-being.
- To focus attention on recent and future trends in changing media environments across Europe.
- To flag key gaps in the evidence base and thereby indicate directions for future research.

#### Definitions

- By 'media', we include any and all forms of media, communication and information technologies as they relate to family well-being. This includes all media goods and services used in Europe's increasingly media-rich homes, including the importance of information and communication technologies (ICT) in spheres with which families must interact (schools, work, commerce, etc). However, most research has concerned television, while recent research and policy focuses on digital and interactive media, especially the internet.
- By 'family', we avoid any prescriptive or narrow specification, following Hill and Tisdall's (1997: 66) claim that "the idea of family is to some degree a fluid one, with a mix of concepts at its core – direct biological relatedness, parental caring role, long-term cohabitation, permanent belonging". As Goodman (1983: 408) adds, "a family is not just a collection of individuals; it is greater than, and different from the sum of its members.... A systems approach views the family in the context of its social milieu and in the context of its life cycle". However, much research, especially statistical data, addresses the unit of individual or household, missing the importance of family relationships (within and between households) and their complex dynamics of power and culture.
- By 'well-being', we follow Family Platform's specification of family well-being as multidimensional, encompassing both an objective approach (as used by 'quality of life' research, including indicators of factors necessary for a good life – health, employment, education, income, security, housing, family relationship, social inclusion and environment) and a subjective approach (typically based on self-reported life satisfaction or personal evaluations of happiness or quality of life). For both approaches, understanding differences in well-being, particularly those attributable to inequalities, is important.

## Scope

- This review draws on rigorous, recent, publicly available academic and policy relevant research as well as policy documents. For the academic literature reviewed, our focus has been on locating empirical research with a focus on European countries.
- We have not focused on media representations of the family, but rather the use of the media and the ways in which it links with and mediates family well-being and the activities and connections between family and society.

### 1.2. Approach: mediation and media change

In this report we inquire into the complex relations among the changing media environment, the changing family and wider societal processes, following three underlying theoretical foci:

- **Mediation: from the *impact of the media on society* to a *mediated society*:** instead of treating the media as a somehow external or singular institution that ‘impacts on’ childhood, youth and the family, we instead examine how the institutions and processes of family and social life are complexly mediated (or mediatised) in diverse, culturally and historically contingent ways (Martín-Barbero, 1993; Silverstone, 1999). We stress that in a mediated world,

... we have moved from a social analysis in which the mass media comprise one among many influential but independent institutions whose relations with the media can be usefully analyzed to a social analysis in which everything is mediated, the consequence being that all influential institutions in society have themselves been transformed, reconstituted, by contemporary processes of mediation. (Livingstone, 2009: 2)

Consequently,

... we should not expect a single answer to the question of how media transform the social, since media themselves are always at least doubly articulated, as both transmission technology and representational content (Silverstone, 1994) in the contexts of lived practice and situated struggle. (Couldry, 2008: 375)

- **Media as *object* and media as *text*:** throughout this report we follow Silverstone’s (1994) double articulation of the media as *object* – an item in the household, whose location, access, gendered usage, use for facilitating work at home or care and support for older people and the infirm are of concern to sociologists of the family, and media as *text* – where the content and reception of media messages, the ways in which it represents dis/advantaged groups, the risks as well as opportunities it poses to young people are of importance. Hence we seek to integrate the two, following Silverstone (1994) who,

... contrasts the analysis of the media *qua* material objects located in particular spatiotemporal settings with the analysis of the media *qua* texts or symbolic messages located within the flows of particular socio-cultural discourses. (Livingstone, 2007: 18)

- **From *mass-mediated* to *interactive environments*:** we employ the concept of media environments (rather than focus on particular or discrete media technologies in turn; see Meyrowitz, 2008), following the Children and their Changing Media Environments project, which compared children’s experiences of old and new media in 12 European countries (Livingstone and Bovill, 2001). In a media-rich environment, each medium shapes the uses and meaning of others, with new media remediating older media (generally the new incorporates elements of previous media, this also altering or further specialising their uses; Bolter and Grusin, 2000).



Crucially, family life is no longer solely conducted face to face, and nor are the boundaries between home and work, family and community, public and private solely a matter of face-to-face negotiation. In this multimedia and digital age, it is necessary to examine the role and significance of mass and interactive mediated environments, within and beyond the home, as they shape family well-being in contemporary Europe.

In structuring this report, we prioritise the key dimensions and drivers identified and developed by the Family Platform project, as shown in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Themes linking media and family well-being**

| <b>Selected dimensions of family well-being</b> | <b>Sections in this review that address these dimensions</b>   | <b>Selected challenges to family well-being</b> | <b>Sections in this review that address these challenges</b> |
|---|--|---|--|
| Involvement in society                          | <i>Section 5 (literacies, education, participation)</i>  | Coping with uncertainty                         | <i>Sections 3.4, 3.6 (new media, new risks)</i>              |
| Policies and regulations                        | <i>Addressed throughout</i>  | Social and economic inequality                  | <i>Section 3.2.1 (digital disadvantage)</i>                  |
| Equality (gender, 'race' etc)                   | <i>Sections 4.1.1, 4.3 (girl culture, tastes and standards)</i><br><br><i>Section 3.2.1 (digital disadvantage)</i> | Immigration                                     | <i>Section 4.3.1 (diasporic media cultures)</i>              |
| Educational opportunities and expectations      | <i>Section 5 (literacies and education)</i>  | Gender roles, responsibilities and identities   | <i>Section 4.1.1 (girl culture)</i>                          |

### **1.3. Methodology and data availability**

The field of media and communications studies is highly interdisciplinary, drawing on diverse perspectives across the social sciences and humanities, including sociology, psychology, anthropology and cultural studies plus the century-long tradition of research on mass media.

- The literature search was conducted at the British Library of Political and Economic Science at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), which provides comprehensive social science databases such as the LSE's International Bibliography of the Social Sciences, the Social Sciences Citation Index from the ISI Web of Knowledge and the LSE Cross-Searcher, which combines a wide variety of subject specific databases. In these searches, we used various combinations of family- and media-related keywords to refine the results.
- Policy documents were sourced from the EC's website, this providing a variety of policy statements, communication papers, consultations and responses. A key resource was European Sources Online, an online database providing information on the institutions and activities of the European Union (EU).

- Despite the many claims associated with the media and the family, many research questions have only been partially investigated and some, especially those concerning social change, are not readily amenable to empirical research. Most important, given the European focus of this report, little available research was cross-nationally comparative.
- Most of the research literature concerned with families and media derives from the field of media and communication (and allied fields of cultural studies, media education, information literacy) rather than from sociology or family studies, where few studies examine the role of media and communication technologies. It seems as if family life is conceived of as if conducted face-to-face, under conditions of physical co-location, with little significant influence from meanings or discourses carried by mass media.
- Exceptions include research in childhood studies, cultural studies or gender studies where, in the context of qualitative exploration of identity, cultural discourses, consumption processes and/or youth cultures, researchers do refer to the media.
- Increasingly, indicators regarding media use and, especially, ICT access and use are included in standard population surveys (for example of family expenditure, social trends or quality of life).
- Most recently, and often stimulated by public policy concerns regarding the threat that new technologies may pose to children, there has been a rise in ad hoc surveys conducted regarding children's (and, often, adults') access to and use of ICT, at times linked to measures of attitudes, concerns, skills or safety practices.

#### **1.4. Europe's changing media environment: key questions**

In 2007, for the first time, a majority (54%) of households in the EU27 had internet access, and the main location for accessing the internet was the home (Eurostat, 2009). The proliferation of communication and information technologies has placed media and digital literacies at the centre of policy priorities (cf. the EC's Digital Agenda, launched in March 2010), as well as high on the research agenda. For most families in Europe, the media have shifted in status from a merely incidental, if desirable, element of private life and leisure to becoming thoroughly embedded in families' everyday life, providing the indispensable infrastructure for domestic space, daily timetables and, in consequence, a taken-for-granted mediator of social relations within and beyond the home.

However, an OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) scoping report on the future of the family, despite observing that "recent innovations such as Facebook and YouTube give an inkling of its power to revolutionise social interaction, particularly among young people" (2008: 2), refers to new technologies as "potentially disruptive factors" and, to be sure, there are many popular anxieties regarding the changes associated with new technologies. Some of these are technologically determinist and overly pessimistic; all are subject to ongoing debate, including formal inquiries into online risks and appropriate policy responses to ensure personal and business security, safety and privacy. These anxieties must be balanced against the equally dramatic although more optimistic claims regarding the potential of new technologies to mediate and enhance education, commerce, employment, skills and participation, for these too are reshaping policy frameworks and public and private sector practices across Europe and beyond.

These changes in the media and communication environment are not occurring in isolation, driven simply by technological and market innovation. Rather, they occur side-by-side and intersecting with significant changes in the population. These include, notably, higher life expectancy and an ageing society, persistently low fertility rates and a declining youth population, and increasing rates of net migration and the ethnic diversification of national populations (Eurostat, 2009). Wider social changes in the structures of employment and education, increased urbanisation and the growth of affluent

individualism, increasing female labour force participation and the transformation of gender relations, a decline in average household size and diversification of family composition, and a delay in the age at which young people leave the parental home all combine to transform the notion of ‘family’ in twenty-first century Europe.<sup>2</sup>

For researchers, policy makers and the public, a series of pressing questions arise regarding the intersection of media change and sociodemographic change which go to the heart of developments in the modern family and its future well-being. These questions ask how the changing affordances of media and communication technologies *shape* and alter the possibilities, for better or worse, of family life. However, since families are agents, active in the construction of the structures and practices of their lives, one must ask how people *appropriate* and make meaningful the technological and market offer in particular ways and in different contexts. Last, it must be recognised that the major trends of modernity – globalisation, commercialisation and individualisation – contextualise developments in both media and family life.

In this context, our **initial agenda of key questions** inquires into the role and significance of media in sustaining or reshaping:

- **Social relations across generations** (in particular, authority, expertise, shared experience, values), especially for parents and children although also grandparents/children.
- **Social relations within generations**, especially youth cultures and peer-to-peer communication among children and young people, as well as extended sources of support and advice for all.
- **Networks and communities**, as circles of communication extend and connect, although possibly also exclude and marginalise, households locally and transnationally.
- **Formal/informal relations beyond the home** – with work (flexi-working, teleworking), education (informal and lifelong learning) and civic life (social capital, online/alternative forms of participation).
- **Valued skills and forms of knowledge**, as media and digital literacies become more vital for diverse forms of communication and action within and beyond the family.
- **Inequalities**, as new forms of mediated and digital exclusion compound or reconfigure existing forms of social and economic disadvantage.
- **Threats to the family**, including financial, security, safety and privacy risks, especially as the internet becomes more embedded in daily life and especially for children.

There are many ways of advancing this research agenda. The OECD’s (2008) recent scoping report on the future of the family illustrates the potential role of ICT in family life. In the report, a study by Forge and Blackman (2008: 47) explores the risks of ICT use (for example bullying, persuasion, addiction) as well as their potential in mediating the care and support structures of changing relationships (for example the use of mobile devices such as VOIP, Skype, social networking) (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Categorising family cultures in relation to ICT usage**

| Type                          | Characteristics  | Use of ICTs                                 |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Communications rich           | The family is linked by all forms of communications, but each member has their own circle so there are many 'NY moments', of sharing experiences across continents. ICTs tend to be multiple cost cutting with IM, chat, SMS and Skype dependence high   | High  |
| Staying together through ICTs | Dispersed family maintains its links with mobile and low cost communications (e.g. Skype) – e.g. remarried mother in the UK speaks with both adult daughters in NY twice a day; or a mother manages family website for immediate and more distant family | Medium/high                                 |
| Entertainments rich           | Tend to concentrate ICTs on gaming, with music, video, films also – while communications are simple and their usage restricted.  | Medium, simple usages                       |
| Experimental rich             | Early adopters of anything new – small category with high disposable income  | Medium                                      |
| Future: care-rich             | The family has to care for disabled, or elderly frail, or seriously ill members with ICT support. ICTs are seen as a prime care support and essential  | Very high – in future (2012 - 2015 onwards) |

Source: Forge and Blackman (2008)

- As this typology of family support structures illustrates, the media are unlike other household appliances (for example a washing machine or a new car). Rather, the media expand the family's communicative possibilities and reach within and beyond the household. This encompasses one-to-many communication (especially characteristic of mass media – radio, television, books and other print media), one-to-one communication (in particular mobile phones and varieties of internet communication) and, distinctive to the present century, some-to-some and many-to-many communication (the peer-to-peer possibilities of the internet, mobile and fixed).
- All this occurs in the context of changing European demographics – an increasingly older population, decreasing birth rates, older ages of children leaving home, migration and diversification of household types. For European families, these trends shape the context within which media are accorded a place in the household (Livingstone, 2002, 2009b).

## 2. The changing place of the media in the European home

In this section we first discuss theoretical arguments regarding the importance of the media in family life. We then review the literature on the medium that dominated the twentieth century – television. We lastly focus on research on ‘the digital age’, including the home computer, electronic games and, especially, the internet and mobile phone.

### 2.1. Understanding media in the family

Two broad trends dominate the explanation of family media access.

- First, Rogers’ (1962) diffusion theory predicts that as each technological innovation enters the market, early adopters will tend to be male, affluent and young, but that once diffusion spreads, the adoption curve will accelerate before tailing off, leaving the ‘laggards’ or, often, the disadvantaged (poorer, older) to take longer to gain access, if they ever do.
- Second, the presence of children in the household matters: parents tend to acquire more media goods when they have children, being generally ‘ahead’ of the adult population in general, while children pressure parents to keep up to date and to diversify media use according to their growing tastes and interests; overall, it seems, families tend to consider a media-rich home a ‘well-provided for’ home.

Whatever media are possessed by the household, Livingstone (2002; see also Gauntlett and Hill, 1999; Morley, 1986; Palmer, 1986) observes that they perform a range of functions in household and familial spaces:

- Provision of a *common leisure activity*, often an activity which brings together the generations and which may both stimulate or allow avoidance of family communication (especially, co-viewing television may provide a non-contentious joint activity for conflicted family members).
- Provision of *symbolic resources for family myths and narratives* – from simple communication facilitation through provision of a common topic of conversation, to the more complex negotiation of rules and expectations (this in contrast to the notion of media as supplanting family conversation).
- The *mediation of reception* (for example parents frame children’s interpretation of media contents or encourage social learning from such contents, while children may invite interpretative guidance from parents, etc), this in turn sustaining the negotiation of values, common opinions and a family culture.
- The *regulation of family time and space*, whether as structured or casual, and whether together, in various combinations, in parallel or apart; this includes the use of media to define ‘appropriate’ activities for different spaces (public, private) or times (homework time, bedtime).
- The *mediation of family subsystems*, where, depending on patterns of power within the household, as well as motivations to be independent or communal, the media may be used in any of a number of ways (as a scapegoat, boundary marker, time manager, stress reducer, bartering agent, babysitter, companion, etc), including, in extreme cases, a rationale for the separation of all family members in their own media-bubbles.

In reviewing research on adolescents’ media use across Europe, Roe (2000) observes the following:

- **On individualised and collective use of the media:** following Pasquier et al (1998), Roe observes that despite privatisation of media access, media experience still tends to be shared with other family members. In Italy and Sweden, the privatisation of access and use is greater; only part of media use is collective. In France and Flanders, media tend to be more integrated into collective dynamics especially in lower socioeconomic status (SES) French families, for whom television is at the centre of daily routines and interactions.
- **Family subsystems:** Roe cites Pasquier et al (1998) to observe that interaction around the media reinforces links between certain family members: a strong mother–daughter link around television, brother–brother around video games, and father–son around the computer, a development that has profound consequences for gender segregation. Ribak (2001) makes a similar observation a decade later in relation to the internet, although notes further that fathers may feel threatened by the expertise of their sons regarding computers/internet.
- **Physical spaces and types of homes** are classified following Wentling (1990) into traditional and transitional, the former type of homes being privacy-oriented, emphasising separate, one-purpose rooms. Roe (2000: 17) states that:

... transitional homes are less private, more open, and community-oriented. Within those two types, the distribution of media appliances may fulfil different functions. For example, in a study of Flemish families, Van Rompaey et al (2000), found that in more traditional homes, the second TV set (and increasingly, the second CD player, VCR, game console, and computer) may be functional for family cohesion because it helps avoid conflict by keeping family members apart. Consequently, in such homes a degree of compartmentalization reduces tension and is sought by family members.

## 2.2. Television in the European home

Most social science research has focused on television, this attracting a diverse array of research questions, methods and findings over a half-century period of research.

The quintessential image of the television audience is of the family viewing at home – children and parents sitting together comfortably in front of the lively set. Accompanying this happy image is its negative – a child viewing alone, square-eyed and trance-like, while real life goes on elsewhere. The former image was quickly popularised by broadcasting industries in many Western countries after the Second World War. It represents the hope of shared pleasure that motivated the public to purchase and install this new technology as quickly as they could afford to do so. The latter image, reproduced by newspapers, parenting magazines and public policy pronouncements, represents the fear that motivated funding for empirical research by social science designed to investigate television's potentially harmful effects. (Livingstone, 2009b: 151)

Research conducted from the 1950s onwards, when television reached the mass market in many Western countries, showed a collective 'coming together' of the family around the set, with domestic living space being rearranged to create the 'family room' (that is, television room; Spigel, 1992) and the domestic timetable being adjusted to fit the television schedules (Scannell, 1988). Pasquier et al (1998: 163) notes how television is usually viewed with family (in Germany for example) or together with peers. Kortti and Mahonen (2009: 63), researching Finnish families' use of the media, suggest several social functions are served by television within the family, as listed in Figure 3.

Ever since it was first introduced into the family home from the 1950s onwards, television rapidly became children's main leisure activity. Viewing figures quickly reached just under two hours per day (the greatest amount of time spent on any leisure activity; Himmelweit et al, 1958), viewers spent less



time alone and more time indoors with the family (although not necessarily talking to each other), with television tending to displace going to the cinema and socialising with others. Over time, this figure rose to nearly two-and-a-half hours in the UK (Livingstone, 2002) and, as Rideout et al (2010: 2) say of the US, “youth pack a total of 10 hours and 45 minutes worth of media content into those daily 7½ hours – an increase of almost 2¼ hours of media exposure per day over the past five years”.

**Figure 3: Television as a family medium**

|                        | <i>Area of scarcity</i>   | <i>Area of availability/plenty</i>  |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Families with children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Electronic hearth’(family living around TV)</li> <li>• TV sustaining family cohesion</li> <li>• Few conflicts concerning programmes</li> <li>• Watching TV together after the sauna</li> <li>• TV as a babysitter</li> <li>• Restrictions on the TV watching of children</li> <li>• Role models for children’s play</li> <li>• School and social pressure to watch certain programmes</li> <li>• TV’s importance and as treat for children</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Electronic hearth’, although watching is more private, and there is more personal selection of programmes</li> <li>• Watching TV together after the sauna</li> <li>• TV as a babysitter</li> <li>• Restricting and controlling the TV watching of children</li> <li>• Role models for children’s play</li> <li>• School and social pressure to watch certain programmes</li> <li>• The everydayness of TV for children</li> </ul>   |
| Gender                 | <p><i>Women: mothers and wives</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rational role in buying a TV set</li> <li>• Being hostess to TV guests</li> <li>• Watching subordinated to household work</li> <li>• Controlling the TV watching of children</li> </ul> <p><i>Men: fathers and husbands</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TV technology (men buy and install the TV set, which is a status symbol for them)</li> <li>• The head of the household gets to decide on the programmes watched</li> <li>• Relaxation</li> </ul> <p><i>Gender-specific watching</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programmes for men / women (especially</li> </ul> | <p><i>Videos</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men mostly rent and buy</li> <li>• Setting the timer is done by Finnish women also</li> </ul> <p><i>Digital TV and home cinema</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men buy and install</li> <li>• For women the technology is of secondary importance</li> <li>• Watching by mothers and wives subordinated to household work</li> <li>• Flat screen TV set as a decorative object for women</li> <li>• Fathers get to decide the programmes watched in the living room</li> <li>• Programmes for men / women (especially important among men and boys)</li> </ul> |

Source: Kortti and Mahonen (2009)

Indeed, young people seem to be multitasking and using a variety of media simultaneously. Reporting from the comparative project, Children and their Changing Media Environments, Johnsson-Smaragdi (2002) found that simple media displacement is rare, given specialised media use, reallocation of media time and additive media use. Television displacing reading time has been a worry, but one without conclusive findings (partly because reading, especially among teenagers, has always occupied just a few minutes per day on average). Johnsson-Smaragdi’s (2002) findings reveal that the habitual time spent before the television screen has increased during the past 15 years with differences across gender and social backgrounds. Boys from low SES families spent the most time before the screen, and girls from high SES families the least.

In fact, television remains important even with the advent of the internet:

... growth in TV watching has been dramatic – not only in Estonia as compared to Nordic countries, but as a trend typical of all postcommunist societies. This is probably connected with a greater need for relaxation, caused by rapid transformation in all spheres of life, and by a turn to the more intensive and demanding situation of permanent competition. (Vihalemm, 2006: 27)

The longer trend, however, is not that of collectivity around the television set but rather of individualisation within the home as well as within communities, stimulated in part by the availability of ever-cheaper and more personalised versions of once-communal goods, all of which took off “in the main collective family space of the living room but, as prices fall and multiplication and mobility of

goods becomes feasible, each has moved into more individualised, personalised and, for children, unsupervised, spaces, particularly the bedroom but also the study, play room and kitchen, thereby spreading both spatially and temporally – from defined and prioritised spaces and times to casual use throughout the home and throughout the day” (Livingstone, 2009: 156).

There are also differences within families on the symbolic significance attributed to fathers and mothers within children’s perceptions of technical competences. Johnsson-Smaragdi’s findings on single-parent families revealed that 30% of children from single-parent homes in Germany name their mothers as the most knowledgeable about computers while in families with both parents more name fathers than mothers, showing “that the absence of the father affects not only the possibility of shared use, which is obvious, but also the image of fathers and of males in general as referent persons for computer use” (2002: 169).

Figure 4 compares media habits across three countries by medium and age, showing that television viewing is largely more popular with the middle-aged and older people in Estonia and Finland, although Swedish young people seem to give television more importance than the radio or print media. Magazines remain popular with Estonian and Finnish young people while this is lower for the Swedish.

**Figure 4: Comparison of traditional media use by age groups in three countries**

|                     | Estonia 2004 |       |       | Sweden 2003 |       |       | Finland 2002-04* |       |     |
|---------------------|--------------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|-------|------------------|-------|-----|
|                     | 15-19        | 40-59 | 60-74 | 15-24       | 45-64 | 65-79 | 15-24            | 45-64 | 65- |
| Newspaper reading** | 59           | 121   | 102   | 53          | 120   | 170   | 52               | 127   | 165 |
| Magazine reading**  | 116          | 104   | 79    | 67          | 113   | 153   | 97               | 97    | 106 |
| Radio listening***  | 83           | 104   | 125   | 74          | 116   | 121   | 68               | 121   | 130 |
| TV viewing***       | 74           | 108   | 136   | 107         | 98    | 124   | 61               | 116   | 153 |

\* Press reading data are based on a slightly different age classification: 12-24, 45-59, and over 60

\*\* In Sweden and Finland, average reading time per day; in Estonia, the number of regularly read newspapers/magazines and other periodicals

\*\*\* Average listening and viewing time per day

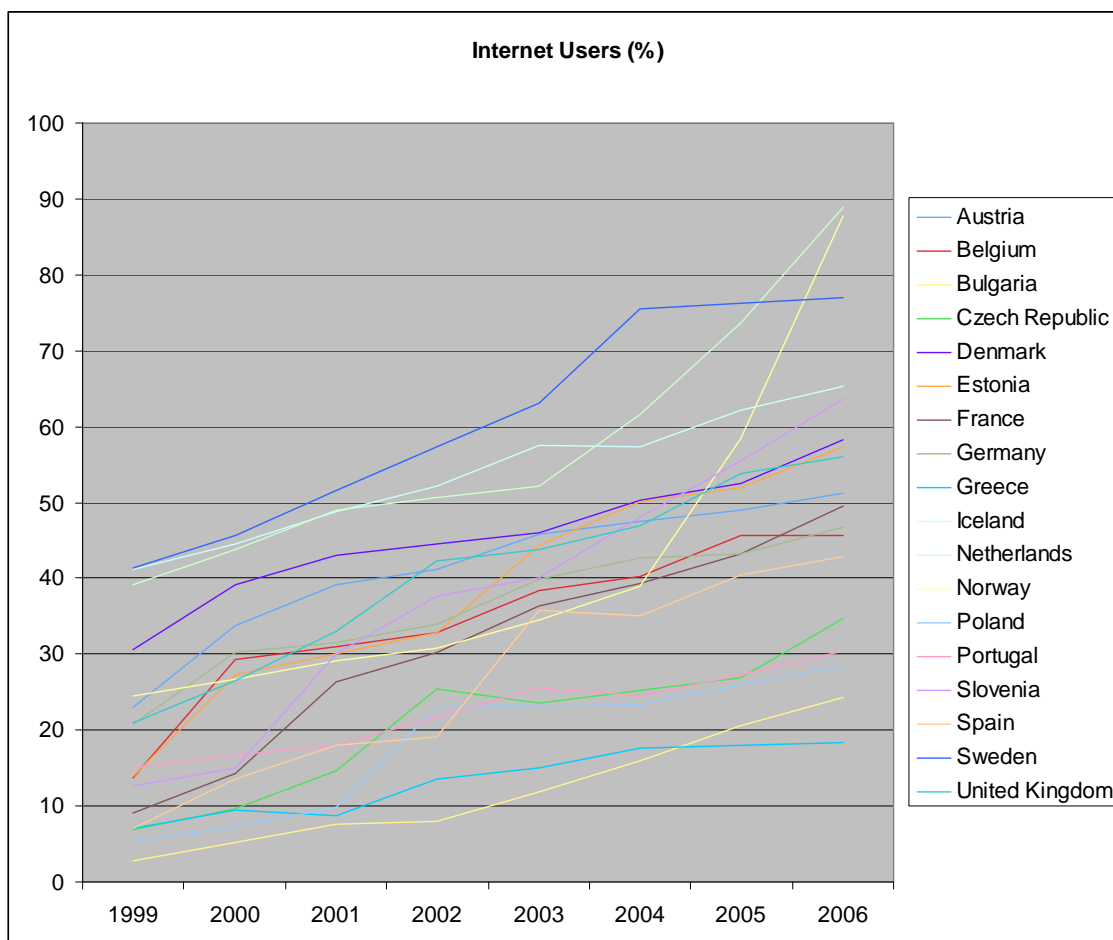
Sources: TNS Emor, Nordicom-Sveriges Mediebarometer 2003, Finnish Mass Media 2004.

Source: Vihalemm (2006: 26)

While we have spent some time discussing the time spent with the media, and more generally media consumption, the content of television (rather than the possession of television sets and the amount of time spent in front of it) and its reception poses some significant issues. These are developed in relation to questions of parenting, childhood and socialisation – see Section 4.3 (taste, offence and harm) and Section 4.2 (parental mediation).

### **2.3. Media in the home: a decade of substantial change**

The history of technological innovation shows that rarely do new media entirely displace established media; rather, the place of the latter adjusts – being remediated, or becoming more specialised – as a newer medium enters the domestic environment. In the past decade, the media environment has been transformed from one centred on a mass audience to one that is simultaneously convergent and diversified, shaped by the networked, interactive and personalised character of digital media. Nonetheless, accommodating to rapid change (see Figure 5) has proved a challenge for families and the wider society (state, workplace, services, etc).

**Figure 5: Internet usage in European countries**

Source: Data from International Telecommunication Union (<http://www.itu.int/en/pages/default.aspx>)

Despite rapid increases in internet access over the past decade, household access and use of the internet still varies widely across Europe, ranging from 25% in Bulgaria to 86% in the Netherlands. As shown in Figure 6, Eurostat (2008) reports that, “in 2008, the proportion of households with internet access was three quarters or more in the Netherlands (86%), Sweden (84%), Denmark (82%), Luxembourg (80%) and Germany (75%). The lowest levels were registered in Bulgaria (25%), Romania (30%) and Greece (31%). The proportion of households with a broadband connection in 2008 was also highest in the Netherlands and Denmark (both 74%) and Sweden (71%)”.

**Figure 6: Household internet access across Europe**

Internet access by households (%)

|                | Internet access |           |           | Broadband |           |           |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|                | 2006            | 2007      | 2008      | 2006      | 2007      | 2008      |
| <b>EU27*</b>   | <b>49</b>       | <b>54</b> | <b>60</b> | <b>30</b> | <b>42</b> | <b>48</b> |
| Belgium        | 54              | 60        | :         | 48        | 56        | :         |
| Bulgaria       | 17              | 19        | 25        | 10        | 15        | 21        |
| Czech Rep.     | 29              | 35        | 46        | 17        | 28        | 36        |
| Denmark        | 79              | 78        | 82        | 63        | 70        | 74        |
| Germany        | 67              | 71        | 75        | 34        | 50        | 55        |
| Estonia        | 46              | 53        | 58        | 37        | 48        | 54        |
| Ireland        | 50              | 57        | 63        | 13        | 31        | 43        |
| Greece         | 23              | 25        | 31        | 4         | 7         | 22        |
| Spain          | 39              | 45        | 51        | 29        | 39        | 45        |
| France         | 41              | 49        | 62        | 30        | 43        | 57        |
| Italy          | 40              | 43        | 42        | 16        | 25        | 31        |
| Cyprus         | 37              | 39        | 43        | 12        | 20        | 33        |
| Latvia         | 42              | 51        | 53        | 23        | 32        | 40        |
| Lithuania      | 35              | 44        | 51        | 19        | 34        | 43        |
| Luxembourg     | 70              | 75        | 80        | 44        | 58        | 61        |
| Hungary        | 32              | 38        | 48        | 22        | 33        | 42        |
| Malta          | :               | 54        | 59        | :         | 44        | 55        |
| Netherlands    | 80              | 83        | 86        | 66        | 74        | 74        |
| Austria        | 52              | 60        | 69        | 33        | 46        | 54        |
| Poland         | 36              | 41        | 48        | 22        | 30        | 38        |
| Portugal       | 35              | 40        | 46        | 24        | 30        | 39        |
| Romania        | 14              | 22        | 30        | 5         | 8         | 13        |
| Slovenia       | 54              | 58        | 59        | 34        | 44        | 50        |
| Slovakia       | 27              | 46        | 58        | 11        | 27        | 35        |
| Finland        | 65              | 69        | 72        | 53        | 63        | 66        |
| Sweden         | 77              | 79        | 84        | 51        | 67        | 71        |
| United Kingdom | 63              | 67        | 71        | 44        | 57        | 62        |
| Iceland        | 83              | 84        | :         | 72        | 76        | :         |
| Norway         | 69              | 78        | 84        | 57        | 67        | 73        |
| Croatia        | :               | 41        | 45        | :         | 23        | 27        |

\* Excludes Belgium in 2008.

: Data not available

Source: Eurostat (2008)

Equally variable are the kind of activities carried out in households using the internet, as Figure 7 reveals. Across the range of activities measured here, it seems that around one quarter to one third of European citizens both receive (for example news reading), transact (for example banking) and participate (for example interact with public authorities) online. The level now reached by 'high use' countries familiar with the internet – consider the Netherlands or Denmark – suggest that this may soon approach half of all citizens. Nonetheless, the universal online activities anticipated in some policy visions are still a long way away.

**Figure 7: Adults' use of the internet in Europe**

**Activities carried out on the internet for private purposes, in % of all individuals, 2008**

|              | Travel and accommodation services | Internet banking | Interacting with public authorities | Searching health information | Reading online news, newspapers or magazines | Ordering goods or services | Looking for job/sending application |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|--|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>EU27*</b> | <b>32</b>                         | <b>29</b>        | <b>28</b>                           | <b>28</b>                    | <b>26</b>                                    | <b>25</b>                  | <b>13</b>                           |
| <b>BE</b>    | :                                 | :                | :                                   | :                            | :  | :                          | :                                   |
| <b>BG</b>    | 5                                 | 1                | 8                                   | 6                            | 13   | 1                          | 6                                   |
| <b>CZ</b>    | 26                                | 14               | 14                                  | 14                           | 33   | 13                         | 5                                   |
| <b>DK</b>    | 47                                | 61               | 44                                  | 36                           | 52   | 47                         | 23                                  |
| <b>DE</b>    | 42                                | 38               | 33                                  | 41                           | 21   | 42                         | 16                                  |
| <b>EE</b>    | 27                                | 55               | 34                                  | 25                           | 54   | 7                          | 15                                  |
| <b>IE</b>    | 41                                | 28               | 27                                  | 19                           | 17   | 30                         | 9                                   |
| <b>EL</b>    | 17                                | 5                | 10                                  | 10                           | 19   | 6                          | 5                                   |
| <b>ES</b>    | 35                                | 20               | 29                                  | 25                           | 27   | 13                         | 12                                  |
| <b>FR</b>    | 38                                | 40               | 43                                  | 39                           | 22   | 28                         | 17                                  |
| <b>IT</b>    | 20                                | 13               | 15                                  | 16                           | 17   | 7                          | 7                                   |
| <b>CY</b>    | 18                                | 11               | 16                                  | 12                           | 23   | 7                          | 4                                   |
| <b>LV</b>    | 25                                | 39               | 16                                  | 24                           | 33   | 10                         | 16                                  |
| <b>LT</b>    | 15                                | 27               | 20                                  | 21                           | 43   | 4                          | 10                                  |
| <b>LU</b>    | 50                                | 48               | 48                                  | 44                           | 41   | 36                         | 12                                  |
| <b>HU</b>    | 23                                | 13               | 25                                  | 29                           | 33   | 8                          | 14                                  |
| <b>MT</b>    | 22                                | 25               | 20                                  | 23                           | 27   | 16                         | 10                                  |
| <b>NL</b>    | 50                                | 69               | 54                                  | 46                           | 43   | 43                         | 17                                  |
| <b>AT</b>    | 32                                | 34               | 39                                  | 32                           | 30   | 28                         | 9                                   |
| <b>PL</b>    | 14                                | 17               | 16                                  | 19                           | 19   | 12                         | 8                                   |
| <b>PT</b>    | 12                                | 14               | 18                                  | 22                           | 20   | 6                          | 8                                   |
| <b>RO</b>    | 7                                 | 2                | 9                                   | 11                           | 14   | 3                          | 3                                   |
| <b>SI</b>    | 26                                | 21               | 31                                  | 27                           | 34   | 12                         | 10                                  |
| <b>SK</b>    | 29                                | 24               | 30                                  | 25                           | 34   | 13                         | 13                                  |
| <b>FI</b>    | 58                                | 72               | 53                                  | 51                           | 57   | 33                         | 26                                  |
| <b>SE</b>    | 46                                | 65               | 52                                  | 32                           | 45   | 38                         | 22                                  |
| <b>UK</b>    | 48                                | 38               | 32                                  | 26                           | 37   | 49                         | 20                                  |
| <b>NO</b>    | 61                                | 75               | 62                                  | 41                           | 73   | 46                         | 22                                  |
| <b>HR</b>    | 15                                | 13               | 12                                  | 20                           | 28   | 5                          | 11                                  |

Source: Eurostat newsletter (2008)

Gender differences in internet and computer use remain inconsistent, although present, across Europe. Seybert (2007: 1) reveals that “the difference between the proportion of young women (62%) and young men (67%) in the EU-25 using computers daily in 2006 was relatively small [...], slightly more young men (53%) than young women (48%) used the Internet daily”.

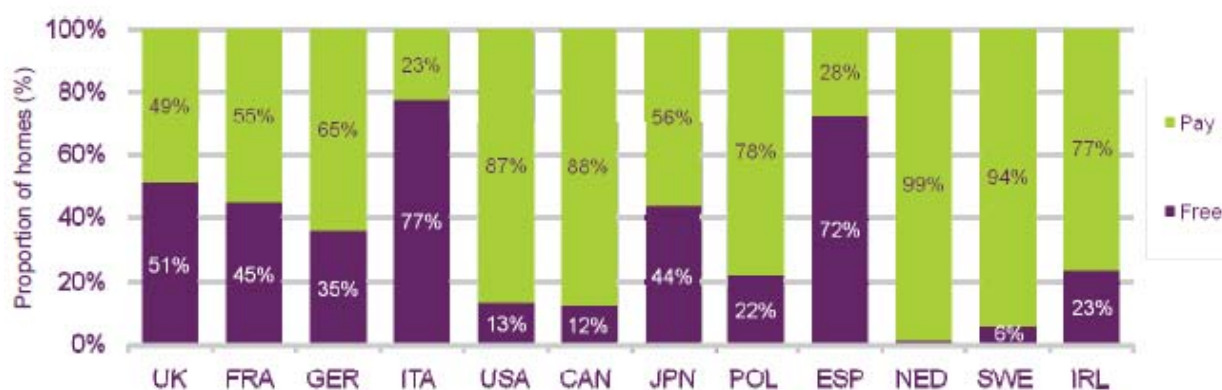
Notwithstanding the advent of the internet, television is still a major part of domestic life. But ‘television’ now means something different from television 20 or even just 10 years ago. Figure 8 shows that viewing per person exceeds 200 minutes per day, with considerable attention still concentrated on the largest (typically, ex-terrestrial) channels, despite the proliferation of digital channels now available. The effect on households is that television is increasingly a significant source of expense, as are most other media, where an increasing proportion of the household budget is devoted to media and communication goods and services.

**Figure 8: Key indicators for television in 2008**

|                                     | UK       | FRA      | GER       | ITA      | USA       | CAN       | JPN       |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Ads, subscriptions and public funds | £10.5bn  | £8.6bn   | £10.1bn   | £7.4bn   | £81.3bn   | £3.1bn    | £20.3bn   |
| Revs per head                       | £172     | £138     | £123      | £129     | £268      | £93       | £159      |
| <i>from advertising</i>             | £57      | £44      | £39       | £63      | £130      | £51       | £78       |
| <i>from subscription</i>            | £71      | £68      | £40       | £44      | £137      | £29       | £54       |
| <i>from public funding</i>          | £44      | £26      | £44       | £22      | £1        | £13       | £26       |
| Annual licence fee                  | £140     | £92      | £163      | £84      | n/a       | n/a       | £134*     |
| Largest TV platform (% of homes)    | DTT (38) | DTT (30) | Acab (47) | ATT (34) | Dcab (36) | Acab (32) | Acab (29) |
| ATT channels                        | 5        | 7        | 13        | 7        | 5         | 6         | 7         |
| Viewing per head (mins/day)         | 225      | 204      | 207       | 234      | 277       | 228       | n/a       |
| Share of largest channel (%)        | 22%      | 27%      | 13%       | 22%      | 7%        | 8%        | 18%       |
| Share of three largest channels (%) | 44%      | 58%      | 38%       | 53%      | 21%       | 19%       | 52%       |
| DTV penetration                     | 88%      | 72%      | 37%       | 63%      | 76%       | 61%       | 65%       |
| DSO date                            | 2012     | 2011     | 2008      | 2012     | 2009      | 2011      | 2011      |

Source: [www.ofcom.org.uk/research/cm/icmr09/ICMRcharts.pdf](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/research/cm/icmr09/ICMRcharts.pdf)

With the rise of pay television (Figure 9), it is likely that inequalities in access will increase. Certainly, expenditure on leisure media represents a steadily increasing proportion of domestic budgets.

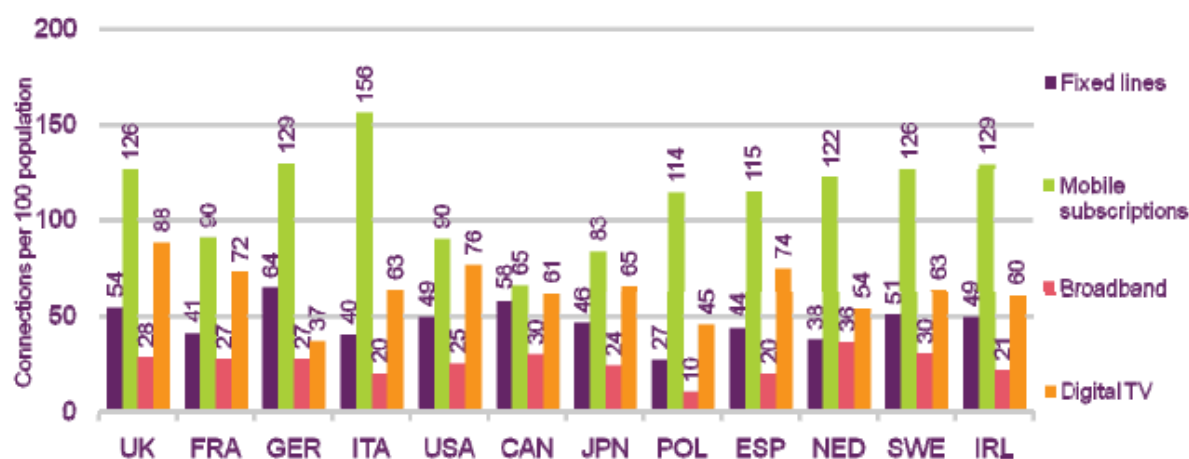
**Figure 9: Pay versus free-to-view television, 2008**

Source: [www.ofcom.org.uk/research/cm/icmr09/ICMRcharts.pdf](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/research/cm/icmr09/ICMRcharts.pdf), based on IDATE data

A similar growth in expenditure is evident for telephony. Figure 10 shows that, in recent years, mobile phone subscriptions have quickly overtaken fixed line telephones, enabling personal communication on a hitherto unprecedented scale. Where fixed line telephones are household possessions, there are already far more mobile phones than people in several European countries.



Figure 10: Take-up of communication services, end 2008



Source: IDATE / industry data / Ofcom

Source: [www.ofcom.org.uk/research/cm/icmr09/ICMRcharts.pdf](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/research/cm/icmr09/ICMRcharts.pdf)

Indeed, revenues per capita for telephony are now over twice that of television, and mobile minutes (calls and text messages) per capita are rising to exceed fixed line calls in some countries (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Key indicators for telephony, 2008

|  | UK      | FRA     | GER     | ITA     | USA      | CAN     | JPN     |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|---------|---------|
| Telecoms service revenues                      | £27.8bn | £29.1bn | £34.3bn | £23.3bn | £144.2bn | £15.7bn | £58.6bn |
| Telecoms revenues per capita                   | £456    | £453    | £416    | £401    | £475     | £474    | £460    |
| Fixed lines per 100 population                 | 54.2    | 40.9    | 64.2    | 40.1    | 49.5     | 58.0    | 46.1    |
| Monthly outbound fixed-line minutes per capita | 190     | 139     | 166     | 114     | 195      | 183     | 62      |
| Mobile connections per 100 population          | 126.0   | 90.2    | 129.4   | 155.8   | 89.6     | 65.3    | 83.1    |
| Share of mobile post-pay connections           | 39%     | 68%     | 43%     | 12%     | 82%      | 78%     | 98%     |
| 3G connections per 100 population              | 29.4    | 17.8    | 14.0    | 49.8    | 26.4     | 5.3     | 68.8    |
| Monthly outbound mobile minutes per capita     | 152     | 132     | 85      | 140     | 603*     | 300*    | 86      |
| Broadband connections per 100 households       | 67.1    | 63.9    | 56.2    | 46.6    | 63.7     | 74.6    | 60.5    |
| DSL as % of broadband connections              | 78.5    | 95.0    | 92.5    | 96.6    | 39.9     | 43.3    | 38.5    |

Sources: IDATE / operators / national regulators

Notes: USA and Canada mobile use includes both outbound and inbound calls; 3G includes W-CDMA and CDMA2000 1xEV-DO. It does not include CDMA2000

Source: [www.ofcom.org.uk/research/cm/icmr09/ICMRcharts.pdf](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/research/cm/icmr09/ICMRcharts.pdf)

In coming years, it is in relation to convergence across these different services that the next trends will be most evident. The use of social networking sites accessed via the mobile phone is one such trend (Figure 12); watching television on the mobile phone is set to be another.

**Figure 12: Use of social networking sites via the mobile internet**

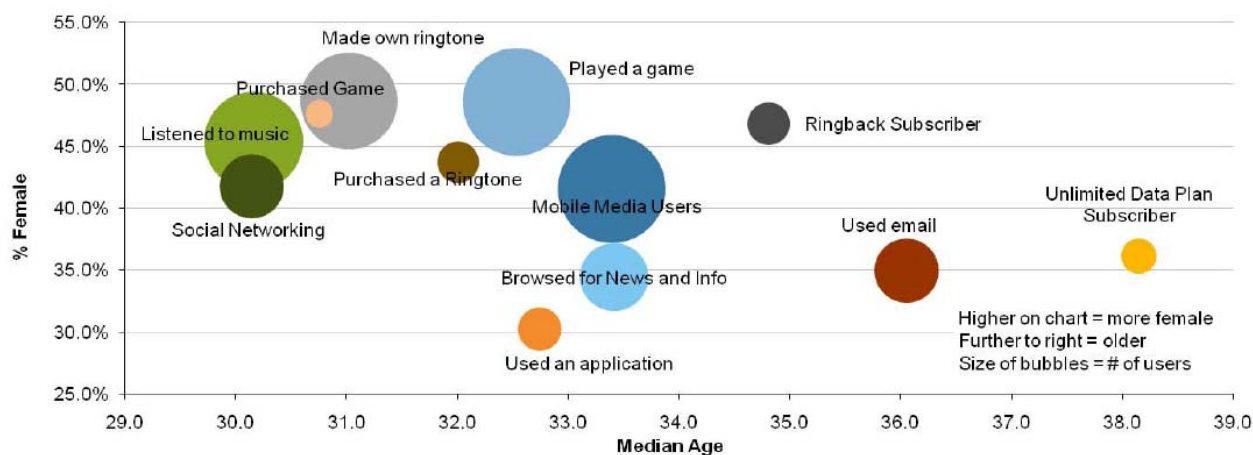


Source: The Nielsen Company, Mobile Media View, Q3 2009 (\*France Q1 2009).  
E.g. 30.9% of UK Mobile Web users (3.5 million people) visited a social network through their mobile phone in Q3 09.

Source: [www.ofcom.org.uk/research/cm/icmr09/ICMRcharts.pdf](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/research/cm/icmr09/ICMRcharts.pdf)

It is also likely that such services will be used in different ways by different social groups. European data regarding use of mobile phones reveal age and gender among adults make a substantial difference: younger users are more likely to use Web 2.0 services on their phone, compared with older users; men browse more for news and information although games and music are evenly used by men and women (Figure 13). In part, this is a matter of personal preference, but insofar as digital choices have social consequences, inequalities may result.

**Figure 13: Gender and age differences in use of mobile applications**



comSCORE.

© comScore, Inc. Proprietary and Confidential.

25

Product: MobiLens

Data: Three month average ending March 09

Country: EU5 (UK, DE, FR, ES + IT) - N= 70,964

Source: comScore

## 2.4. European homes domesticate new technologies

As television has been increasingly complemented, if surprisingly little displaced, by the use of new interactive technologies within the home, a new body of British and European research developed, following Silverstone's (2006) concept of domestication of new technologies in the 1990s. The argument, in essence, was that even once technologies had been purchased by the household, the process of rendering them meaningful, finding them both space and time in the life of the family, is an unfolding process of interpretation and adjustment (Silverstone, 2006), "ongoing processes rather than being a one-off event" (Haddon, 2006: 196).

Thus researchers examined the place of television, telephone and teleworking in British households, including the use of ICT among lone parents and the young elderly (Haddon, 2000, Silverstone, 1999). Haddon and Silverstone, writing on teleworking in British homes (1993), drew attention to the concept of the moral economy of the household which produced the capacity of families and households to negotiate with the public meanings and pre-defined uses of ICT (Silverstone et al, 1992). Their study of British families and teleworking led to distinct findings by gender, for it was almost always women who took up teleworking and that most of these women had a commitment first and foremost to their domestic role, then finding work which could be fitted in with that. Haddon and Silverstone's study discovered many reasons behind teleworking, namely, to avoid commuting, as alternative work, as a reaction to work problems, forced by redundancy, as entrepreneurship and as a preference for the domestic site over work site.

This advanced research beyond Morley's (1986) study of 'family television', which had been influential in shifting the unit of study from individuals to families and which had revealed the living room conflicts of gender and generation which determined the place of media in the home (cf. Ang's *Living room wars*, 1996, and the feminist ethnography of Press, 1991 and Radway, 1984). Parallel examples from the US include Hoover and Clark's (2004) account of the media use in eight very different US families, some of them very religious. They charted the subtle embedding of media forms and meanings in families' value systems, moral perspectives, gender relations and social practices, and the array of strategies and tactics employed by both children and parents in negotiating values and the public/private boundary.

The resultant 'domestication' framework attuned researchers to the taken-for-granted practices of everyday life and emphasised people's agency in appropriating or domesticating media goods, fitting them within their pre-existing frameworks of meaning and practice (Berker et al, 2006) in ways which may contrast with explicit discourses of media consumption and are certainly not predictable from the intentions of product developers, producers or marketers. Haddon (2000) found that the telephone gained new significance for the young elderly, how those watching more television were often more house-bound, and how basic telephony and the telephone at work meant a lot to single parents and those who had returned to work.

Social class was an important consideration in the empirical research reported by Haddon (2000). He pointed out that "the very horizons of those single parents with few financial resources could be more limited by their experience of having a low income" (p 392) Haddon's earlier work with Silverstone on lone parents' use of ICT made a similar point: most lone parents were concerned about their telephone use and felt pressured to cut back on usage. Most phoned during the cheap tariffs and if they could not they were worried about the costs. Their study also revealed that telephone stamps not only provided some self-discipline in saving but also spread the cost of bills.

More recently a training network of seven laboratories in the EU was brought together by Silverstone to examine the meaning of media within everyday life and diasporic and organisational contexts across Europe. As Haddon (2007: 28) observes, "both early and later studies had looked at groups other than household members and at sites other than the home, such as computer hackers in clubs (Håpnes, 1996) and participants in internet training courses (Hynes and Rommes, 2005)". In discussing non-use of new technologies, Selwyn (2003: 110) extends the domestication concept to the individual user thus:

... with mobile ICTs increasingly less 'fixed' to the confines of institutions (be it fixed in terms of physical connection to power supplies and network connections or fixed in terms of ownership) it can be argued that technologies go through a process of domestication into the 'moral economies' of people's lives as well as across all the institutional settings that they are brought into. Therefore each individual will be constantly negotiating the 'proper placement of technology' into their lives according to a range of personal and institutional factors.

Bergman and van Zoonen (1999), reporting from a small qualitative study in the Netherlands, found that structural factors did not as such become barriers for women accessing ICT. Internet communication for these women was seen to be a virtual translation of feminine concerns of personal contacts, sharing and community creation. Frissen (2000: 70), writing from the Netherlands, presents findings of a small-scale qualitative study in 'busy' households, noting the importance of a pressured time schedule in the way the households operate and use technology:

ICTs tend to have an ambiguous role, which results in tensions regarding acceptance. On the one hand, ICTs are seen – and used – as instruments for organizing daily life because they tend to increase flexibility and control. Furthermore, they are seen as useful because of their mobility, interactivity, and time-saving potential. On the other hand, they are just as much seen as time-consuming technologies and as lacking flexibility and control.

Hynes and Rommes (2005) note, in relation to people taking introductory computer courses in the Netherlands and Ireland, the importance of social and cultural capital, this affecting how inequalities impact on how technologies are rendered meaningful and thus useful. Ward (2005: 154) shows how people who use technology at home distinguish between 'work' and 'home': as work and technology become linked while working from home, "most users carefully balanced the 'intrusion' of the technology and its ability to disrupt the household's value system, accepting the inevitability of some changes, with active attempts to domesticate the new medium".

#### 2.4.1. Special focus: 'Bedroom culture'

##### **Sonia Livingstone**

For children and young people, one of the most important contributions of research – whether observing young people hanging out on the street corner or, more recently, going online in their bedroom (Livingstone, 2009), has been to challenge the moral panics stance that commonly associates youthful media use with fears regarding their vulnerability and victimisation or, on the other hand, their engagement with new forms of mediated 'hooliganism'. A good example of this sensibility is research on the emergence of a media-rich bedroom culture for children. This could be framed in terms of children's isolation from family life and their consequent vulnerability to commercial, violent or other media messages. Although children are hardly immune to such messages, qualitative research influenced by domestication theory adds a different understanding.

Comparing 6- to 17-year-old children's bedroom cultures across Europe in the Children and their Changing Media Environment project, Bovill and Livingstone (2001: 191) note that it is in their bedroom that:

... media technology and content are appropriated by young people to sustain and express their sense of who they are. This new leisure site raises a variety of questions both for family life and children's media use. 'Bedroom culture' implies that children and young people spend significant proportions of their leisure time at home with the mass media, increasingly screen media, in their own private space rather than communal or family space.

'Bedroom culture' – especially among children and young people – refers to the set of conventional meanings and practices closely associated with identity and privacy, and the self has become linked to the domestic space of the child's bedroom in late modern society (McRobbie and Garber, 1976). This has been encouraged by four key social trends:

- the retreat to the home as outside spaces become the object of parental fear, increased surveillance (with youth themselves often construed as a threat);

- the individualisation of personal interests, meaning that families are less likely to share the same taste in music, television or other entertainment;
- the reduction in price (and, often, size) of media goods, so that multiple televisions, games machines, DVD players and computers are affordable even in relatively poor homes;
- the cultural repositioning of the child as a person in their own right, with independent tastes, right to privacy and a claim on a sizable proportion of the household budget;

Bedroom culture is, especially in some parts of Europe, a heavily media-rich culture. For example, in the UK, four fifths (79%) of 7- to 16-year-olds have internet access at home, and over half (53%) of even 5- to 6-year-olds now go online. Significantly, among 5- to 16-year-olds, 77% have a television in their bedroom (56% have multi-channel), 73% have a mobile phone, 69% have their own DVD player, MP3 player, radio and games console, while 55% have their own PC or laptop (ChildWise, 2009; see also Ofcom 2008b). ChildWise's 2009 report finds that 43% of 5- to 16-year-olds access the internet in their own room.

The rise of a media-rich bedroom culture suggests several consequences for the family: children spend time in highly individualised, consumerist, and usually strongly gendered spaces; children's media use may be more extensive, continually in the background if not also the foreground, and relatively unsupervised or unmediated by parents; the family's leisure time is more compartmentalised (Van Rompaey, 2001), with families 'living together separately' (Flichy, 1995), and with time spent together 'as a family' something that requires deliberate arrangement. And, even when children are in the home, not physically co-located with friends, their leisure time may be spent in a peer context, in touch with peers as much or more than with parents (Ito et al, 2009; Livingstone, 2009). Age makes a difference:<sup>3</sup>

- Children younger than about nine years old are relatively uninterested in bedroom culture, although a well equipped, 'media-rich' bedroom is occasionally provided as a way of ensuring the parents' privacy.
- From middle childhood, children – particularly girls – become more interested in their bedroom, and start to want their own television/computer/games machine. This is largely for pragmatic reasons, particularly being able to choose and watch their own programmes uninterrupted.
- In adolescence, the concern with the self is pre-eminent. The significance of the bedroom is now primarily centred on identity, as young people take a growing interest in how their bedrooms are furnished, arranged and equipped.
- By the early teens, these psychological reasons are easily as important as the practical ones as children and young people seek to identify, protect and embellish their own spaces distinct from adult scrutiny and intervention.

Generally, older children and boys have more media goods in their bedroom, particularly screen entertainment media. Livingstone (2002) notes that families with sons place computers in bedrooms more often; those with daughters place them in a common space. Johnsson-Smaragdi et al note (1998) similar gender differences in Flanders, Germany and Sweden, where while all children incorporate new media into their everyday media menu, boys are more likely to have a television set and VCR in their room than girls.

While parental education and income both have a part to play, their effects may be opposed, and it is certainly not simply the more affluent who have more. Family type also matters: while two-parent households (and households with working mothers) are much more likely to provide a media-rich home, reflecting their considerably higher incomes, single parents are just as likely to provide media-rich bedrooms for their children. Further, the presence of siblings makes a media-rich home more likely

but a media-rich bedroom less likely; in other words, parents with several children tend to provide for household rather than for individual media use.

The UK Children Go Online project (Livingstone, 2009) found that the oldest and youngest groups have less home access than the younger and middle teenagers, while older teenagers have more points of access, and more private access in their bedroom. Regarding SES, middle-class children have more access points, and the most affluent are considerably more likely than the poorest group to have home access, broadband and bedroom access.

Considerable cultural differences in bedroom culture are evidenced cross-nationally. The Children and their Changing Media Environment project, which surveyed children in 12 countries in 1997-98, found differences, as shown in Figure 14. A 'screen entertainment culture' is particularly strong in the UK, with Denmark following close. Households in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands are 'pioneers' of new technologies, including for children. In Spain both boys and girls are particularly likely to spend time with the family and to spend comparatively less time in the bedroom, while Swedish and Finnish teenagers are overwhelmingly more likely to spend their free time with a group of friends, also spending a smaller proportion of their free time in their own room. Indeed, Swiss teenagers spend a more than average proportion of their time in their own rooms, while Finnish teenagers spend less than average, even though Swiss children own fewer televisions or computers and spend less time on these media while for Finnish children the opposite is the case (Bovill and Livingstone, 2001: 196).

**Figure 14: Comparative data on children and young people with access to screen media (%)**

|                         | UK  | USA | DE | FR  | ES | NL  | CH | FI | DK  | SE |
|-------------------------|-----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|----|
| <i>At home</i>          |     |     |    |     |    |     |    |    |     |    |
| Television              | 100 | 99  | 96 | 99  | 97 | 99  | 90 | 95 | 98  | 97 |
| VCR                     | 96  | 98  | 87 | 92  | 74 | 92  | 72 | 91 | 92  | 92 |
| TV-linked games machine | 67  | 82  | 31 | 57  | 54 | 48  | 42 | 43 | 24  | 62 |
| Cable/satellite TV      | 42  | 74  | 83 | 24  | 21 | n/a | 50 | 35 | 22  | 64 |
| PC                      | 53  | 73  | 50 | n/a | 54 | 84  | 60 | 70 | n/a | 66 |
| PC with CD-Rom          | 31  | 63  | 39 | 19  | 39 | 46  | 43 | 46 | 53  | 47 |
| Internet/modem          | 7   | 48  | 9  | 8   | 9  | 18  | 17 | 26 | 25  | 31 |
| <i>Child's bedroom</i>  |     |     |    |     |    |     |    |    |     |    |
| Television              | 63  | 65  | 40 | 28  | 31 | 30  | 19 | 38 | 60  | 49 |
| VCR                     | 21  | 36  | 14 | 9   | 9  | 5   | 9  | 15 | 30  | 21 |
| TV-linked games machine | 34  | 45  | 19 | 25  | 33 | 17  | 19 | 20 | 24  | 34 |
| Cable/satellite TV      | 5   | 30  | 28 | 3   | 4  | n/a | 9  | 9  | 22  | 21 |
| PC                      | 12  | 21  | 18 | n/a | 19 | 11  | 19 | 24 | n/a | 22 |
| PC with CD-Rom          | 4   | 15  | 13 | 3   | 13 | 3   | 11 | 14 | 16  | 15 |
| Internet/modem          | 1   | 10  | 2  | 2   | 2  | 1   | 3  | 7  | 5   | 8  |

*Sources:*

UK data for 6- to 17-year-olds collected during 1997 (Livingstone and Bovill, 1999). US data for 8- to 18-year-olds reported in Roberts et al (1999). Other European countries' data approximated by collapsing across data reported for boys and girls, and collected for 6- to 7, 9- to 10, 12- to 13 and 15- to 16-year-olds during 1997-98 (d'Haenens, 2001)

As shown in Figure 15, internet access has rapidly achieved a significant place in most European families, with 75% of 6- to 17-year-olds online across Europe in late 2008. However, as Livingstone and Tsatsou (2009: 309-10) observe:

Striking differences are also observed among different parts of Europe with respect to cultural, infrastructural, socio-economic and political parameters shaping children's experiences with the internet and new media. For example, the social and religious traditions of childhood and parenting vary from the Scandinavian North to the Latin South; the gradual harmonisation of



economic and educational policies instigated by the European Union creates new tensions; and the incorporation of post-Communist countries has seen rapid market and technological developments disrupting established cultural norms in those countries.

The Teens and ICT: Risks and Opportunities (TIRO) research project has examined the ambiguity of daily internet and mobile phone practices (how they are used, perceived and the significance given to them) among Belgian teenagers (aged 12-18). Findings reveal that:

- internet use at home is almost universal: 96% of teenagers use the internet, and almost all (93%) use it at home;
- half of all teenagers use the internet primarily for social contacts (50%). For almost 1 in 3 (31%) the internet is primarily a leisure medium;
- 96% of all teenagers have their own mobile phones. A third of teenagers (36%) sometimes pay their calls and SMSs out of their own pocket. Almost 1 in 4 (38%) always pay themselves.

Reviewing the state of research with children and new media technologies recently, Livingstone identifies three priorities on the research agenda (2003):

- first, that children themselves play a key role in establishing emerging internet-related practices, thereby advocating a child-centred rather than media-centred approach to research;
- second, that there is a need for a focus shift from access to the nature and quality of media use, its social conditions, cultural practices and personal meanings;
- and third, that despite the turn of research attention to new media, these new forms complement rather than displace older media.

**Figure 15: Children and parents online, across Europe**

| Country                    | Population <sup>4</sup><br>(est. millions) | Internet <sup>5</sup> (broad<br>band <sup>6</sup> )<br>penetration | Child internet use,by age <sup>7</sup> 2008<br>(2005) <sup>8</sup> |      |       |       | Parents' internet use,<br>2008 <sup>9</sup> (2005) |
|----------------------------|--|--|--|------|-------|-------|--|
|                            |  |  | All  | 6-10 | 11-14 | 15-17 |  |
| EU27                       | 489.1                                      | 60.7 (31.6)  | 75 (70)  | 60   | 84    | 86    | 84 (66)  |
| Austria (AT)               | 8.2  | 68.3 (32.8)  | 77 (66)  | 49   | 90    | 93    | 87 (76)  |
| Belgium (BE)               | 10.4                                       | 67.3 (48.1)  | 71 (84)  | 58   | 75    | 80    | 92 (80)  |
| Bulgaria (BG)              | 7.3  | 32.6 (10.0)  | 81 (41)  | 64   | 89    | 93    | 84 (34)  |
| Cyprus (CY)                | 0.8  | 41.0 (12.6)  | 50 (44)  | 28   | 57    | 64    | 57 (35)  |
| Czech Republic (CZ)        | 10.2                                       | 48.8 (16.5)  | 84 (78)  | 58   | 94    | 97    | 91 (73)  |
| Denmark (DK)               | 5.5  | 80.4 (63.2)  | 93 (95)  | 83   | 98    | 99    | 98 (96)  |
| Estonia (EE)               | 1.3  | 65.4 (36.8)  | 93 (90)  | 85   | 97    | 96    | 92 (83)  |
| Finland (FI)               | 5.2  | 83.0 (53.3)  | 94 (89)  | 87   | 98    | 100   | 98 (96)  |
| France (FR)                | 62.2                                       | 64.6 (30.3)  | 76 (78)  | 53   | 86    | 91    | 85 (67)  |
| Germany (DE)               | 82.4                                       | 67.0 (33.5)  | 75 (65)  | 56   | 88    | 94    | 89 (75)  |
| Greece (EL)                | 10.7                                       | 46.0 (3.90)  | 50 (39)  | 25   | 59    | 79    | 54 (24)  |
| Hungary (HU)               | 10   | 52.5 (21.8)  | 88 (65)  | 68   | 95    | 95    | 80 (41)  |
| Ireland (IE)               | 4.2  | 58.0 (13.9)  | 81 (61)  | 61   | 94    | 96    | 89 (60)  |
| Italy (IT)                 | 58.1                                       | 48.6 (16.4)  | 45 (52)  | 34   | 48    | 54    | 82 (62)  |
| Latvia (LV)                | 2.2  | 59.0 (22.3)  | 83 (73)  | 59   | 92    | 99    | 87 (54)  |
| Lithuania (LT)             | 3.6  | 59.0 (19.6)  | 86 (70)  | 69   | 94    | 96    | 83 (45)  |
| Luxembourg (LU)            | 0.5  | 74.9 (44.1)  | 75 (88)  | 47   | 89    | 93    | 92 (87)  |
| Malta (MT)                 | 0.4  | 23.5 (20.6)  | 88 (68)  | 71   | 93    | 97    | 63 (41)  |
| Netherlands (NL)           | 16.6                                       | 82.9 (65.6)  | 93 (92)  | 83   | 96    | 100   | 97 (97)  |
| Poland (PL)                | 38.5                                       | 52.0 (21.6)  | 89 (62)  | 72   | 97    | 98    | 82 (44)  |
| Portugal (PT)              | 10.7                                       | 39.8 (23.8)  | 68 (54)  | 54   | 81    | 75    | 65 (37)  |
| Romania (RO)               | 22.2                                       | 33.4 (n / a)   | 70 (42)  | 57   | 72    | 82    | 58 (35)  |
| Slovak Republic (SK)       | 5.5  | 49.6 (11.6)  | 78 (68)  | 55   | 87    | 86    | 76 (59)  |
| Slovenia (SI)              | 2  | 64.8 (33.5)  | 88 (81)  | 73   | 95    | 96    | 84 (74)  |
| Spain (ES)                 | 40.5                                       | 66.8 (29.3)  | 70 (52)  | 52   | 86    | 79    | 72 (50)  |
| Sweden (SE)                | 9  | 80.7 (50.8)  | 91 (86)  | 77   | 97    | 100   | 97 (98)  |
| United Kingdom<br>(UK)     | 60.9                                       | 70.9 (44.1)  | 91 (90)  | 87   | 94    | 95    | 92 (72)  |
| Iceland (IS) <sup>10</sup> | 0.3  | 90 (72.2)  | 94(93)   | 87   | 97    | 100   | 98(98)   |
| Norway (NO) <sup>11</sup>  | 4.6  | 86 (57.3)  | 93   | n/a  | n/a   | n/a   | n/a (97)   |

Source: Hasebrink et al (2009)

#### 2.4.2. Special focus: The place of mobile technology within European families

##### Leslie Haddon

- Most research on mobile technologies is on mobile phones, and more specifically on communications, although other functionalities of this device have started to receive some attention. Only a small subset of mobile phone research looks at the family, and this is mainly focused on parent–child relationships.
- The age at which children first acquire mobile phones has been decreasing into the pre-teens for a decade, although there is some country variation as regards the exact levels of adoption. Meanwhile, the rise of texting, use of the camera on the phone and internet access via the mobile phone have given rise to concerns about what children do with these facilities (for example cyberbullying) and what they can access (online).
- The growing absence of young people from unsupervised public spaces in some countries has led to both a bedroom culture and increased mobility as young people spend time both in peers' homes and in after-school activities. Both trends, arguably, have had implications for children's acquisition of mobile phones.
- The mobile phone has had mixed implications for parents' ability to monitor their children. They can check on the children when they are out of the home, which is sometimes respected by children and sometimes resisted. Services showing parents the location of children have the potential to raise tensions in this respect. But children can now more easily make their calls and organise their social life beyond parental supervision. There are also some specific concerns about children accessing the internet on the mobile phone, beyond supervision, but at the moment this is not a widespread practice because of the cost of doing so.
- While there is a literature showing how children resist parents' attempts to manage their lives, not all research emphasises such family tensions and conflicts. Some researchers have observed how, in various ways, the mobile phone can assist in the process of children gaining more independence, emphasising compromise and trade-offs in families, which may generally involve more negotiation and democracy.
- A wider theoretical framework is provided by the literature emphasising how our expectations of children and of parents are 'socially shaped', that is, influenced by media, experts, policy, etc. This can vary over time and by country, meaning parents can have slightly different concerns and views about parental intervention in their children's lives. This wider context contributes to parents being concerned about the potential dangers to their children and wishing to monitor their lives. That said, there seems to have been little media, expert or policy advice to parents specifically about the mobile phone and children, compared to that relating to the internet.
- While the mobile phone research literature is dominated by the issues outlined above, mobile technologies can also play other roles in children's lives. They can serve (and indeed be used by parents) to occupy children as 'time fillers'. As for adults, they can be practically useful (for example looking up information online) and enhance various experiences (for example sharing photos taken with the camera on the phone). And communications by mobile (voice or text) can sometimes be regarded as 'gifts' between family members, showing that the other person is thinking of them.
- As regards future research, it would be useful to know the extent to which some of the parent–child analysis outlined above applies across other European countries, whether children's access to

the internet via the mobile phone is changing and to know about their use of laptops to gain internet access. If we change the focus to parents, one could ask how mobile technologies fit into, and in various ways help them to manage, their lives.

- Apart from perhaps some health concerns about mobile phone radiation, the mobile phone as a communications device appears to have attracted very little overall policy interest. Possible areas would include children's use of mobile phones in schools, what they can take pictures of using the camera on the phone, using the mobile in relation to cyberbullying, what they can access online via the mobile phone, whether they can opt out of surveillance services related to the mobile phone and their use of Wi-Fi in public spaces.

#### 2.4.3. Special focus: ICT, healthy ageing and eHealth

##### Ranjana Das

Introducing a report on the economic benefits of implemented eHealth solutions, Commissioner Viviane Reding (EC, 2006) remarked that "the advice is simple: do not postpone innovation, but equally, do not take a leap into the dark; take small steps, carefully, and be guided by evidence now available of the successes and failures of others". One of the key future challenges identified by the OECD in its scoping report on the family in 2030 is an ageing European society. The report draws attention to the:

... extremely rapid rise in the coming years of the number of elderly and very elderly – estimated for example for Europe at +37% and +54% respectively by 2030 (and +44% and +171% respectively by 2050) – and the potential constraints this could impose on women's availability for employed work and their careers. Clearly much will depend on whether or not 'healthy ageing' becomes a widespread phenomenon. (OECD, 2008: 21)

Integrated policies for supporting healthy ageing are now a EU-wide priority. The recommendations of CARMEN or the Care and Management of Services for Older People in Europe Network, a thematic network supported by the EC which worked with 40 European organisations from 11 European countries from 2011-2004, are to adopt a "broad focus that includes perspectives on empowerment, prevention, social values such as equity and solidarity, and the role of informal carers" (Tamsma, 2004: 7) rather than a narrow focus on specialised and acute care.

An important strategy that forms part of this holistic focus perhaps is the use of ICT for assisting healthy ageing. 'Active ageing', a concept that is high on EU policy priorities, still remains a confusing concept for many across Europe and progress seems to be hindered not only by fragmented policies and responsibilities but also by disparities in social contexts across Europe where these are implemented – for instance the socioeconomic and demographic differences between other parts of Europe and some of the post-Communist new member states (Arend, 2005). The EC's visions of the ambient assisted living (AAL) initiative presents its overview of instruments (Timmers, 2007) as including policy and support, regulation, research and development, cooperation and deployment.

Stroetmann et al (2006: 9) point out that eHealth, defined as "encompassing information and communication technology (ICT)-enabled solutions providing benefits to health, be it at the individual or at the societal level, is expected to contribute significantly to the further development of health systems". Generally, one of the clear benefits identified by initiatives for using ICT in healthy ageing is cost reduction by providing care at the early stages of illness rather than waiting for a fully developed condition and increasingly integrated home care for older people and the infirm are being encouraged, which makes use of a variety of assistive technologies.

The purpose, as evident within initiatives for eHealth, tele-health services and smart home technologies, is to aid older people to live within their own homes while receiving adequate support. While the health dimensions to this are apparent, there is also perhaps a related social dimension. On the one hand, it enables people to live independently as far as is possible and on the other, it assists the activities of informal and family carers who now need to accommodate care activities as part of their ongoing professional lives. Blaschke et al's (2009: 642) recent review of the literature on ageing and technology stresses these social dimensions thus: "ATs (assistive technologies) may provide older adults with an increased sense of safety and independence, allow them to remain in their homes longer, feel more actively involved in their care, decrease feelings of isolation and improve their overall sense of well-being".

Their review was able to divide the literature in the area into three groups: behaviour monitoring tools, smart homes and tele-health tools. The first "consist of sensors and warning systems that alert care-givers whenever the care receiver enters or leaves a designated location (eg bed, room, etc)" (Blaschke et al, 2009: 644), the second category includes technologies that "involve more complex environments that predict normal and abnormal behaviours prior to alerting care-givers of potentially dangerous behaviours" (p 644) and the third focuses "explicitly on health and illness issues and include passive monitoring systems (ie fall and movement sensors); remote exchange of data (ie blood pressure) between patients and health care professionals; and video conferencing systems that allow patients to interact with family, friends and health care professionals even in remote rural areas" (pp 644-5).

Active ageing, assistive technologies, smart homes, tele-health and more generally the support of healthy ageing by the use of ICT calls for a not insignificant amount of investment, not only in terms of the technologies but also in terms of the other related investments these require, such as training resources if needed. In Europe, financing these eHealth initiatives have received the following recent policy recommendations (EC, 2008: 80):

- "Promote eHealth as a resource in healthcare and services, not as an end in itself
- "Focus on improving several aspects of health services, not on cash savings
- "Facilitate effective, comprehensive financing packages covering the whole
- "Investment lifecycle, including long-term, recurring expenditure
- "Invest in more evidence on investment risks
- "Promote and facilitate stakeholder engagement, not just consultation
- "Provide resources to develop skills and knowledge."

The take-up of eHealth initiatives remains uneven across the EU. In a seven-country study of European citizens' use of eHealth services, Andreassen et al (2007: 2) point out the following cross-national differences:

Health-related use of the Internet was most frequent in the Northern countries, with Denmark (62%), and Norway (59%) topping the list, followed by Germany (49%). The Eastern countries, Poland and Latvia, reported 42% and 35% health related use of the Internet respectively, while the Southern countries had the lowest proportion of Internet health users with 30% in Portugal and 23% in Greece. In the sub-sample of Internet users, the differences between the countries were smaller, but a chi-square test showed that the differences between the Northern (74% Internet health users), East-European (72%) and Southern countries (60%) were significant ( $\chi^2(2,4714) = 88, 5, p < 0.001$ ), despite the high score in Poland (79%). (p 2).

Differences were also found across individuals depending on their self-assessment of their health conditions. The study concluded that: “Those who assessed their own health status as poor tended to use the Internet less than others to get health information. However, medical indicators of health, such as a current diagnosis of long-term illness or disability, and a high number of visits to the GP, indicate a higher level of health-related use of the Internet” (P 4).

Predicting the future of research in the use of information systems for patient care and related areas, Haux et al (2002: 19-20) outline several areas of research likely to remain significant:

- “Structuring and testing comprehensive electronic patient records, which support the casuistic use of patient data for direct patient care, and which allow patient group analyses and use of data for research and reporting.
- “Conception and testing of suitable information system architectures that support cooperative, patient-centered and cross-institutional care.
- “Conception and testing of system architectures for ‘knowledge centers’ offering specialized medical knowledge world-wide via the Internet. Conception and testing of methods for medical data analysis (‘medical data mining’) based on modern information system architectures and electronic patient records and aimed at clinical and epidemiological research, as well as health reporting.
- “Integration and testing of comprehensive, practical, useful and mobile ICT tools for patient care.”

Involving older people in these kinds of conversations is crucial and it seems there is some demand for a more personal touch to care. Eggermont et al (2006: 209) developed policy recommendations based on a dialogue with senior citizens, suggesting that older people, on the one hand:

... would like to see ICT enhance the quality of life. For instance, ICT may support the social relationships of the elderly and help them fight loneliness; ICT may also ameliorate their physical condition and help them live independently; and ICT may offer them possibilities to stay mobile, to relax, to learn, and to work, in other words, to fully participate in society [...] On the other hand, the elderly strongly advocate maintaining non-mediated communication (face-to-face contacts) and non-technological alternatives in the future. They still want to talk to their doctor in person, have the possibility to go to the bank or a grocery store, take courses in a classroom situation, receive information about their community life through traditional information channels, and enjoy nature. Their home environment too should be a cosy place, instead of a cold technological one.

Eggermont et al (2006) propose the following figure based on elderly citizens’ expectations of ICT in their lives (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: Overview of desired and unwanted futures

|                                  | What we do want  | What we do NOT want   |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Social relationships</b>      | 1. ICT that <b>supports other social contacts</b> (e.g. e-mailing with friends abroad, making appointments using ICT, distributing and receiving information with regard to club life, keeping in touch with other people when immobile, etc.) (37.8%)<br>2. <b>Personal face-to-face contacts</b> (family life, parties, etc.) (24.4%)  | 1. <b>Disappearance of physical human contact</b> and its negative consequences (loneliness, bad family relationships, etc.) (48.8%)  |
| <b>Health</b>                    | 1. Technology as a means to improve the <b>quality of life</b> (e.g. faster diagnosis, better treatment; monitoring and alarming from a distance; independent living, even when one is sick); as a means to carry out euthanasia; to control the food chain (38.7%)<br>2. <b>Availability of information for medical personnel to optimise the health care system</b> (e.g. reduced waiting times, no double investigations) (20.2%) | 1. <b>Intrusion of privacy</b> (e.g. abuse and commercialisation of medical information) (27%)<br>2. <b>The disappearance of human contact</b> in the health sector (21.3%)<br>3. <b>Needless prolongation of human life and suffering</b> (16.9%)  |
| <b>Leisure</b>                   | 1. <b>ICT to support and promote leisure activities (information)</b> , ICT as a means to connect people with similar interests, ICT as a means to create free time (42.9%)<br>2. <b>Alternative leisure activities should continue to exist (travel, books, etc.)</b> , at a reasonable price, alternative communication channels about leisure activities, ICT as a means to increase freedom of choice (14.3%)                    | 1. <b>Lack of alternatives</b> , limitation of freedom of choice: decrease of alternative leisure activities (e.g. physical activities in open air), reduction of alternative information channels with regard to entertainment activities (45.1%)<br>2. <b>The disappearance of face-to-face human contacts</b> , loneliness (23.5%) |
| <b>Work, education, learning</b> | 1. <b>Increasing choice through ICT</b> , ICT as a means to make education accessible for everyone (e.g. physically disabled persons), as a means to promote teleworking (which is beneficial to family life and to the environment) (31.3%)<br>2. <b>Increasing usability of ICT and of ICT trainings</b> – especially those aimed at the elderly (e.g. by using mother tongue) (23.8%)   | 1. <b>The disappearance of face-to-face contacts</b> (35.5%)<br>2. <b>Limited choices, alternatives</b> (for instance, only online learning) (12.9%)  |

|                                    | What we do want   | What we do NOT want   |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Public and private services</b> | 1. <b>Improvement of life quality</b> : online shopping for immobile people, ICT to save time and increase comfort (24.6%)<br>2. <b>Good information about ICT applications</b> for the elderly, user-friendly ICT, courses, objective information, ICT in mother tongue, etc. (24.6%)    | 1. <b>Disappearance of face-to-face contact</b> (e.g. contacts with service suppliers, who may also provide additional information) (36.5%)<br>2. <b>Intrusion of privacy</b> (19.2%)<br>3. <b>Lack of alternatives, limited choices</b> (17.3%)                  |
| <b>Housing</b>                     | 1. <b>Comfortable housing</b> (55.6%)<br>2. <b>User-friendly ICT in the home</b> (22.2%)  | 1. <b>The disappearance of face-to-face human contact</b> , a “chilly” environment (17.4%)<br>2. <b>Limited alternatives, choices</b> (13%)   |
| <b>Mobility outside the home</b>   | 1. <b>Technology as a means to facilitate traffic</b> : navigation, prevention of traffic jam, tracing of cars, improvement of public transport, etc. (44.7%)<br>2. <b>Better accessible transport</b> (13.2%)<br>3. <b>Good information about ICT applications in this field</b> (13.2%) | 1. <b>Lower quality of life</b> (due to pollution, noise, traffic jams, etc.) (19.2%)<br>2. <b>Individualism, fewer social contacts</b> (19.2%)<br>3. <b>Limitations on the freedom of choice, alternatives</b> (15.4%)<br>4. <b>Intrusion of privacy</b> (15.4%) |
| <b>Political participation</b>     | 1. <b>Improvement in the political participation of the elderly</b> (66.7%)   |   |

Source: Eggermont et al (2006: 211-12)

eHealth is accompanied by a significant number of challenges dotting the way to sustained and successful take-up. An EC document on an overview of the European strategy in ICT for ageing well (2009: 4) points out that:

... the majority of older people do not yet enjoy the benefits of the digital age – low cost communications and online services that could support some of their real needs – since only 15% use the internet. Severe vision, hearing or dexterity problems, frustrate many older peoples’ efforts (21% of the over 50s) to engage in the information society. The market of ICT for ageing well is still in a nascent phase and does not yet fully ensure the availability and take-up of the necessary ICT-enabled solutions.



### 3. Digital, interactive and mobile technologies: all change?

The media landscape has been transformed in the past decade by the arrival of the internet, mobile technologies, and the digital reshaping of analogue media (including television, music, games, press, film and more). As Jenkins (2006: 3) observes, “in the world of media convergence, every important story gets told, every brand gets sold and every consumer gets courted across multiple platforms”.

On the one hand, we see the emergence of the notion of the ‘media hub’ or home hub, the box that converges previously separate media, accessed via a powerful computer and a large flat screen in pride of place in the living room. On the other hand, we see the miniaturisation of media that were previously household goods, so they are refashioned as personal goods for the pocket, accessed privately via headphones. In social and historical terms, the significance of the media are far from restricted in significance to the realm of private leisure. Rather, media increasingly contribute to the reconfiguration of opportunities and risks in people’s lives in relation to social, cultural, educational, civic, health, work and commercial activities in addition to leisure. This has potentially transformative consequences for the concept of ‘family’ and the boundary between public and private.

Schulz (2004: 98; see also Thompson, 1995) argues that developments in technology which permit the media to bridge time-space distances, combined with new semiotic potentialities by which to encode the world and the powerful economic underpinning of media systems which ensures the standardisation and commodification of these bridging and encoding activities is together resulting in four kinds of social/historical transformation:

First, the media extend the natural limits of human communication capacities; second, the media substitute social activities and social institutions; third, media amalgamate with various non-media activities in social life; and fourth, the actors and organizations of all sectors of society accommodate to the media logic.

This approach is very different from that often propounded by the mass media and, too often also, by policy makers. In short, researchers of the social shaping and social consequences of new media (Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2006) increasingly concur that, as Livingstone and Haddon (2009) put it, three assertions are crucial:

- First is the rejection of the technological determinism commonplace in public and policy discourses (resulting in questions or claims that begin, ‘the internet impacts/affects/results in...’).
- Second is that, contrary to popular rhetoric, there is little evidence that the internet is revolutionising society, transforming childhood or radically changing the family or education, though to be sure, the internet is implicated in complex processes of social change, facilitating some possibilities and impeding others.
- Third is that there are substantial continuities between the online or ‘virtual’ world and the offline or ‘real’ world. Thus research is now rejecting early conceptions of ‘cyberspace’ as a qualitatively distinct place.

With this context clearly stated, in this section we examine families’ increasing access to and use of the internet and mobile phones, considering the role these media are finding in relation to digital in/exclusion, intimate relationships and supporting care relations in the extended family. Focusing on children in particular, we divide our inquiry into the importance of the internet into a section on online opportunities and one on online risks, both high on the European research and policy agenda. This distinction is, however, largely one of analytic convenience, for as we conclude, online opportunities and risks are closely related.

### 3.1. What do we know about children, families and the internet?

With 75% of European children using the internet,<sup>12</sup> a figure that continues to rise although it may soon plateau, societal concerns regarding the associated risks also increase, raising new research questions with pressing policy implications. The EU Kids Online project, a thematic network funded by the EC (see [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net)), adopted a comparative, critical, contextual and child-centric approach to the examination of existing research on European children and online opportunities and risks (from 2006 to 2009). To examine available findings on children's online opportunities and risks, these were first classified by theme, as shown in Figure 17.

**Figure 17: Classifying children's online opportunities and risks**

|               |   | Content:<br>Child as recipient          | Contact:<br>Child as participant                  | Conduct:<br>child as actor                 |
|---------------|---|---|---|--|
| OPPORTUNITIES | Education learning and digital literacy | Educational resources                   | Contact with others who share one's interests     | Self-initiated or collaborative learning   |
|               | Participation and civic engagement      | Global information                      | Exchange among interest groups                    | Concrete forms of civic engagement         |
|               | Creativity and self-expression          | Diversity of resources                  | Being invited/ inspired to create or participate  | User-generated content creation            |
|               | Identity and social connection          | Advice (personal/ health/ sexual etc)   | Social networking, shared experiences with others | Expression of identity                     |
| RISKS         | Commercial                              | Advertising, spam, sponsorship          | Tracking/ harvesting personal information         | Gambling, illegal downloads, hacking       |
|               | Aggressive                              | Violent/ gruesome/ hateful content      | Being bullied, harassed or stalked                | Bullying or harassing another              |
|               | Sexual                                  | Pornographic/harmful sexual content     | Meeting strangers, being groomed                  | Creating/ uploading pornographic material  |
|               | Values                                  | Racist, biased info/ advice (eg, drugs) | Self-harm, unwelcome persuasion                   | Providing advice eg, suicide/ pro-anorexia |

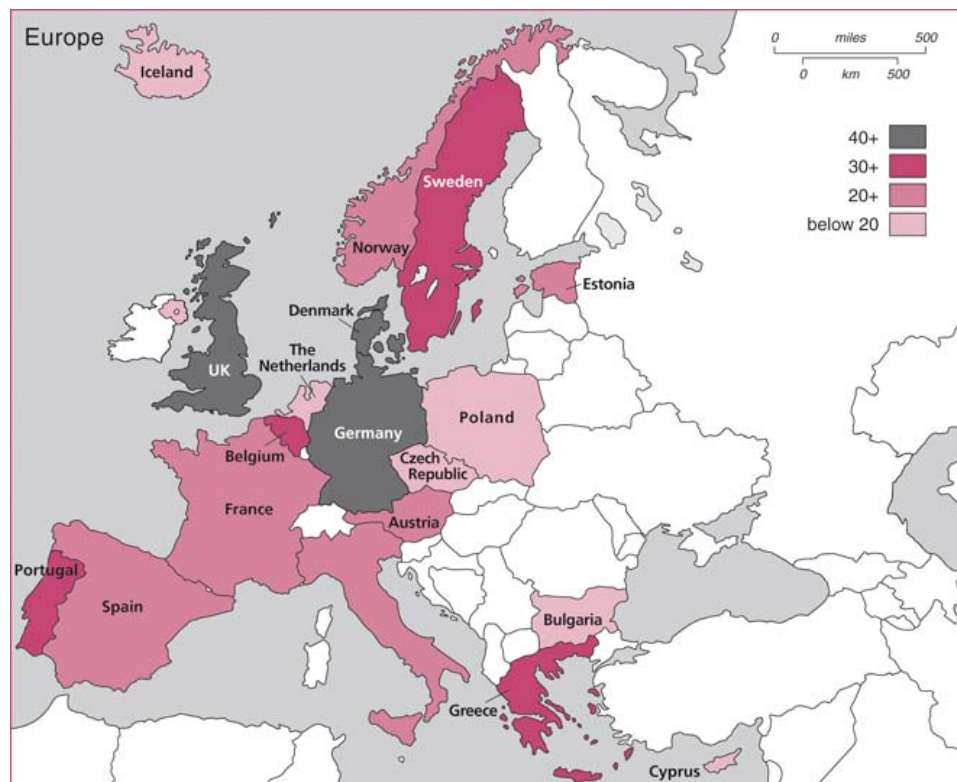
Source: Livingstone and Haddon (2009b)

This distinguishes the three modes of communication afforded by the internet: one-to-many (child as recipient of mass distributed content); adult-to-child (child as participant in an interactive situation predominantly driven by adults); and peer-to-peer (child as actor in an interaction in which s/he may be initiator or perpetrator). Both opportunities and risks were further classified by theme, each theme of considerable policy and research interest. Then, to chart the available European research, the EU Kids Online network constructed a publicly accessible and fully searchable database of empirical studies conducted and identified across Europe, provided they met a certain quality threshold. The result was a literature review of nearly 400 studies, as shown in Figure 18.<sup>13</sup>

In its comparative analysis of data availability and research gaps in Europe (Staksrud et al, 2009), the network found, firstly, that studies are unevenly distributed across Europe, with most research in Germany, the UK, Denmark and least in Cyprus, Bulgaria, Poland, Iceland, Slovenia and Ireland. In countries where few national studies exist, EC-funded research has shaped the evidence base by conducting pan-European studies of all member states. Other findings were as follows:

- Most research focuses on children directly, although much of this concerns teenagers rather than younger children. There is also some research on parents and teachers.
- Since less research uses qualitative or combined methods, the evidence base provides insufficient understanding of children's own experiences or perspectives. It tends to exclude young children (for whom surveys are inappropriate), and it offers little contextualisation of online activities in children's lives.

**Figure 18: Number of studies on children's internet use identified by country**



Source: Staksrud et al (2009)

There is a lack of evidence at present regarding:

- younger children, especially in relation to risk and coping, although continually updated research on teenagers is also important;
- emerging contents (especially Web 2.0) and services (especially if accessed via mobile, gaming or other platforms);
- understanding children's developing skills of navigation and search, content interpretation and critical evaluation;
- new and challenging risks, such as self-harm, suicide, pro-anorexia, drugs, hate/racism, gambling, addiction, illegal downloading and commercial risks (sponsorship, embedded or viral marketing, use of personal data, GPS tracking);
- how children (and parents) do and should respond to online risk;
- how to identify particularly vulnerable or 'at risk' children within the general population;
- evaluations of the effectiveness of forms of mediation – technical solutions, parental mediation, media literacy, other awareness and safety measures.

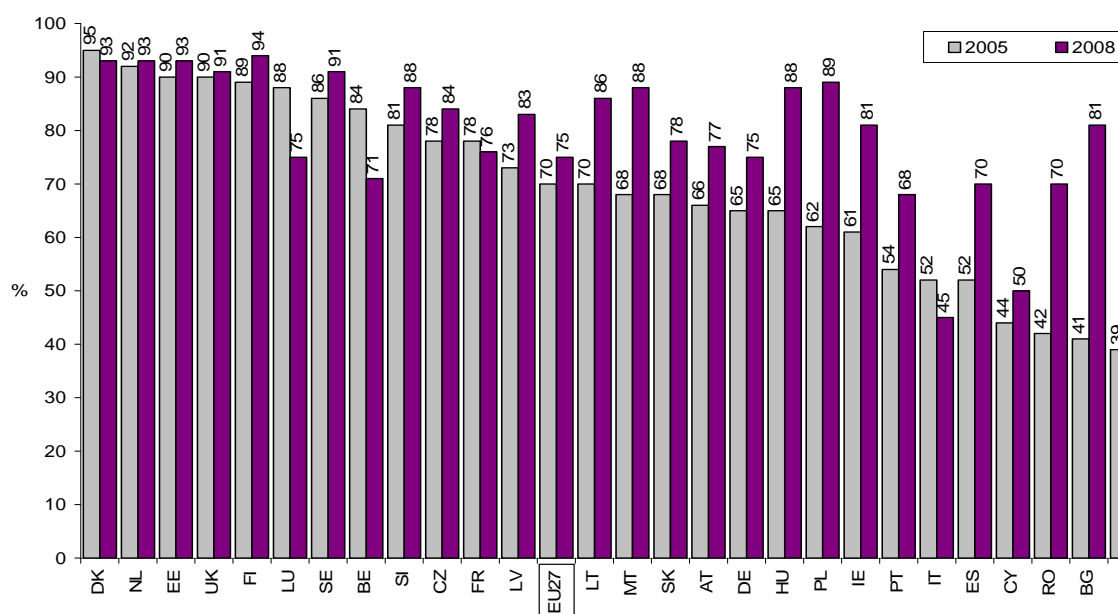
### **3.2. Access and use of the internet by European children**

In the past decade, the internet has diffused rapidly across Europe. The EU Kids Online project identified the following key points regarding families' access and use of the internet at home.

The only cross-nationally comparable European evidence regarding children's use comes from surveys of the parents/carers of 6- to 17-year-olds, rather than as directly reported by children themselves (Eurobarometer, 2008; see Figure 19). According to the analyses of this data conducted by Hasebrink et al (2009), this shows that:

- Children's use of the internet continues to grow. Striking recent rises are evident among younger children (6-11 years) and in countries that have recently entered the EU.
- Contrary to the widespread assumption that, in general, children are the digital natives and parents the digital immigrants, there are also striking increases in the percentage of parents online, reversing the previous trend for teenagers especially to outstrip adults in internet use.
- Indeed, the 2008 Eurobarometer survey shows that, although children (under 18 years) use the internet more than adults in general, they use it less than parents in particular, and this is especially the case for those under 11.
- This suggests that, in general, it is reasonable to expect that their parents will understand the internet sufficiently to guide their use, although this may not hold for teenagers.
- Across Europe, children generally use the internet more at home than at school, and there is a positive correlation between use at home and school across countries. In 2008 children in all European countries were more likely to use the internet at home than at any other place, and on average they go online in 1.9 locations (more in Nordic countries than in Southern Europe).
- Further, the more children use the internet at home in a country, the more likely they are to also use it at school, and vice versa.
- The evidence across Europe shows that, notwithstanding considerable cross-national differences in children's internet use, the more parents use the internet, the more children do so also.
- This reveals particularly rapid diffusion in Southern and Eastern European countries, while Northern Europe already shows a ceiling effect of near-maximum internet use among 6- to 17-year-olds. As regards gender, Hasebrink et al (2009) also observe that long-standing gender inequalities (for example in access to the home computer) may be disappearing, although socioeconomic inequalities persist in most countries (see the special focus report below on digital exclusion).

**Figure 19: EU children online (6- to 17-year-olds, %)**



Source: Hasebrink et al (2009), based on data from Eurobarometer (2005, 2008)

Several patterns could be said to be emerging: (i) gender gaps in access diminish as home and school internet access becomes common; (ii) there is a growing bedroom culture for teenagers and solitary use of the internet is increasing, particularly for boys; and (iii) the amount of time spent by boys and girls online has been increasing in all countries.

Figure 20 shows that from the age of 14 or so the percentage of girls having used the internet at any place is slightly higher than the percentage of boys. The reason for this seems to be that girls are more likely than boys to have used the internet at home. In 2005 this was the other way round. Then boys were more likely than girls in the oldest age group to have used the internet at home. It should be stressed, however, that when it comes to the amount of time spent online, there is a lack of comparable data to make similar analysis.

**Figure 20: Percentage using the internet, by age and location of use**

| % using the internet at... |       | 6-7 years | 8-9 years  | 10-11 years | 12-13 years | 14-15 years | 16-17 years |
|----------------------------|-------|-----------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Any place                  | Boys  | 48.3      | 63.6       | 78.0        | 84.1        | <b>82.8</b> | <b>84.7</b> |
|                            | Girls | 46.4      | 63.7       | 79.9        | 86.5        | <b>86.3</b> | <b>90.1</b> |
| Home                       | Boys  | 41.6      | 54.0       | 70.6        | <b>73.7</b> | 73.5        | <b>77.2</b> |
|                            | Girls | 41.6      | 55.9       | 70.9        | <b>78.1</b> | 77.0        | <b>83.6</b> |
| School                     | Boys  | 42.5      | 48.3       | <b>61.0</b> | 62.6        | 63.7        | 53.8        |
|                            | Girls | 42.4      | 49.8       | <b>55.6</b> | 62.8        | 63.3        | 57.1        |
| A friend's place           | Boys  | 9.8       | 14.4       | <b>23.0</b> | <b>25.6</b> | 30.3        | 34.7        |
|                            | Girls | 14.0      | 15.0       | <b>18.3</b> | <b>30.4</b> | 33.1        | 31.5        |
| An internet café           | Boys  | 0.9       | 0.5        | 1.1         | <b>3.6</b>  | <b>6.7</b>  | 6.2         |
|                            | Girls | 0.2       | 0.5        | 1.6         | <b>1.9</b>  | <b>4.4</b>  | 5.5         |
| A library                  | Boys  | 4.8       | <b>6.7</b> | <b>5.6</b>  | 11.3        | 8.3         | 8.6         |
|                            | Girls | 4.6       | <b>4.2</b> | <b>9.3</b>  | 9.9         | 9.5         | 7.4         |

McQuillan and d'Haenens (2009: 98) note, "While gaps between European countries persist, a positive trend is the shrinking gender difference in young people's internet use across Europe, with girls' use now slightly higher than boys (76% vs 74%). Only in the 6-7 year old age group is girls' internet use lower than boys' (46% vs 48%)". Arising from the foregoing questions of access and use, and possibly the most researched question in relation to families and the internet thus far, is the question of digital inclusion and exclusion.

Specifically, it is widely asked, does digital exclusion exacerbate existing forms of social exclusion? And can strategies to foster digital inclusion ameliorate social exclusion? Of increasing interest, too, is the question of whether the internet is reshaping the conduct of personal relationships. In terms of the family, many such relationships are of interest. In this report we examine two: one is the romantic relationship – the mediation of intimacy; the other is the potential of ICT to mediate relationships of care and support within the home and, especially, among family members dispersed across different households.

These are the topics of the special focus pieces below.

### 3.2.1. Special focus: Families' digital disadvantage and exclusion

Ellen Helsper

- The implications of socioeconomic exclusion on everyday life have been well documented. For example, poverty has been related to low educational attainment, health problems and family instability as well as to material disadvantages (Farrington, 1992). This link between exclusion and family life can also be seen in other areas. The European Human Rights Charter (2007) included family, social and informational rights besides economic, health and freedom related rights. Article 7 directly links the right to family and private life to communication<sup>14</sup>. Thus information and communication as well as family life are now explicit rights.
- Digital exclusion research initially followed the pattern observed in social exclusion policy and practice. It focused on economic barriers to inclusion that prevented people from accessing ICT but moved towards a broader definition that incorporated skills and different types of engagement.
- Access: a lack of access to ICT is potentially problematic not just because access might offer new opportunities but also because many traditional products and services are moved to digital formats such as the internet.
- Skills: access to ICT gives people access to education, information, services and leisure pursuits. Therefore, policy targets were set by the EU in its Riga Declaration to halve the gap in internet use between groups at risk of exclusion and those who were considered to be advantaged. Goals included making 100% of public websites accessible for people with disabilities and to halve digital literacy gaps for disadvantaged groups.
- The family and its sociocultural context influences self-efficacy levels in relation to all aspects of ICT from a very young age onwards (Bandura, 2006a, 2006b; Bandura and Locke, 2003).
- Attitudes: whereas there are classifications emerging of ICT access and skills, there is a less clear development in the classification of different fields of attitudes and motivation. What is clear is that among socially disadvantaged groups these attitudes tend to be more negative.
- Engagement: most researchers agree that there are different levels of engagement with ICT but agreement about what constitutes high quality engagement is more controversial. Gradations of inclusion should be conceptualised that reflect the different ways of engaging with technologies (Livingstone and Helsper, 2007; Warschauer, 2004).

### **Implications of digital inclusion for the future family**

- ICT such as the internet and mobile phones are first and foremost about communication and social interaction, both important for a healthy family life (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2002; Segrin and Flora, 2005; Sillars et al, 1984, 2004). Exclusion from opportunities for learning about ICT and interaction with them at home can therefore mean exclusion from support networks and wider society for those who do not have access or skills to use the communication tools available (Selwyn, 2002, 2004).
- Socialisation and sociocultural influences within the family strongly influence the way in which people behave and think. The home and the family environment will thus have a large impact on how future families engage with ICT: family life is the basis for the skill, motivational, engagement and access aspects of digital exclusion. Inequalities in how ICT skills and types of engagement are distributed among families with different economic and sociocultural backgrounds are likely to result in persistent disadvantage in the future for children from less fortunate families.
- The most recent research shows that the economic and educational resources of the family are replicated in digital environments. To create societies in which all families are equal, it is important to understand how we can break this vicious cycle for disadvantaged families so that access to

services, social relationships, education and information is not dependent on cultural, social or economic background. This cannot be done without a wider focus on social exclusion. Widespread distribution of ICT devices, whether mobile phones or internet connections, will not overcome inequalities in skills, motivation and types of engagement since social inequalities are important in determining every stage of the digital inclusion process.

If the family, in whatever shape or form, is seen as the cornerstone of society it will without doubt continue to be so in a digitised future society. It is therefore important to understand what the influence of family life and resources is on the way we participate in a society that, while sharing many characteristics with current everyday life, requires a greater knowledge of and interaction with digital services and products.

### 3.1.2. Special focus: Intimate relationships and ICT

#### Ellen Helsper

The study of interpersonal communication in intimate relationships has a long history in the social sciences, in particular in psychology. Frequent and open communication is one of the most important principles of success in relationships, especially in the intimate relationships that make up the family environment (Allen et al, 2008; Burleson and Denton, 1997; Noller and Fitzpatrick, 1990; Stafford and Canary, 1991). This section focuses on how new modes of communication and interaction are influencing the establishment and maintenance of these intimate relationships.

#### Policy

Two EU policy areas, data protection and harassment protection, have implications for the use of ICT in relation to intimate relationships.

- *Data protection:* the data that people share through ICT in intimate relationships is highly personal. It is protected from abuse by third parties through the EC Data Protection Directive. Under this directive, personal data can only be shared with others when it complies with quality (collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes), legitimacy (consent), transparency (information of use and 'ownership' of data), right of access (right to see the data kept about you), right to object (right to remove data) and confidentiality of processing requirements (protection against misuse by others).
- *Stalking and harassment:* there is currently no EU policy that specifically focuses on preventing media-based harassment. It is argued that current laws such as the Protection of Harassment Act (1997) in the UK are sufficient to cover mediated spaces as well. Nevertheless, there are issues of traceability of people committing these acts and debates about whether psychological harassment should be covered as well as acts that might be life threatening.

#### 1) Establishing relationships

Widespread use of ICT could change who we meet and who we form intimate relationships with. ICT can be expected to change where we meet and who we meet. The first question to be asked is whether we are meeting our potential romantic partners in different locations now that we have access to new spaces for social interaction. While online dating sites are relatively popular, meeting potential partners through traditional means is still far more common (Dutton et al, 2008; Yougov.com, 2007). Only very infrequently have people who are currently in relationships met their romantic partners online. The



most common sites for meeting new people on the internet are social networking sites or through email and instant messaging applications.

Researchers argue that the growth of the singles market and the time pressure associated with modern lives has pushed young adults in particular to look to the internet as a place for safe and efficient dating (Barraket and Henry-Waring, 2008; Brym and Lenton, 2003). The EU project on Me, My Spouse and the Internet<sup>15</sup> should soon release data on the popularity of online dating in all European countries. Their UK data shows that about one third of married couples who have met online used online dating sites in particular (Dutton et al, 2008); this means that this is a growth market to be reckoned with (Gunter, 2009).

Recent research suggests that there are larger differences in age and income between people who have met their partners online, but these differences are not significant (low numbers of people who have met their partners online makes significance testing difficult) and might be due to the special nature of those who have so far been in the position to meet their partners online (Dutton et al, forthcoming).

Those who use online dating sites have higher incomes, are more likely to be highly educated and in professional employment (Brym and Lenton, 2003; Schulz et al, 2009). However, reflecting the average internet user, they are not socially more isolated or desperate than those who do not use ICT to meet up with others (Brym and Lenton, 2003; Wellman et al, 2001). After initial contact with a potential partner has been established through ICT, the understanding of and trust in what people present about themselves will determine whether these relationships are taken to a non-mediated context.

## 2) Maintaining relationships

Media and popular attention in the area of maintaining relationships emphasises how an obsession with or proliferation of ICT could 'destroy' what people see as the nexus of all intimate relationships: face-to-face contact. Addiction to digital content such as pornography, gaming and social interaction and networking are often blamed for breaking up family relationships in the popular press (Tyler, 2002). Academic research is less clear on how prevalent these activities are and how large and generalisable an impact they have had in changing our everyday interactions (Whitty and Joinson, 2009a).

There is some research on whether in general new media replace old media, which suggests that supplementation of old media with newer media is more likely than substitution (Helsper et al, 2008), but there has been very little research in relation to intimate relationships and family communication in this particular field. Media richness research asserts that the more cues (visual, audio, textual) and the more immediate the medium is the more likely it will be used for relationships that require trust and intimacy (Hancock et al, 2004). However, this conflicts with the idea promoted by social distance research that some types of communication and interaction are actually better served by creating a non-confrontational situation (that is, spatial and temporal distance; see Whitty and Joinson, 2009b). For example, non-emotional, practical communication or interactions where some kind of deception is beneficial would be most likely to occur through ICT that creates more distance between sender and receiver. A feature-based (Hancock et al, 2004) approach has been offered as a solution. This approach argues that it depends on the features of the communication and of the ICT, which medium will be used.

From general research on intimacy, it is clear that intimacy is more frequent in the beginning of a relationship and younger couples are indeed more likely to engage in mediated intimacy (unpublished results, Me, My Spouse and the Internet project). Researchers interested in this area are looking at ways in which online environments might be used to solve marital problems in intimacy (Pollock, 2006). Under the terms cybercheating and online infidelity, researchers have looked at whether the easy access and high levels of anonymity on ICT such as the internet might lead to higher levels of infidelity (Griffiths, 2004) and also into how people perceive online types of intimacy with others in comparison to offline infidelity (Whitty, 2005).

Research shows that in established intimate relationships, lying is not more likely to occur in ICT-based communication than it is to occur in face-to-face communication (Whitty and Joinson, 2009b). Levels of agreement on the acceptability of online behaviour related to emotional and physical interaction with others are very high in intimate relationships although women tend to be less accepting (Helsper and Whitty, in press). A relatively new aspect of intimate relationships in relation to ICT is the possibility to find out a lot about the other through their digital footprint. This is clearly understood in professional contexts where employers look at potential job candidates' social networking sites or other information available on the web (Byrneside, 2008; Coutu et al, 2007; Sprague, 2007).

## Conclusions

- There is currently not sufficient evidence that couples who have met through ICT are different in composition than traditional pairs. Since technology use in general is subject to patterns of digital exclusion the people who do meet their partners online are slightly different from those who meet through traditional channels. We do not know how this will be in the future when the online population looking for relationships starts to represent the general population more.
- Similarly, research in this field is too young to understand whether in the future individuals who establish an intimate relationship for the first time will resort as much to ICT as do those who are currently in the second round of establishing longer-term intimate relationships. Changes in society are likely to make it easier for people to meet and to establish relationships even at later stages in their lives through ICT.
- The rule still seems to be that offline sociability and intimacy will be extended into the online world and not replaced by it. However, relationships started within a digital environment seem to make people more strategic in thinking about what ideally they would like themselves and their partners to be, which might lead to these interaction patterns filtering through in real life.
- In families of the future, spouses might rely on information gathered through all kinds of ICT. For those with the need to communicate but lacking the tools or skills to communicate productively face-to-face, ICT can offer a stepping-stone to better communication. Of course, compulsive use of ICT and easy access to 'straying' opportunities will also be easier and therefore will form a greater threat to rocky relationships.
- Online behaviour will likely become a more frequent topic of negotiation and conflict within intimate relationships, not only between parents and children such as is currently the case, but also between the adults around which these families are built. It is important to understand which types of individuals will be more likely to need or resort to ICT to establish healthy family relationships.

### **3.3. New media, new opportunities: European children's internet use**

As Hasebrink et al (2009) report, among the 21 countries included in the EU Kids Online Network, evidence was available from almost all about the main opportunities experienced by children; however, little evidence was available from Slovenia, Bulgaria and Greece, and only in some countries was evidence available regarding both adults' and children's perception of online opportunities (Sweden, Poland, Ireland, Denmark, Greece, Italy, the UK, Norway and Iceland). In general, adults and children agreed that children use the internet as an educational resource, for entertainment, games and fun, for searching for global information and for social networking, sharing experiences with distant others. Other opportunities, such as user-generated content creation or concrete forms of civic participation, are less common. Generally, little clear or cross-nationally comparable information is available regarding the incidence and take-up of these various opportunities, making it difficult to justify a classification of countries in terms of online opportunities engaged in by children.

Livingstone and Helsper propose a graduated sequence of activities towards digital inclusion (Livingstone and Helsper, 2007). Based on findings for UK 9- to 19-year-olds, differences among users fell into four orderly steps, suggesting a ladder of online opportunities as follows.

- Step 1 centres on information seeking. This is the first step for everyone, and characterises internet use among those who just take up a few online opportunities. They may be termed basic users.
- Step 2 adds in games and email. Thus, those who take up a few more opportunities are likely to use the internet for information, entertainment and communication. These may be termed moderate users.
- Step 3 adds in instant messaging and downloading music. Those who take up a fair range of opportunities continue to seek information but they expand their peer-to-peer engagement. They may be termed broad users.
- Step 4 adds in a wide range of interactive and creative uses, while continuing the foregoing uses, making for a diversity of uses among those who take up the most opportunities online. These are termed all-rounders.

To some degree, children progress ‘up the ladder’ as they get older – most activities online become more common with age. The Mediappro project (Mediappro, 2006) has produced the only directly comparable data available on children’s uses thus far. This survey of 7,393 12- to 18-year-olds regarding their appropriation of new media in nine European countries shows that children mix educational, entertaining, informational and networking activities in substantial numbers, while tailoring internet use to suit their interests. Generally, once they gain access (and skills), it can be concluded that children in all countries prioritise online communication, various forms of entertainment and play, and information provision, while for parents the benefits of educational resources are higher on their agenda.

The Mediappro survey data were reanalysed by Kalmus et al (2009) in accordance with Livingstone and Helsper’s ladder of opportunities. They find the model to fit, more or less, albeit with some exceptions. Figure 21 shows the nine countries ranked (horizontally) in terms of decreasing ‘versatility of internet use’, based on an index of versatility calculated in terms of the number of activities a child reported doing at least ‘sometimes’ (out of 11 activities in all). The main figure in the text represents the percentage of children (aged 11-18) in each country who do the activity at least sometimes.

- Step 1 includes activities identified by Kalmus et al as particularly ‘school-favoured’ (and taken up by 8 or 9 in 10 of the children). This implies a key role for schools in stimulating children’s internet use in Europe.
- Step 2 adds in communication and entertainment activities, taken up by 60%-70% of the children; these they term ‘popular uses’.
- Stage 3 adds in two further entertainment activities – watching videos or television and playing online games; slightly over half of the children do this, but as Kalmus et al observe, these activities are ‘resource-bound’ in that they require high speed broadband connections and, in social terms, a fair amount of disposable time.
- Stage 4 – the ‘advanced uses’ – are more interactive and creative. As also noted by Livingstone and Helsper (2007), these are undertaken only by a minority of children, belying popular labels such as ‘digital natives’. If more children are to do these activities, additional social or educational support may be required. Without this, advanced uses are likely to remain unequally distributed across the population.

For the most part, Kalmus et al further note that most activities online become more common as children become older, although playing games reduces with age and there are no age differences in watching videos, television, chat, blogging or creating home pages. Peter et al (2009: 85) studied parental concern across Europe on their children's use of social networking sites, and observe that, "although a general pattern does not emerge, it does seem that parents in Nordic countries (ie Denmark, Finland and Sweden) are generally less worried than other European parents about what their children do on these sites".

**Figure 21: Versatility of internet use**

|                                 |  | Estonia | UK   | Poland | Denmark | Portugal | Belgium | France | Greece | Average |
|---------------------------------|--|---------|------|--------|---------|----------|---------|--------|--------|---------|
| Index of use versatility (mean) |  | 6.49    | 5.92 | 5.71   | 5.58    | 5.45     | 4.90    | 4.88   | 4.73   | 5.44    |
| Opportunities                   |  |         |      |        |         |          |         |        |        |         |
| Stage 1                         | Uses search engines                            | 90      | 98   | 91     | 92      | 95       | 95      | 94     | 81     | 91      |
|                                 | Uses for school work (at school)               | 80      | 91   | 81     | 92      | 84       | 85      | 86     | 76     | 84      |
| Stage 2                         | Uses instant messenger                         | 88      | 78   | 75     | 87      | 77       | 81      | 69     | 39     | 71      |
|                                 | Listens to music, radio                        | 87      | 68   | 67     | 69      | 70       | 58      | 57     | 70     | 66      |
|                                 | Sends and reads emails                         | 69      | 81   | 62     | 66      | 69       | 74      | 67     | 46     | 65      |
|                                 | Downloads music, movies, software, video games | 73      | 60   | 67     | 50      | 60       | 58      | 49     | 65     | 60      |
| Stage 3                         | Watches videos, television                     | 71      | 47   | 53     | 52      | 64       | 46      | 46     | 58     | 53      |
|                                 | Plays games online                             | 56      | 67   | 57     | 52      | 50       | 33      | 31     | 76     | 51      |
| Stage 4                         | Goes to a chat room                            | 33      | 20   | 34     | 26      | 38       | 28      | 32     | 41     | 32      |
|                                 | Has a blog or personal web page                | 30      | 35   | 29     | 21      | 26       | 38      | 30     | 25     | 29      |
|                                 | Fills out surveys, enters competitions         | 44      | 22   | 24     | 29      | 16       | 25      | 23     | 19     | 25      |
|                                 | Buys things                                    | 10      | 45   | 28     | 20      | 11       | 9       | 28     | 10     | 19      |
|                                 | Makes phone calls                              | 28      | 11   | 30     | 15      | 11       | 14      | 15     | 8      | 16      |

Note. The sample base are 11 to 18 year-old children who were studying in typical schools in each country in autumn 2005 and had used the internet (N = 45 58, 96% of population). Online activities were measured on a 5-point scale (1 – 'never' ... 5 – 'very often'). The index of use versatility is based on eleven indicators; being engaged in each activity at least 'sometimes' added one point to the index. The opportunities taken up by at least 50% of children in the respective country are in bold.

Source: Kalmus et al (2009)

**Figure 22: Country classification**

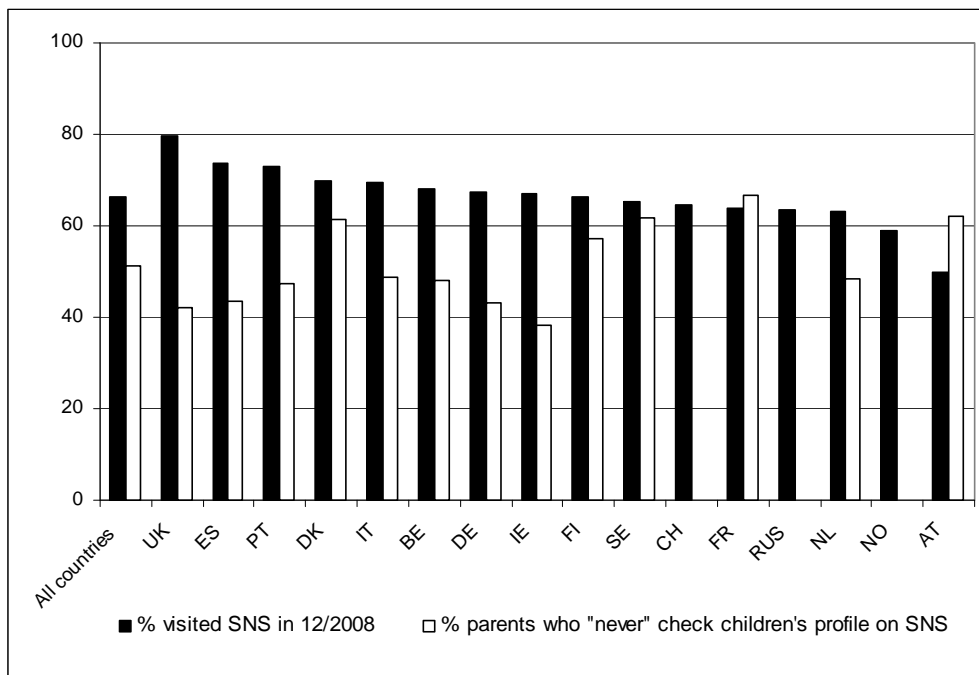
Country classification on the basis of children's online content creation, socio-demographic differences and mediating variables (MEDIAPPRO survey, 2005)

|  | Belgium | Denmark         | Estonia | France | Greece          | Poland | Portugal | UK    |
|--|---------|-----------------|---------|--------|-----------------|--------|----------|-------|
| Opportunity: Content creation                      | High    | Low             | Medium  | Medium | Low             | Medium | Medium   | High  |
| Access   | Medium  | High            | High    | Medium | Low             | Low    | Medium   | High  |
| Usage  | Medium  | High            | High    | Medium | Low             | Low    | Medium   | High  |
| Attitudes and skills                               | High    | Medium          | Medium  | Medium | Low             | High   | Medium   | High  |
| Parental mediation                                 | High    | Medium          | Low     | High   | Low             | Low    | Low      | High  |
| Mediation by peers                                 | Medium  | Low             | High    | Medium | Low             | Low    | High     | High  |
| Mediation by teachers                              | Low     | Low             | Low     | Low    | Medium          | High   | High     | High  |
| Gender difference in content creation (higher for) | =       | Boys            | =       | =      | Boys            | =      | =        | Girls |
| Age difference in content creation (highest for)   | =       | 11–13 year olds | =       | =      | 11–13 year olds | =      | =        | =     |

Note. The sample base are 11–18 year-old children who were studying in typical schools in each country in autumn 2005 (N = 4767). " = " – difference between the groups is not statistically significant.

Source: Kalmus et al (2009a)

**Figure 23: Use of SNS in Europe and parental concern**



Source: Peter et al (2009: 84)<sup>16</sup>

### 3.4. New media, new risks: European children's encounters with risk

What follows under this heading is an excerpt from the Final Report of the EU Kids Online Network (Livingstone and Haddon, 2009b), reflecting on available comparative findings regarding children's experience of online risks across Europe. In making cross-national comparisons, the report first examined similarities in online risk experience, based for the most part on diverse national studies conducted with teenagers.

#### Ranking of risk incidence

Across Europe, notwithstanding considerable cross-national variation, it appears that the rank ordering of risks experienced is fairly similar in each country.

- Giving out personal information is the most common risky behaviour at around half of online teenagers.
- Seeing pornography online is the second most common risk at around 4 in 10 teenagers across Europe.
- Seeing violent or hateful content is the third most common risk, experienced by approximately one third of teenagers. Being bullied (that is, 'cyber-bullied') comes fourth, affecting some 1 in 5 or 1 in 6 teenagers online, along with receiving unwanted sexual comments, experienced by between 1 in 10 teenagers (Germany, Ireland, Portugal) and as many as 1 in 3 or 1 in 4 teenagers in Iceland, Norway, the UK and Sweden, even rising to 1 in 2 in Poland.
- Last, meeting an online contact offline appears the least common although arguably the most dangerous risk. There is a fair degree of consistency in the findings across Europe: around 9% (1 in 11) of online teenagers go to such meetings, rising to 1 in 5 in Poland, Sweden and the Czech Republic. Often these meetings are with teenagers of a similar age.

- In several countries, there is evidence that around 15%-20% of online teenagers report a degree of distress or of feeling uncomfortable or threatened online. This provides some indication, arguably, of the proportion of teenagers for whom risk poses a degree of harm.

#### **Who encounters online risks and where?**

- Findings from the pan-European Eurobarometer survey (2008) suggest that, according to their parents, children encounter more online risk through home than school use (although this may be because parents know little of their children's use at school).
- But since children use the internet at home for longer periods and often with less supervision, this is also likely to increase risk. Further among those (relatively few) children who use the internet in an internet cafe or at a friend's house, the absence of supervision makes these risky locations.
- In most countries, household inequalities in SES have consequences for risks as well as opportunities. Specifically, even though higher status parents are more likely than those of lower status to provide their children with access to the internet, this generally enabling more use among advantaged children, it seems that lower class children are more exposed to risk online.
- There are also gender differences in risk, with boys apparently more likely to encounter (or create) conduct risks and with girls more affected by content and contact risks.
- Specifically, boys appear more likely to seek out offensive or violent content, to access pornographic content or to be sent links to pornographic websites, to meet somebody offline that they have met online and to give out personal information. Girls appear more likely to be upset by offensive, violent and pornographic material, to chat online with strangers, to receive unwanted sexual comments and to be asked for personal information although they are wary of providing it to strangers. Both boys and girls appear at risk of online bullying.
- It seems likely that these gender differences are the (mainly) unintended consequences of the choices that girls and boys make regarding preferred online activities. Nonetheless, this hardly makes the associated risks something they can be held responsible for, and nor is restricting their preferences the optimal solution to the problem of risk.
- Last, it appears that older teenagers encounter more online risks than younger children, although the question of how younger children cope with online risk remains little researched.

#### **Classification of countries by online risk to children**

- Although generally European children are gaining access to the internet, considerable differences in access and use remain, enabling a country classification based on the percentage of children who use the internet (as low, medium or high).
- Also striking is the diversity of online risk figures obtained across countries, suggesting a classification of countries based on the likelihood (also low, medium or high) of children experiencing online risk. The classification of countries as 'high risk' (that is, above the European average), 'medium risk' (that is, around the European average) or 'low risk' (that is, below the European average) is a relative judgement based on findings in the available studies reviewed in Hasebrink et al (2009). Putting these two classifications together produces the classification in Figure 24:

**Figure 24: Classifying countries by use and risk**

| Online risk | Children's internet use |  |   |
|-------------|-------------------------|--|---|
|             | Low (< 65%)             | Medium (65%-85%)                                   | High (> 85%)  |
| Low         | Cyprus<br>Italy         | France<br>Germany                                  |   |
| Medium      | Greece                  | Austria<br>Belgium<br>Ireland<br>Portugal<br>Spain | Denmark<br>Sweden   |
| High        |                         | Bulgaria<br>Czech<br>Republic                      | Estonia<br>Iceland<br>Netherlands<br>Norway<br>Poland<br>Slovenia<br>UK |

Source: Hasebrink et al (2009)

- This classification suggests a positive correlation between use and risk. High use, high risk countries are, it seems, either wealthy Northern European countries or new entrants to the EU. Southern European countries tend to be relatively lower in risk, partly because they provide fewer opportunities for use.
- Stating this differently, we might conclude, as a broad generality, that (i) Northern European countries tend to be 'high use, high risk'; (ii) Southern European countries tend to be 'low use, low risk'; and (iii) Eastern European countries tend to be 'new use, new risk'.
- More promisingly for public policy, high use may also be associated with only average risk, notably in Nordic countries where both regulation and awareness are most developed, these countries having 'led' in internet adoption and, presumably, cultural adjustment.

### Coping with risk

- Given the available evidence, it seems that there are both pan-European similarities and cross-national differences in how children cope with online risk. Note, first, that there is little consensus on what it means to 'cope' with or 'be resilient' to online risk, nor much expertise in measuring this.
- A qualitative study for the Safer Internet programme scopes the range of children's coping responses, from ignoring the problem to checking website reliability or reporting it online, telling a friend or (rarely) a parent or, for some, exacerbating the problem by forwarding on or responding with hostility.
- Generally, it seems that children's internet-related skills increase with age. Such skills are likely to include children's abilities to protect themselves from online risks although, perhaps surprisingly, this has been little examined. However, there are difficulties measuring internet-related skills as yet, and little available comparable research on children's attitudes to the internet. For example, boys often claim higher skill levels than girls, but this remains to be tested objectively, and little is known of how children evaluate websites, determine what is trustworthy, cope with what is problematic and respond to what is dangerous.



- There are cross-national differences in coping, it seems. Children's perceived ability to cope with online risk (as reported by parents in different countries, based on the 2005Eurobarometer survey) reveals that high ability to cope is claimed for children in Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany and the UK; low ability to cope is claimed in Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Portugal and Spain (intermediate countries are the Czech Republic, Ireland, Poland, Slovenia and Sweden).
- Across countries, findings for coping are negatively correlated with parents' perception that their child has encountered harmful content online.
- It seems that asking parents for help does not play a significant role in children's approach to coping with online risks.

## 4. Parenting, media, everyday life and socialisation

The media is consumed by individuals within interpretative communities where the media as object as well as text is appropriated and interpreted within the contexts of everyday life. Here, use and reception are gendered and classed according to a variety of socio-historical dynamics, and media consumption is always the site of agency. In this chapter we address themes and relevant special focus areas on the role of the media in everyday life. By looking at socialisation, girl culture online, parental mediation, values and tastes in media reception and diasporic media practices, we focus on the question of context – the importance of the cultures of consumption within which families and individuals use and interpret the media.

### 4.1. *The media, socialisation and the question of effects*

Socialisation is often defined as the array of processes by which needs are met (Grusec and Hastings, 2007), the way people learn about their culture (Signorielli, 2000), the processes whereby individuals are taught the skills, behaviour, patterns, values, motivations (Maccoby, 2007), and the process by which people acquire the behaviours and beliefs of the social world—that is, the culture in which they live (Arnett 1995a). Arnett finds that three goals central to this process are: (i) impulse control; (ii) role preparation and performance; and (iii) the cultivation of sources of meaning.

On gender and age impacts on the process of socialisation, Livingstone (2006) argues that the household is not merely a site of difference but also a site of the reproduction of difference, and the question for new media studies is whether technologies such as the internet exacerbate or ameliorate this process (Murdock et al, 1992). Findings from the UK Children Go Online project show that age makes the biggest and most consistent difference within households (Livingstone and Bober, 2005: 221):

- “Traditionally, infants and toddlers have engaged little with the media, though television, radio and music are often in the background. However, recent years have seen an expansion in the ‘educational toys’ market, these often being digital toys, for very young (as well as older) children, as well as an expansion of the pre-school television market. This has led some (eg the American Pediatrics Association) to issue warnings regarding limits on media use for pre-school children.
- “During primary school years, children are generally not major media users, although television and electronic games are highly popular. Recently, the mobile phone market has extended down to 8 years old or even younger, and it is among this age group that internet use is rising fastest (teenagers being already at saturation point in many countries).
- “Over the teenage years, young people begin to broaden their range of media uses and tastes, often seeking to individuate themselves from their friends via media tastes while, simultaneously, being absorbed in the (often normative, even coercive) culture of their peer group. The plethora of available forms of music, consumer styles, films, games etc provides welcome opportunity for them to express their individuality within accepted peer boundaries.
- “By their late teens and early twenties, young people are negotiating a wide range of information, communication and literacy demands as they manage the transition from school to further study and/or work.”

Arnett (1995: 525) identifies five uses of media by adolescents: entertainment, identity formation, high sensation, coping and youth culture identification. In a shift from the stimulus–response model, he argues that the “media are part of the process by which adolescents acquire – or resist acquiring – the

behaviors and beliefs of the social world, the culture, in which they live". Arnett concludes that "adolescents have greater control over their socialization on the dimension of the media than they do over socialization from family, school, community, and the legal system" (p 526), and that "the result of the rise of the media and the decline of the family as socialization agents is, for adolescents, an increase in their independence" (p 529).

Notten and Kraaykamp (2009: 186) distinguish "parental media consumption (parental media example) from parental media instruction and guidance, and we assume a causal relation between the two". They conclude that:

... within a divorced (single-parent) household, necessary tasks and paid labour are more likely to cause a time squeeze. Among the consequences of a divorce is the reduction of (quality) time for the single-parent to spend on media consumption or to invest in guiding children's reading abilities and television consumption. (p 188)

Their analysis reveals that:

... parental highbrow reading and highbrow television viewing are found more often among higher educated parents; each additional year of parental education leads to an increase of 3.7 percent points in literary reading and 1.7 percent points in highbrow television viewing and children with higher educated parents and parents with higher status occupations are less confronted with parental lowbrow television consumption than children from lower status households. In contrast, the results on lowbrow reading content were surprising. (p 193)

### **The contentious question of media effects**

Possibly the most contentious issue in relation to children and media centres on children's susceptibility to media influences. It's a question that divides researchers quite profoundly, because at its heart lies the question of children's agency. However the two 'sides' are labelled – child-centred versus media-centred, constructivist versus positivist, cultural theorists versus psychologists – there remains not only little agreement but, worryingly, little discussion and debate. Put too simply, just to capture the point, it seems that on the one hand, some researchers anchor their investigation by reference to a social problem in childhood (violence, early sexuality, obesity, etc) and then ask, not always subtly, to what extent the media are to blame. As they see it, research should focus on identifying causes, rigorous testing, and addressing real-world problems. By contrast, other researchers begin with a critique of this approach (for its simple causal theories, for engendering moral panics, for positioning the child as 'victim') before asking, not always more than descriptively, how children enjoy media, what they gain from them and how skilled or tactical they are in managing the media's role in their lives. (Livingstone, 2007: 5)

Generally, much of the available literature on media and socialisation focuses on media exposure and effects. Notwithstanding many contentious debates over theory, methodology and findings, Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone's (2009) review of research on media effects concluded that, for television, there is a sizeable body of evidence that suggests that televised portrayals of aggression can, under certain circumstances, negatively influence the attitudes and behaviours of children, especially boys. Similar findings exist as regards aggressive content in film, video/DVD and electronic games, although the body of research evidence is somewhat smaller. These media are, at present, all highly regulated in most developed countries through labelling and age restrictions (or scheduling restrictions in the case of television). It seems likely that the risk of harm will be greater when children view content inappropriate for their age (that is, intended for those older than them), although research does not always adequately link the effects of exposure to the specific nature or age-appropriateness of the content.

Often, the cultural context is crucial. Researchers have long pointed to the media's role in relation to reality-defining effects, arguing that the media provide the frameworks or expectations with which the public understands the world around them. This has been, in various ways, considered harmful – potentially reinforcing stereotypes of marginalised groups, providing a biased account of current affairs, exacerbating a fear of crime, promoting a commercialised culture of childhood, encouraging the early sexualisation of girls, and so forth. In general, the evidence for reality-defining effects generally shows modest effects on social attitudes or beliefs across the population.

In other words, the findings show that media exposure explains a small proportion of the variation in attitudes or beliefs across the population. By implication, other factors also play a role, although these are not always well researched. Reality-defining effects are theorised in terms of cultivation effects (the 'drip-drip' effect of repeated messages), agenda setting (defining what people should think about) and mainstreaming (making certain views 'normal' or standard, while marginalising other views). However, here too, the evidence is patchy and, by and large, not very recent. The difficulty here is that, as noted above, any effect of the media operates only in combination with many other social influences, and the effect is to be measured not in terms of an immediate impact on an individual but rather in terms of gradual shifts in social norms over years or decades.

A critique of stimulus–response dominated socialisation research is evident in the literature. Note the critique from Valkenburg (2000: 54) that “socialization studies often seemed to be guided by a simple stimulus–response perspective, which assumes that exposure to advertising directly influences children's consumer attitudes. However, a basic assumption in modern theories of media effects is that children are active and motivated explorers of what they encounter in the media.... Another assumption is that any media effect on children is enhanced, channeled, or mitigated by what the child makes of it”. Another critique comes from McLeod (2000: 46) thus:

Where did the traditional socialization model go wrong? First, the developing child was believed to be a passive recipient nonreactive in the learning process. Compounding this problem was the fact that the earlier child development literature had led researchers to concentrate too much on the stages of early childhood at the expense of later adolescence and early adulthood.

While deleting agency and conceptualising audiences, especially children, as passive recipients of media effects (violence, sex and so forth) shifts the conversation to an extreme where agency is deleted, abandoning the question of effects altogether, for reasons of highlighting individual agency or for reasons of cultural complexity, risks an over-celebration of agency, where many important considerations, for instance the question of age, are lost. The balance is delicate and the question of effects still contested. Livingstone (2007) proposes a risk-based approach as a solution to these polarisations where “research should seek to identify the range of factors that directly, and indirectly through interactions with each other, combine to explain particular social phenomena” (p 10).

#### 4.1.1. Special focus: Girl culture and the web

##### Yinhan Wang

- A review of European and US research on gender differences in content creation online concluded that, even though girls and boys show different preferences as to what kind of online content they publish, girls are “equally as vocal and visible” as are boys (McQuillan and O'Neill, 2009: 371).
- Indeed, in almost all European countries, girls are equally as vocal and visible as boys online in terms of their content creation activities. Girls' 'bedroom culture' is now also online, as here they

engage in cultural consumption and production activities for the construction and negotiation of identity, exploration of sexuality and establishment of social networks.

- While productive media technologies offer opportunities for the development of (feminine) identity and may empower girls with the means to 'speak up' and disrupt hetero-normative ideals, girls' cultural activities nonetheless take place in the broader commercial and societal structures; it is therefore necessary to acknowledge the forces that extend but at the same time limit the possibilities of their online activities.
- Scholarship of girls' culture online should expand its scope beyond the popular, the spectacular, and the white middle class; it should respect girls' voice and examine how their articulation online, offline and in research is made possible/impossible; it should also increase the visibility of research.
- The panic about the increasing visibility of the risky online activities of girls and teenagers in general should be redirected from the internet toward the real causes of concern.

### **Consumer culture**

- Two UK studies found that for some, the media play the role of cultural resources from which they draw elements to think about themselves with and to talk with (Buckingham and Bragg, 2003; Nayak and Kehily, 2008). Girls who mature earlier than their peers may use the media as a 'super peer' to learn about sexual information that is otherwise not discussed in peer groups (Brown et al, 2005).
- An analysis of the website Beinggirl.com showed that despite the commercial website's intention to provide a space dedicated to girls for exploration of puberty information and products, much of the information provided is commercial-laden, and girls are not given an active role in the creation of content (Mazzarella, 2008).

### **Private space for constructing and negotiating identity**

- A study of British teenagers and young adults found that that an online journal offers a private and controlled space where personal reflections take place, identity is worked up and social networks developed and maintained (Hodkinson and Lincoln, 2008). Others have also remarked that the design of teenagers' home pages exemplifies their identity construction analogous to the decoration of bedroom walls (Chandler and Roberts-Young, 1998; Stern, 2002).
- A Swedish study showed how Swedish young women aged 15-19 use photographic self-presentation on the largest Swedish internet community to explore and negotiate femininity through playing with style and looks, showing sexual desirability through exposure of body while at the same time being careful to not reveal 'too much' (Elm, 2009).

### **Social relations**

- A Dutch quantitative survey of teenagers aged 10-17 found that online identity experiments (defined as pretending to be someone else online) is positively related to teenagers' communicating with a wide range of people; it therefore increases the opportunities to practice their social skills and improve their social competence (Valkenburg and Peter, 2008).
- Another Norwegian ethnographic study looked at how children aged 11-12 use brands and branded resources to help build their self-presentation on a social networking site. Children either collect the resources or elaborate on them; the former requires less work and appears trendier, while the latter requires more creativity but does not necessarily appear as appealing.

### Future research

- The scope of research should extend beyond: (i) the popular and commercial cultural activities, to study girls' other aspects of lifeworld such as political, education and economic (Mazzarella and Pecora, 2007); (ii) the spectacular (that is, the savvy or the victim) and examine the mundane and everyday experiences; and (iii) the white, heterosexual middle-class girls to address the experiences of girls of other 'races', sexual orientation and class (Merskin, 2005).

### Policy-related concerns

- Online cultural activities offer opportunities for educators to guide students to learn about the complexity and construction of meanings of online content, the political economy of commercial host sites such as SNS, etc, all of which apt materials for media literacy education (Willett, 2009).
- Stakeholders should develop both analytical and regulating strategies toward addressing the increasing visible sexual exploration of children (Durham, 2008).
- The panic about the increasing visibility of the risky online activities of girls and teenagers in general should be redirected from the internet toward the real causes of concern, as the internet mostly only uncovers the risks young people take and face offline (boyd and Marwick, 2009). Putting the blame on the internet only obfuscates the issue and diverts attention from where action is needed.

## 4.2. Parenting and parental mediation

Television in particular is so well integrated into family life that it appears less a matter of rules and more one of family habits. Busy parents often lack the energy to insist on rules. (Livingstone and Bovill, 2001: 192)

In relation to television, Valkenburg et al (1999) summarise research showing that, although as domestication research suggests, patterns of use are indeed often taken for granted; nonetheless parental mediation strategies can be classified as active or instructive mediation, rule making or restrictive mediation, and parental modelling or co-viewing. Restated in a more general form, for all media, Livingstone and Helsper (2007) suggest:

- 1) Active mediation consists of talking about media content while the child is engaging with (watching, reading, listening to) the medium (hence, this includes both positive/instructional and negative/critical forms of mediation).
- 2) Restrictive mediation involves setting rules that restrict use of the medium, including restrictions on time spent, location of use or content (for example restricting exposure to violent or sexual content), without necessarily discussing the meaning or effects of such content.
- 3) Co-using signifies that the parent remains present while the child is engaged with the medium (as for co-viewing), thus sharing in the experience but without commenting on the content or its effects.

This combination of strategies marks a change from the 1950s approach of parents where parenting was understood in terms of the Victorian model, with only restrictive mediation being considered. For example, Schramm et al (1961: 148) discuss parental authority by noting that "late bedtimes tend to occur in homes where parental control is lax", and they stress the parental duty "to shield a child from undue fright resulting from television".

By contrast, in today's democratic family model, more social/conversational strategies are preferred – by both researchers (Nathanson, 2004, recommends that parents discuss screen violence with their children, for example, rather than banning their viewing) and by parents themselves (Livingstone, 2009). Not only do parents thereby seek to prevent unwanted influences but also, as proposed by

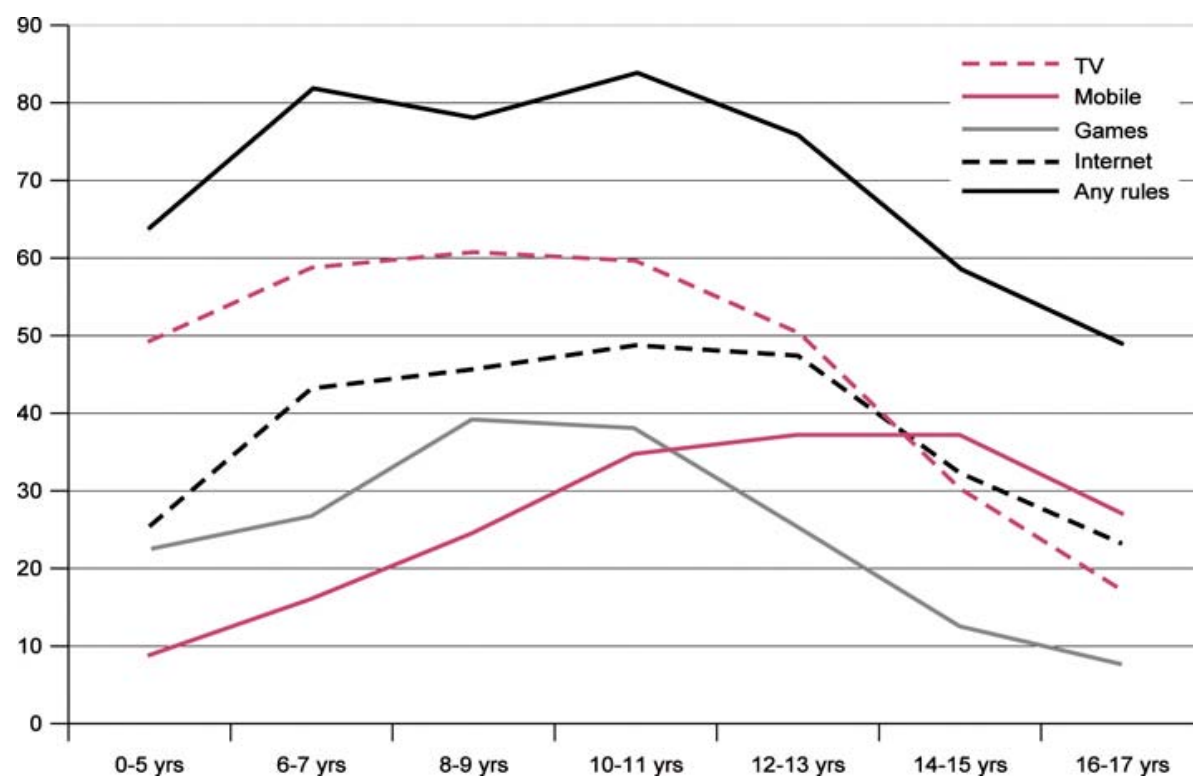
Warren's (2005) ecological approach to the parent-child interaction, that parents use the media to facilitate desired values, for example, by using media to support shared family activities (via co-viewing, the construction of common interests, talking about media).

However, as Livingstone and Helsper (2008: 582) observe,

In regulating their children's media use, parents face several challenges. These include the proliferation of media goods in the home, especially in children's bedrooms, and the growing complexity of media and communication technologies. Especially for new media, lack of technical expertise may hinder implementation of parental mediation at home. Yet as domestic Internet use becomes more commonplace, even overtaking time spent with television in some countries (Lenhart, Madden and Hitlin, 2005), the bewildering array of online content accessible to young people occasions concern among parents, academics and policy-makers.

Evidence of 'a regulation gap', impeding parental mediation especially for the internet, is shown by Figure 25 (Hasebrink et al, 2009). This suggests that since parents are willing and ready to mediate television more than the internet, even though they worry more about the internet than the television, it is lack of skills rather than lack of concern that results in lower levels of internet mediation.

**Figure 25: Parental mediation by medium**

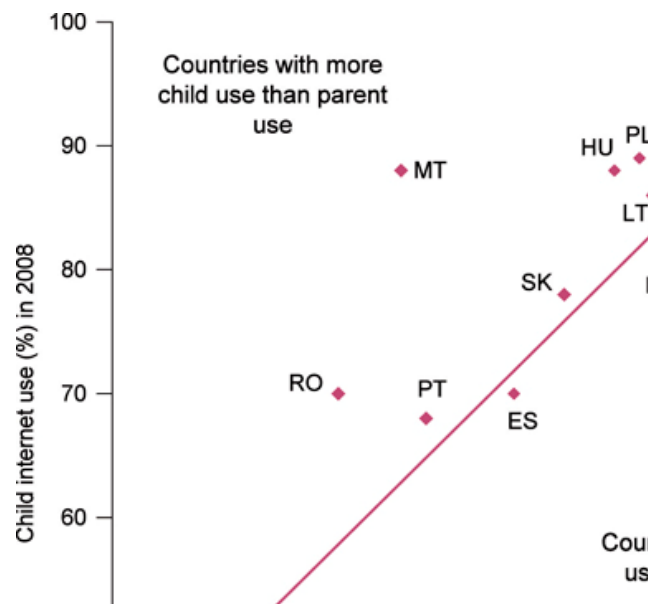


Source: Hasebrink, et al (2009)

Nonetheless, research on parental mediation of the internet in fact reveals that mediation is fairly widely practised, albeit with substantial cross-national variations. Even in the few years from 2005 to 2008 (Figure 26), parents in many countries have caught up significantly with their children in terms of internet use:



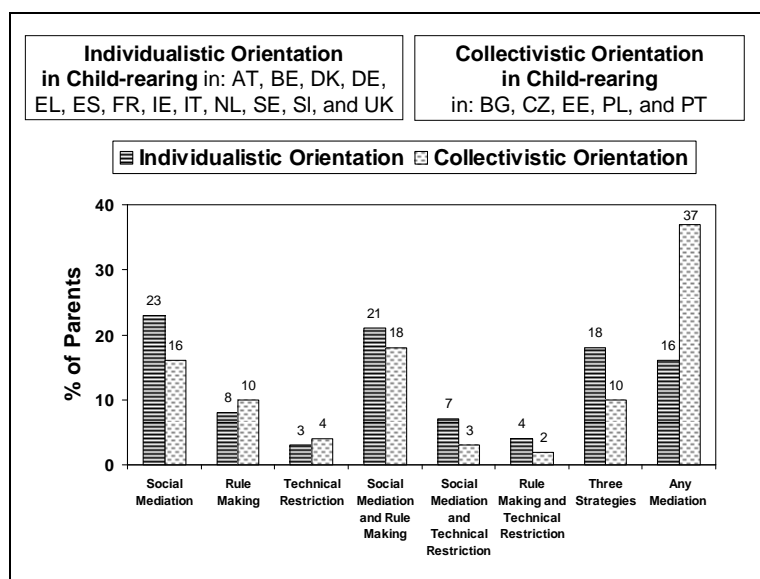
**Figure 26: Parental internet use in 2008**



*Source:* Hasebrink, et al (2009)

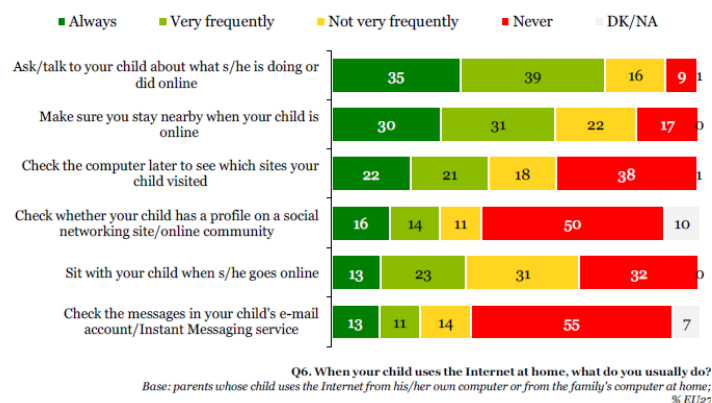
As is evident, there are considerable cross-national differences. In seeking to understand variations on parental mediation across Europe, Kirwil (2009: 403) concludes from the Eurobarometer findings that, “although parental mediation is associated with fewer number of children at risk from online content, the effectiveness of several strategies seems to depend on the country’s socialization culture. In Europe, both restrictive and non-restrictive mediation may be effective in one childrearing culture, but ineffective in another one”. She finds that “independently of childrearing culture, parents favor social mediation of the Internet. This mediation strategy gives more opportunity for communication with children and for instructive mediation [...] Parents in all childrearing cultures also favor restrictive rule-making, primarily time restriction and restrictions on access to selected websites, to non-restrictive rules, for instance, instructing children about how to behave when they encounter risks. These findings suggest that most parents favor multiple strategies to single strategies in Internet mediation – as has been found for American parents (Barkin et al, 2006; Turow and Nir, 2000)” (2009: 405).

**Figure 27: Patterns of parental mediation of children online in countries with various child-rearing orientations**



Source: Data from European Values Survey 2000 and Eurobarometer (2005), as analysed by Kirwil (2009)

**Figure 28: What do parents do when their children go online**



Source: Eurobarometer (2008: 35)

Kirwil et al (2009: 210) note that the effectiveness of time restriction in European countries shows that the significance of the strategy differs with the socialisation cultures of the countries (see Figure 28 above). They observe that:

... in such countries as Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium, Ireland and the UK (Northern Europe mostly individualistic in child-rearing) the more parents limit time spent by children online, the more children experience online risk. In other countries: Austria, France, Germany, Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain (Catholic Europe moderately individualistic in child-rearing) and Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, and Poland (post-Communist Europe, mostly collectivistic in child-rearing), the more parents use time restriction, the less children encountered online risk.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the role and the effectiveness of time restriction to protect

children from online risks appears to vary according to the country's individualistic-collectivistic orientation towards child-rearing and its historical religious roots.

**Figure 29: Kirwil's classification of European child-raising cultures**

| European childrearing cultures        | Strategy of parental mediation |         |                  |                   |                     |                   |                        |      |                             |                   |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------------|------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
|                                       | Social co-use                  |         | Time restriction |                   | Website restriction |                   | Technical restrictions |      | Non-restrictive rule making |                   |
|                                       | Not used                       | Used    | Not used         | Used              | Not used            | Used              | Not used               | Used | Not used                    | Used              |
| All 18 countries                      | 26.9                           | 20.3*** | 27.4             | 23.4 <sup>+</sup> | 24.2                | 26.0              | 22.6                   | 22.3 | 25.9                        | 23.5              |
| English-speaking Europe (& Belgium)   | 21.9                           | 17.1    | 18.5             | 18.7              | 16.6                | 20.6              | 18.1                   | 18.9 | 19.2                        | 17.5              |
| Historically Catholic (& Greece)      | 23.9                           | 12.2*** | 26.4             | 16.0*             | 27.3                | 14.5**            | 15.9                   | 17.3 | 24.2                        | 12.5*             |
| Historically Protestant Nordic Europe | 41.2                           | 30.3**  | 35.5             | 35.5              | 25.6                | 45.5***           | 32.0                   | 36.6 | 32.5                        | 41.6 <sup>+</sup> |
| Post-communist Europe (& Portugal)    | 22.4                           | 19.3    | 26.3             | 20.0              | 27.1                | 16.1 <sup>+</sup> | 21.8                   | 16.9 | 25.4                        | 8.0*              |

<sup>+</sup> $p < 0.10$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  (one-tailed) for comparisons between families that use a given strategy and those that do not.

Note. Size of samples for social co-use and technical restrictions: English-speaking (& Belgium):  $n = 409-412$ ; historically Catholic (& Greece):  $n = 601-602$ ; historically Protestant North:  $n = 571$ ; post-Communist (& Portugal):  $n = 358-364$ . Size of samples for other strategies: English-speaking (& Belgium):  $n = 231$ ; historically Catholic (& Greece):  $n = 266$ ; historically Protestant North:  $n = 310$ ; post-communist (& Portugal):  $n = 147$ ; all 18 countries:  $n = 1,039-1,949$ . Responses are based on parents whose 6-17 year-old child has access to and uses the Internet at home. Source: Eurobarometer 2005.

Source: Kirwil (2009: 404)

Earlier, Pasquier et al (1998: 172), reporting from a comparative European project on the effectiveness of parental control, proposed that control might not always be efficient, for "children who say their use of television and telephone is controlled are as likely as other children to be heavy users of both media". Plowman et al's (2008: 68) Scottish survey found that "practices such as purchasing decisions, the kinds of technologies which children were allowed to use and the balance struck between technological and traditional toys and activities were influenced not so much by income as by family values".

Lobe et al (2009: 175) observe considerable cross-national variation across Europe on how children and parents cope with online risks, as "in some countries, including Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark, Iceland and Norway, almost all children who go online have parents well acquainted with the internet. In others, including Greece, Cyprus and Portugal, where barely half of children go online, parents generally do not use the internet and hence are hard-pressed to monitor their children online (Hasebrink et al, 2009)".

Livingstone (2009c: 52) writes on parental responsibilities in these new media environments that:

No-one doubts that parents are responsible for their children's safety, online as offline, and this is a responsibility they accept. For television and other familiar media, they are used to doing it. But for the internet, it's still a struggle, resulting in a 'regulation gap' between parental willingness and parental competence. [...] Many lack the skills, knowledge or motivation to mediate their children's use. [...] Further, though many parents do use filtering technology, it is unclear whether it is being used effectively or appropriately, or whether, as often claimed, children can and do 'get around' this. Indeed, since many parents find it difficult to know where to obtain guidance on, say, choosing a filter, assessing a website, reporting a problem, or setting rules, a well-promoted, reputable, easy-to-use, publicly-funded 'one-stop shop' or parent portal in each country – as, for instance, promised by the UK Council for Child Internet Safety, would seem an excellent idea.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4.3. Media reception, values and taste<sup>19</sup>

A recent study commissioned in the UK by the BBC found in 2009 that "although there has been a sustained academic interest in media content, resulting in studies originating from a range of critical positions – for instance, studies that offer critiques of humour, most of these do not directly include audience responses to such content" (Livingstone and Das, 2009). The study revealed that there has

been more qualitative research, providing in-depth analyses of why people respond to content as they do, than quantitative research with large-scale samples or research using mixed methods. There is little comparative research that contextualises attitudes towards offence, decency and standards or that compares findings across a range of social groups or media platforms.<sup>20</sup>

### ‘Offensive’ content in the family context

- The **context of family viewing** is a crucial determining factor in what causes offence. Research suggests that audience concern most often focus on terms that stereotype or marginalise. Instances include discontent with the over-use of open categories like ‘terrorist’, especially when associated with religion (Ahmad, 2006). A Spanish study with audience attitudes towards sexual language and other offensive words revealed that viewing contexts were most important for words being considered offensive (Santaemilia and Rice 2008). Attitudes towards offensive language are related to concerns about representation (languages and images), for instance stereotypes, and other forms of discrimination (Sancho and Wilson, 2001).
- There are contradictions among audiences, especially parents, regarding the **depiction of sexual material in the media**. As noted in Millwood Hargrave and Livingstone (2009), Ofcom’s 2005 tracking study also found that most respondents (75%) think that people should be allowed to pay more to watch ‘particularly sexually explicit programmes not available on other channels’. This more accepting attitude towards the depiction of sexual material was underscored by other research which showed that participants in qualitative research in the UK were more concerned about the use of swearing and offensive language than they were about sexual activity on-screen (Ofcom, 2005). There was some concern that the media might add to the premature sexualisation of children, but many participants talked of the positive benefits of a more ‘open’ attitude towards issues regarding sexual matters.
- Buckingham (2005) found that **children may adopt their taste judgements from adults**, including finding swearing, sex or violence distasteful or embarrassing. On the other hand, they also consider that such content in reality television, game shows and soap operas has value in offering them a kind of a projected adult future.
- **Offence is linked with expectations of the genre** and channel. A comparative project of multi-platform and multi-genre viewing habits in the UK and Sweden reinforces the high value attached to factual programming, with lifestyle, makeover and reality television being accorded the status of light genres by comparison (Hill, 2007). Although this explains why higher expectations are held of the news than reality television, reality television can also offend: a recent study found that Dutch audiences have been seriously offended by some of the content on Big Brother (Heuvelman and Peeters, 2005)
- The importance of **a person’s position in the life stage** in influencing their expectations from the media was also demonstrated by Towler’s (2001) study. Teenagers had less rigorous ideas about particular channels having particular duties or about public service broadcasting, instead making their judgements on a programme-by-programme basis. Adults with older children seemed to feel that it was hardly possible to monitor a child’s viewing habits all the time while parents with young families were more concerned about what was shown on television. Empty nesters, according to the report, appeared more ‘liberal’ in their views than has been found in other research.
- The role of **age, sex, gender, education and religion** is significant in what is considered offensive. The Dutch study on audience responses to offensive content on screen (Heuvelman and Peeters, 2005) based on a survey of 495 people, shows the following interesting results, for instance that being shocked by programmes correlates significantly with the viewer’s sex (women are often more shocked than men); considering a programme intolerable with the viewer’s age (older viewers are

more likely to find programmes intolerable than younger ones); being irritated with the viewer's level of education (higher educated viewers are more inclined to being irritated than lower educated viewers); being shocked by programmes correlates significantly with a viewer's religion.

Research in this area is primarily dominated, however, by analyses of media content that, although important, reveals little about audience responses to it. Comparable data of contextualised tastes and standards among European families, whether qualitative or quantitative, is difficult to find.

#### 4.3.1 Special focus: Diasporic families and media consumption

##### Myria Georgiou

This report outlines the main theoretical, methodological and empirical contribution of studies on diaspora, migration and the media to the family and the media research. The main points of the section are summarised below:

- The diasporic family is, like all families, a specific representation of the more universal category of family, that is, an institution playing a key role in the organisation of modern societies. Thus, and unsurprisingly, diasporic media consumption often reflects very familiar media consumption patterns, widely studied among other kinds of families.
- There is a paradox in the relation between migration and the family: migration can interrupt family life, while at the same time, it can strengthen family relations. This is the case in the diaspora, when the family becomes reaffirmed as a system of support, providing a sense of security and continuity in a life disrupted by mobility and resettlement.
- The consequences of this paradox for media consumption can be summed up in three key points: (i) the interruption of physical contact between family members – a result of migration – has advanced the use of transnational media and communications (especially the mobile phone, the internet and television); (ii) the close relations within families, often intensified in the diaspora, go hand in hand with everyday shared familial media consumption of certain genres and media (especially television); and (iii) media consumption choices in diasporic families vary between generations. The choices family members make as media consumers between national and transnational media are largely the result of the position they occupy in relation to migration, generation, and age.
- Research on diasporic media consumption reveals intergenerational tensions in the use of the media, especially television. At the same time, it shows that significant elements of everyday family bonding and communication take place around shared television viewing.
- Young diasporic subjects' media consumption tends to be diverse and cosmopolitan, as it often includes media of various cultural and linguistic zones, as well as shared and individual use of media and communication technologies.
- Research on diasporic families and media consumption is likely to continue having a predominantly empirical orientation, advancing further a transnational comparative outlook.

Family is of great relevance to migration and relevant decisions are often made by families and not individuals (Castles and Miller, 2009). For this reason, family tends to be considered to be a central category, or more often it is approached as the taken-for-granted background in the study of migration and diaspora. Relevant literature – mostly within sociology, geography and social policy – approaches family in one of these ways: (i) by focusing on economic life; (ii) by exploring cultural identity and

community continuity or discontinuity; and (iii) by addressing specific challenges presented by diasporic families to multicultural societies. These three broad areas can be broken down in five themes:

- *Family as an economic unit*: the focus is on the contribution of one or more family members to the economic life of either or both the country of origin and the country of settlement.
- *Family in the context of multicultural societies*: this research emerges primarily within sociology and social policy. It looks at the role of the family in mediating value systems, especially in relation to work, participation in the mainstream society and local life; it also looks at families' experience of discrimination of racism.
- *Family as a component of community and identity construction*: the focus is on the family as a component of diasporic and transnational communities, especially in relation to sustaining communities and securing intergenerational cultural reproduction (Guarnizo, 1997).
- *Family and gendered migration*: research that focuses on gendered experiences of migration and diaspora in two ways: (i) first – and mostly within the sociology of migration – specific patterns of gendered migration are examined in their consequences for individuals and in relation to participation in/absence from family life (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila in Vertovec, 2009); and (ii) the position of men and women within families in the diaspora and how traditional, hegemonic family relations are either reproduced (cf. Koffman) or challenged (cf. Parrenas, 2005) in the diaspora.
- *Family, migration and children*: a smaller number of studies focus on children in particular and on the role migration and diaspora play in their sense of identity and their participation in local, national and transnational communities. There are two distinct elements of research on children. The first focuses on diasporic children within social, economic and cultural contexts in the country of settlement. The second strand focuses on fragmented families and the separation of parents from children as a result of parental migration.

A number of EC-funded projects have provided an intellectual space for the development of cross-national and comparative studies on diaspora and media consumption (cf. in particular the completed EMTEL2, Mapping Diasporic Media across the EU; Children in Communication about Migration – CHICAM; Changing City Spaces: New Challenges to Cultural Policy in Europe; and the ongoing Media and Citizenship: Transnational Television Cultures Reshaping Political Identities in the European Union).

There is a paradox in the discussion of the family in media and diaspora literature: family is both in the background and at the core of research.

- A number of empirical studies illustrate the negotiation of gender, age and generation identities in the use of the media (cf. Gillespie, 1995; Georgiou, 2006; Guedes-Bailey, 2007).
- Television consumption shapes a cultural space of commonality for diasporic families and cross-generational communication (Gillespie, 1995; Georgiou, 2006; de Block et al, 2005).
- Diasporic media consumption is diverse. Individual family members consume diasporic media in the same banal ways they consume other media (that is, making their choices based on preferences and interests, not based on essentialist identities and pre-given commitments to a specific national community) (Aksoy and Robins, 2000).
- The media, and especially television, become important tools in sustaining ethnic and transnational identities and transnational connections (Brinkerhoff, 2009; Adoni et al, 2006).

- The focus on young family members and their media use has provided an interesting insight into diasporic family life. Children in diaspora are active agents who construct identities and meanings through their use of media and communication technologies. In this way, children shape cultural spaces that are separate from the adult world (de Leeuw and Rydin, 2007).
- Long distance relations sustained between parents and children separated through the experience of migration represent a distinct communication experience for transnational families. Parrenas (2005) discusses the intense exchange of text messages and phone calls between migrant mothers and their children, while Madianou (2006) writes about uses of the internet and mobile phones among separated families in order primarily to sustain relations, more than for the purpose of sustaining ethnic identities.
- Diasporic families often appear critical towards mainstream national and transnational media. The main reason mentioned in various research projects and across generations is the sense of misrepresentation of minorities in mainstream media.

The policy implications of the research outlined above are multiple and cut across policies on citizenship, cultural diversity, migration policies, media representations and diversification of mediascapes. The main implications are:

- Fair representation of ethnic and diasporic minorities in mainstream national and western media remains a key area that attracts the attention of diasporic audiences.
- Young diasporic people born in the diaspora often find themselves in spaces 'in-between' different cultural spheres they have attachments to.
- It is important for media policy to address informational and representational needs and interests of the young generation. This is particularly important in order to understand how young people might not fit within a singular national imaginary; this area presents a challenge in developing social cohesion policies that are inclusive and reflexive.
- Policy in both the cultural sphere and the sphere of political representation needs to draw from research (and possibly develop it further) in order to understand how some minority groups develop a sense of exclusion and alienation in relation to (mediated) dominant narratives of identity and citizenship.



## 5. Mediating relations between family and society

In this section we report from contemporary conversations in the areas of media literacy, ICT in education and new technologies and participation to comment on the role of the media in mediating relations between the home and wider society.

### 5.1. *Media literacy as a strategy to promote engagement*

Both convergence and diversification in media and communication technologies and services open up new opportunities for individuals, even new routes to empowerment. Moreover, the accompanying shift in regulatory regimes towards co- and, especially, self-regulation exposes individuals to new risks (Livingstone, 2009). No longer is such emphasis placed on the actions of supposedly benevolent state authorities in determining, on the one hand, what is 'good' for people and, on the other, what they should be protected from. In an age of individualisation and consumer choice, these decisions are, increasingly, devolved to the individual. While media literacy – or, digital literacy or, in some contexts, digital citizenship – has long referred to the public's knowledge of and competence with media (whether print literacy or film literacy, advertising literacy or televisual literacy), in recent years, media literacy has also become a shorthand way of pointing to the array of policies and initiatives designed to bridge the gap between what people know about the changing media environment and what they need to know in order to meet certain policy goals.

As the EC's Information Society and Media Commissioner, Viviane Reding, said in December 2007:<sup>21</sup>

In a digital era, media literacy is crucial for achieving full and active citizenship.... The ability to read and write – or traditional literacy – is no longer sufficient in this day and age.... Everyone (old and young) needs to get to grips with the new digital world in which we live. For this, continuous information and education is more important than regulation.

The EC defines media literacy as:

... the ability to access, analyse and evaluate the power of images, sounds and messages which we are now being confronted with on a daily basis and are an important part of our contemporary culture, as well as to communicate competently in media available on a personal basis. Media literacy relates to all media, including television and film, radio and recorded music, print media, the Internet and other new digital communication technologies.<sup>22</sup>

Formal inclusion of media literacy in the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMS), approved by the EC in November 2007, points to a dual concern with citizen rights and consumer protection in the digital information and communication environment, intersecting with prior regulatory issues such as the Recommendation on the Protection of Minors and Human Dignity, on the right of reply and so forth. This:

... stresses that regulatory policy in the sector has to safeguard certain public interests, such as cultural diversity, the right to information, the importance of media pluralism, the protection of minors and consumer protection and action to enhance public awareness and media literacy, now and in the future.<sup>23</sup>

As a result, diverse government, industry and civil society initiatives are working to advance these objectives across Europe. The EC recently mapped trends and approaches to media literacy in Europe.<sup>24</sup> UNESCO recently published a Media Education Kit (January 2007).<sup>25</sup> In the UK, Ofcom has begun a tracking audit of media literacy in the population, anticipating the requirement of the AVMS that all EC member states report on population levels of media literacy at three yearly intervals.<sup>26</sup> In November

2009 the EC put out a call for a tender to test and refine criteria by which to assess media literacy levels in all member states.<sup>27</sup> Internationally, other initiatives are also underway – see, for example, the work of the Dynamic Coalition on Media Education of the Internet Governance Forum.

Among social science researchers, and as advocated by media critics, media activists and consumer groups, media literacy recognises the growing importance of media, information and communications in society. Ambitiously, yet plausibly in a society that is increasingly dependent on media and information technologies across diverse spheres of society, media literacy can be said to serve three key purposes: the contributing to (i) democracy, participation and active citizenship; (ii) the knowledge economy, competitiveness and choice; and (iii) lifelong learning, cultural expression and personal fulfilment (Livingstone, 2004).

In terms of its implementation and measurement, a pragmatic definition was agreed by the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy held in the US in 1992, namely that media literacy is “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages in a variety of forms”.<sup>28</sup> This has been widely followed by academics and policy makers alike – for example, following the requirement of the Communications Act (2003) that it “promote media literacy”, the UK communications regulator Ofcom defined media literacy as the ability to access, understand and create communications in a variety of contexts. Nonetheless, it remains the case that media literacy can be defined broadly or narrowly.

A 2005 review of the literature on adults’ media literacy levels for Ofcom followed the regulator’s general division of access, understanding and creation, with some expansion of the terms, in order to identify the key points listed below in its findings (quoted from the Executive Summary). Access has been divided into four sections: basic access and ownership, navigational competences, control competence and regulation competences. Understanding includes both comprehension and critique. Creation includes both interaction with media and creation of media by the public. The review is further divided into sections on broadcast media (including digital television) and on internet/mobile technologies, thereby drawing together research on ‘media literacy’ and ‘information literacy’ (Livingstone, van Couvering and Thumim, 2005).

The report concluded that key barriers to media literacy include age, SES (including education and income factors), gender, disability, ethnicity and proficiency in English. Key enablers include the design of technologies and contents, adult education opportunities, consumer information and awareness, perceived value of media goods and services, self-efficacy (skills and confidence in using new media technologies), social networks to offer support in gaining and maintaining access, family composition (in particular, having children in the household), work involving the use of computers and new technologies and the activities of institutional stakeholders.

As for the evidence base regarding media literacy among children and young people, the UK regulator Ofcom also commissioned a review of empirical literature regarding children’s media literacy. Key findings from that study are quoted as follows (see Buckingham, 2005: executive summary):

- “In terms of access, the literature suggests that children and young people already possess quite high levels of functional literacy – that is, the skills and competencies needed to gain access to media content, using the available technologies and associated software.
- “In terms of understanding, there is an extensive literature relating to the development of children’s understanding of television. This literature suggests that children’s awareness of areas such as television ‘language’, the difference between representation and reality, and the persuasive role of advertising, develops both as a function of their increasing knowledge of the world, and as a result of their broader cognitive and social development.
- “By contrast, when it comes to creativity, there has been less academic research relating to ‘older’ media such as video and analogue radio than to new media, particularly the internet. Research here suggests that there is considerable potential for media to be used as means of communication and self-expression, not least by socially disadvantaged groups.

- “Among the barriers to media literacy are several interrelated factors, of which social class and economic status are the most well-established. These barriers limit children’s access to the internet, although not to established media such as radio or television.
- “Less is known about other potential barriers such as disability and ethnicity, or about the role of individual dispositions or motivations.
- “Potential enablers of media literacy include parents, teachers (both in schools and in informal educational settings) and other agencies such as broadcasters and regulators.
- “Of the three areas in Ofcom’s definition, ‘creativity’ is by far the least well-researched. New technologies and media forms will also pose new challenges and demands in terms of media literacy, so it is important that research in this field is regularly updated. There is a case here for more sharing of research findings and methodologies between academic and industry researchers.”

Although debates over media literacy are far from new, media literacy is increasingly occupying a prominent place on the policy agenda. Once a rather specialist issue for media practitioners and educators, although drawing on a longer, contested history of print literacy, media literacy is now a central issue for everyone concerned with people’s – especially, but not only, children’s – critical, participatory and creative engagement with all forms of media and communications. Notably, media literacy is increasingly prominent on the European policy agenda, reflecting a widespread sense that today’s technologically convergent, globalised market is increasingly difficult, perhaps impossible to regulate by individual states. The individual citizen or consumer is thus repositioned by the changing regulatory regime. So, too, are they repositioned because the digital environment increasingly mediates all aspects of economic, civic, cultural and personal life.

## ***5.2. ICT in education: the response of European schools***

Greater internet use is associated with higher levels of education, so educational achievement may be expected to increase the extent and sophistication of internet use. However, gaps in ICT provision and insufficient/outdated provision of ICT in schools should be addressed, and media education should be recognised and resourced as a core element of school curricula and infrastructure. The Euridyce Report from 2001 charts European action in terms of using ICT in educational systems across Europe through a number of stages to reveal multiple initiatives at the EU level to integrate ICT into education. National policy analysis for the report revealed four levels of policy action across Europe, in this regard: actions to enhance facilities and equipment (hardware and software); teacher training initiatives; the inclusion of ICT in courses; and specific supporting initiatives. More recently, the ICT Impact Report (2006) reviewed studies of the impact of ICT on schools in Europe by drawing on 17 recent impact studies and surveys carried out at national, European and international levels. The European Schoolnet report (2006: 8) highlights the following findings:

- The evidence suggests that ICT impacts most in primary schools in the home language (that is, English in the studies) and science. The implication is therefore that funding and efforts are most profitably directed in this direction.
- The evidence for mathematics is less compelling than for English and science, but longer use of ICT by young people is linked to improved mathematics scores.
- There is a growing gap between high and low e-confident teachers and schools.
- A clear finding is that teachers’ practice is not changing much when they use ICT.
- Many of the findings relate to the UK and to England in particular.
- There are gaps in what is known about other countries.
- The review shows that current education systems hinder ICT impact and correspondingly impact studies, and evaluations often measure against traditional systems.

Tracing the impact of ICT in education, Korte and Husing (2006: 4) observe that, “there are large variations in the number of computers per 100 pupils. The clear European leaders are Denmark (27 computers per 100 pupils, 26 of which are connected to the internet), Norway (24 computers per 100 pupils/23 internet connected), the Netherlands (21/20) and the UK (20/19) and Luxembourg (20/18)”.

They also note variations in the intensity of ICT use in schools across Europe:

Extreme values are reached in the UK where 38% of those teachers using computers in class use it in more than 50% of the lessons. Interestingly, in those countries known for rather low ICT usage in schools, teachers using computers in class do so rather frequently and intensively. The high figures for using ICT in more than half of their lessons in Hungary (27%), Poland (24%), Greece (22%), and Portugal (19%) can be used to illustrate this. (Korte and Husing, 2006: 5)

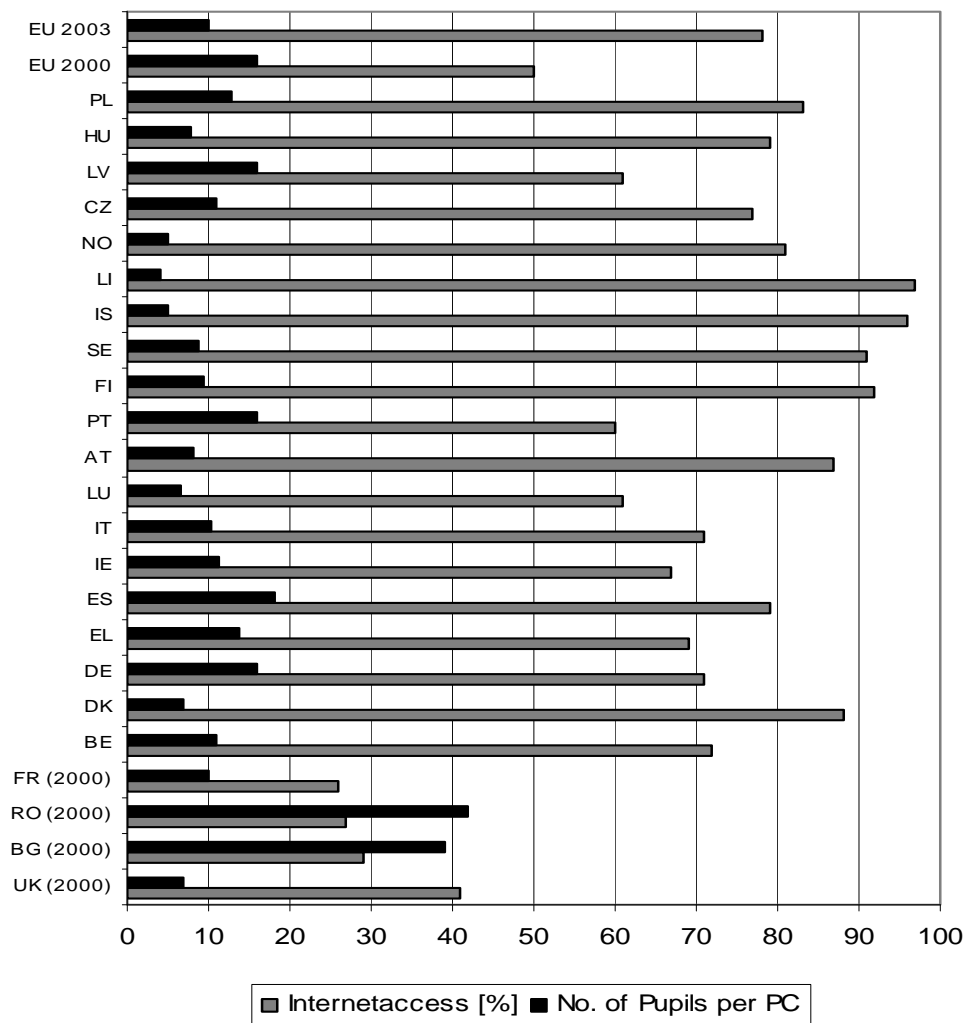
**Figure 30: ICT use in European schools**

*ICT equipment and use in schools in Europe 2001 and 2006*

|        | Use of computers for teaching in % |      | No. of computers / 100 pupils |      | Broadband connection in schools in % |      | Own Web page in % |      | Own LAN in % |      |
|--------|------------------------------------|------|-------------------------------|------|--------------------------------------|------|-------------------|------|--------------|------|
|        | 2006                               | 2001 | 2006                          | 2001 | 2006                                 | 2001 | 2006              | 2001 | 2006         | 2001 |
| BE     | 98                                 | 99   | 10                            | 10   | 74                                   | 18   | 69                | 44   | 57           | 50   |
| CZ     | 100                                |      | 9                             |      | 63                                   |      | 75                |      | 81           |      |
| DK     | 100                                | 99   | 27                            | 31   | 95                                   | 64   | 99                | 75   | 74           | 66   |
| DE     | 100                                | 94   | 9                             | 5    | 63                                   | 8    | 70                | 48   | 66           | 40   |
| EE     | 99                                 |      | 7                             |      | 95                                   |      | 87                |      | 72           |      |
| EL     | 100                                | 72   | 7                             | 5    | 13                                   | 3    | 37                | 15   | 50           | 18   |
| ES     | 96                                 | 88   | 9                             | 7    | 81                                   | 10   | 53                | 43   | 80           | 35   |
| FR     | 99                                 | 96   | 12                            | 10   | 75                                   | 10   | 29                | 37   | 22           | 38   |
| IE     | 100                                | 100  | 10                            | 11   | 66                                   | -    | 36                | 38   | 52           | 42   |
| IT     | 100                                | 94   | 8                             | 6    | 69                                   | 24   | 73                | 37   | 35           | 60   |
| CY     | 99                                 |      | 12                            |      | 31                                   |      | 51                |      | 23           |      |
| LV     | 98                                 |      | 6                             |      | 67                                   |      | 41                |      | 54           |      |
| LT     | 97                                 |      | 6                             |      | 33                                   |      | 60                |      | 50           |      |
| LU     | 99                                 | 94   | 20                            | 32   | 77                                   | 3    | 64                | 47   | 59           | 49   |
| HU     | 97                                 |      | 10                            |      | 77                                   |      | 56                |      | 56           |      |
| MT     | 100                                |      | 11                            |      | 95                                   |      | 63                |      | 60           |      |
| NL     | 100                                | 100  | 21                            | 13   | 92                                   | 27   | 87                | 44   | 87           | 44   |
| AT     | 99                                 | 90   | 16                            | 11   | 68                                   | 23   | 64                | 43   | 68           | 45   |
| PL     | 95                                 |      | 6                             |      | 28                                   |      | 68                |      | 56           |      |
| PT     | 97                                 | 70   | 6                             | 4    | 73                                   | 4    | 61                | 25   | 14           | 25   |
| SI     | 100                                |      | 8                             |      | 85                                   |      | 96                |      | 88           |      |
| SK     | 99                                 |      | 7                             |      | 40                                   |      | 65                |      | 72           |      |
| FI     | 100                                | 100  | 17                            | 17   | 90                                   | 52   | 86                | 77   | 50           | 28   |
| SE     | 100                                | 97   | 17                            | 15   | 89                                   | 31   | 84                | 81   | 69           | 71   |
| UK     | 100                                | 100  | 20                            | 14   | 75                                   | 15   | 73                | 50   | 65           | 63   |
| IS     | 99                                 |      | 15                            |      | 92                                   |      | 94                |      | 65           |      |
| NO     | 100                                |      | 24                            |      | 89                                   |      | 82                |      | 59           |      |
| EU25   | 99                                 |      | 11                            |      | 67                                   |      | 63                |      | 55           |      |
| EU25+2 | 99                                 |      | 11                            |      | 67                                   |      | 63                |      | 55           |      |
| EU15   | 99                                 | 94   | 12                            | 8    | 72                                   |      | 62                | 44   | 54           | 47   |

Source: Reproduced from Korte and Husing (2006: 19)

**Figure 31: Relation between access to the internet in schools (%) and the number of pupils per computer**



Source: From Paus-Hasebrink et al (2009: 222) using Euridyce data from 2005

The impact of using mobile technologies for teaching and learning was recently assessed by Attewell et al (2009). Their findings derived from the MoleNet project conducted in the UK<sup>29</sup> show that using mobile technologies in learning can potentially encourage and support learning at any time of the day while making learning more convenient, accessible and inclusive. While remaining optimistic that mobiles may help to overcome digital divides between learners with home broadband access and those without, or that it may improve feedback from teachers, they suggest caveats as well that mobile learning necessitates a good amount of technical training, preparation and planning, production of learning material and a sequence of other many time-consuming activities.

### ***Promises and complexities of using ICT for learning***

The potential of ICT for in/formal learning is also the site of academic attention where problems and prospects of initiatives such as these above are evaluated and assessed as the visual mode becomes more widespread than verbal modes of learning and representation (Kress, 2003). Academic researchers suggest alternative ways to consider the use of ICT in formal settings. Buckingham (2007: 173) suggests that creation with digital media technologies should “replace the compulsory specialist subject of ICT in schools and also be much more centrally integrated within the core subject of English (or language arts)”. In reviewing actions and evidence for the benefits of ICT in learning, Livingstone

(2009: 64) points out that, “national policies for enhancing informal learning ‘anywhere, anytime’, supporting ‘the home-school link’, building ‘a whole school community’, and so forth depend, crucially, on the active participation of individual parents. Two hurdles exist: one is attitudinal, for parents must share this educational and technological vision for their child; the other is material, for parents must possess the resources (time, space, knowledge and money) to implement this vision”.

She asks two questions:

- The first issue is empirical: does the evidence really support the claim that ICT enhances learning?
- The second issue is conceptual: what do we mean by learning and is our very conception of learning changing?

Her conclusions suggest that first, it is not yet proven that the use of ICT in education does indeed bring greater benefits to children than their being educated without it; second, there seems to be a lack of clarity in whether ICT is to be used for delivering pre-designed curriculums or for alternative student-centred learning models; third that under some circumstances, some uses produce positive outcomes; and fourth, even if for a small minority, there are indications of genuinely new learning opportunities.

Doubts regarding the role of technologies in the home–school relationship should be noted. Grant (2009: 12) finds that:

Educational use of digital technologies tends to be planned and scaffolded within an organised curriculum, and links to a broader programme of learning. In contrast, educational home use tends to favour individual use with little collaboration with or tutorial support from other family members. [...] extending educational technologies from the school to the home does not necessarily lead to these technologies being used to support school learning in the home.

The disconnect between home and school is also evident in a recent study by Hollingworth et al (2009), where the authors spoke to 80 parents across England on their perceptions and experiences of the use of ICT to aid parental engagement in children’s education. Their findings revealed that, despite a number of measures that have been taken to use technologies in this context, the question of its success is still doubtful. A project on learning spaces outlines creative and new possibilities for re-designing spaces for learning in digital times (Rudd et al, 2006). In suggesting a variety of alternative spaces they clarify that there is not just one sort of learning space to meet the needs of the next century, but that one must indeed re-think educational spaces.

The role of the school, and the importance of formal learning in making full, creative and fruitful use of ICT, is stressed by Buckingham (2007a: 52):

... the home context did not provide children with sufficient social motivation to want to engage in such activities in the first place, even where they had the necessary access.

Hence his conclusions stress the importance of the role of the school, where:

... the value of digital technology depends to a large extent on the pedagogic relationships that are established around it – for example, on how students are given access to the skills and competencies they need, how far they can control the process, and how far they can enter into a dialogue with their peers and teachers. (Buckingham, 2007: 53)

It is especially this question – the home–school de/link, that leads Livingstone (2003: 153) to observe that “it is a common theme that computers and the internet are used differently at home and at school, making policies centred on an effective home–school link particularly fraught”.

### **5.3. New media, engagement and civic participation**

Much like the promises and problems latent in the use of ICT for education, youthful civic participation remains a contested territory. While many declare the potential of the internet to engage young people towards civic and democratic participation, and while many also lament the disappearance of political engagement and civic interests among young people, the situation in reality appears more complex as the potential of the internet to make a difference is being debated (Bentivegna, 2002; Coleman, 2005).

In reviewing the evidence on the relationship between new media technologies and the civic participation and engagement of young people, Livingstone (2009: 146) brings together findings from a range of international projects, focusing “on the civic interests and potential of the majority of children and young people, rather than focusing on the notable, often exciting exceptions – instigators of new social movements and the like – that attract popular acclaim or notoriety”. Thus she argues that, “in so far as participation is or could be mediated by the internet, both providers and users – politicians, youth organisations, citizens – face a series of conceptual, technical, political and communicative challenges”.

Participation, like everything else, depends on the social location of individuals within specific contexts. The UK *Children go online* final report (Livingstone and Bober, 2005) highlighted the following findings:

- *Producing as well as receiving content:* 44% of 9- to 19-year-old weekly users have completed a quiz online, 25% have sent an email or text message to a website, 22% have voted for something online and 17% have sent pictures or stories to a website.
- *Some are interested in civic issues:* 54% of 12-to 19-year-olds who use the internet at least weekly have sought out sites concerned with political or civic issues.
- *Age, gender and social grade make a difference:* girls, older and middle-class teens visit a broader range of civic and political sites.

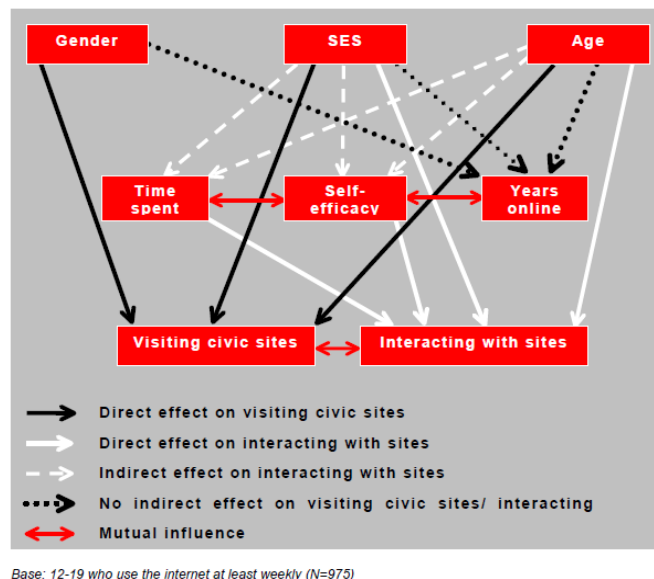
Livingstone, Bober and Helsper, reporting from the same project, suggest the following typology of young people and their civic participation online (2005a: 302):

- *The interactors:* these young people engage the most interactively with websites, and although they are not especially likely to visit civic websites, they are the most likely to make their own web pages.
- *The civic-minded:* these young people are not especially likely to interact with websites generally, nor are they especially likely to make their own web pages. Rather, they are distinctive for being much more likely to visit a range of types of civic websites, most of all charity websites and sites concerned with human rights issues.
- *The disengaged:* these young people are the least active in all three areas of online participation, being much less likely than the other two groups to interact with sites, visit civic sites or make their own web page.

They note that class differences remain significant in these questions. Their findings reveal that boys, middle-class children and older teenagers are more likely than girls, working-class children and younger teenagers to engage in online communication, information seeking and peer-to-peer connection. They brought together a series of sociodemographic variables along with internet use variables to analyse the relationship among social attributes and civic participation.



**Figure 32: Relationship between demographic variables, internet use variables and participation variables**



Source: Livingstone et al (2005: 14)

Using data from the European Social Survey (2002-03), Luengo (2006) compares the connection between political activism and the consumption of new and old media in European countries. The 12 countries with the highest levels of political activism are located in Western and especially Northern Europe. Activism is highest in Sweden and Norway. With the exception of the Czech Republic, the citizens of Eastern European countries are less active, thus, the most disaffected. Livingstone (2009: 123) reports from the Public Connection project (Couldry et al, 2007) that:

“... among adults of all ages, there is a notable gap between access to information (with 81 per cent saying they know where to get the information they need) and political efficacy: only 39 per cent saying they can influence decisions in their area, and as many as 55 per cent feel that ‘people like us’ have no say in what the government does, while 73 per cent sometimes feel strongly about something but do not know what to do about it” (p 123).

She also points out that the UK Children Go Online survey of 9- to 19-year-olds asked users about various activities that could be termed ‘participation’, but these varied widely.

The European project CivicWeb (2008) focused on young people between the ages of 15 and 25 and their civic engagement, using qualitative methods. Alberro-Andrés (2007) reports from the project to show that Hungary shows civic participation and engagement is scarce across the population; Dutch findings highlight young people’s opinions on the purpose of blogging. In Slovenia young people seem to be active for altruistic motives, and also to acquire skills and to build networks. The EUYOUPART project (Political Participation of Young People in Europe – Development of Indicators for Comparative Research in the European Union, 2005: 188), in its final comparative report, concluded that “there is a clear-cut differentiation among countries for what concerns both the use of the media for political information and the relationships which exist between media use and other variables related to political participation. [...] In Austria and Germany, radio still retains an influential role, in Estonia and Finland, the use of the internet for political purposes is already established and in France, Italy and Slovakia television is heavily predominant. In the UK, a remarkable number of young people does not make use of any mass media for political information”.

Using results from a large-scale web survey with 2,163 students in Italy, Spain and the Netherlands, Calenda and Meijer (2009) conclude that the internet reinvigorates political participation but does not trigger a shift from 'old' to 'new' politics. Using a representative sample of 6,330 16-year-olds in Belgium, Quintelier and Vissers (2008) conclude that time spent online does not have an effect on the inclination to participate in public life – at least no conclusive results can be obtained regarding a causal relationship. More upbeat findings perhaps come from de Vreese (2007), whose study of 2,404 Dutch respondents between the ages of 16 and 24 reveals that online activities like news use, consumption and online service use are positively related to political participation.

## 6. Conclusions

We now summarise our conclusions from this review by distinguishing our findings specific to age, gender, social class and cultural differences.

### Age

- Young people have increasingly media-rich lives and bedrooms. Indeed, research attention is increasingly focused on the media practices, literacies, risks and opportunities of the 'digital' youth.
- The telephone gains new significance for the young elderly, while 'old' media continue to be significant dependent on their stage in the life cycle and place in the family (Haddon, 2000).
- Children younger than about nine years old are relatively uninterested in bedroom culture but as they grow older it becomes a crucial part of their experimentation with and expression of both identity and privacy.
- ICT technologies and eHealth policy is almost entirely focused on healthy ageing and older people.
- The nature of parenting (single or partnered) links with the social class and financial resources when it comes to technology use.
- Research points to significant differences across European cultures in parenting styles, media consumption and other practices.
- Cultural differences remain in the degree of tolerance towards leisure time spent alone.
- We observed from the research reviewed that to an extent children progress 'up the ladder' as they get older – most activities online become more common with age as it seems that children's internet-related skills increase with age.
- Media use differs by age. Following Livingstone and Bober (2005), we noted that during primary school years children are generally not major media users, although television and electronic games are highly popular. During the teenage years, young people begin to broaden their range of media uses and tastes, often seeking to individuate themselves from their friends while, simultaneously, being absorbed in the (often normative, even coercive) culture of their peer group. By their late teens and early twenties, young people are negotiating a wide range of information, communication and literacy demands as they manage the transition from school to further study and/or work.
- As an adult, a person's position in the life stage continues to influence their expectations from the media.
- Reviews of both adult and children's media literacy reveal that people possess highly variable levels of functional, creative and critical literacy.

### Gender

- Media as objects and meaningful texts in the home have gendered uses. In particular, interpersonal relations in the family are gendered and mediated. There are differences within families on the symbolic significance attributed to fathers and mothers within children's perceptions of technical competences of their parents.

- Literature shows differences in media use by gender. Seybert's (2007) findings show that in all age groups, the proportion of women with medium or high levels of basic computer skills was smaller than that of men.
- The media as an object in the home has gendered uses. In the 1990s, the findings from the teleworking studies by Haddon and Silverstone had revealed that it was almost always women who took up teleworking and that most of these women had a commitment first and foremost to their domestic role, and then to find work that fitted in. with their home life.
- Gender was also significant, where time spent by children in their own rooms with various media is different across genders, associated with different media. Johnsson-Smaragdi et al (1998) note similar gender differences in Flanders, Germany and Sweden, where, while all children incorporate new media into their everyday media menu, boys are more likely to have a television set and VCR in their rooms than girls.
- The literature shows that the physical space reserved for the media in the home is gendered. Note Livingstone's (2002) findings that families with sons place computers in bedrooms more often those with daughters in a common space.
- There is a small difference in internet use between boys and girls in the younger age groups and gender gaps in access to the internet are mostly small and are closing in nearly all countries.
- There are also gender differences in children's experience of online opportunities and risks (as a function of use preferences).
- Boys are apparently more likely to encounter (or create) conduct risks and girls are more affected by content and contact risks.
- When it comes to the amount of time spent online, there is a lack of comparable data to make similar analysis.
- Boys appear more likely to seek out offensive or violent content.
- It seems likely that these gender differences are the (mainly) unintended consequences of the choices that girls and boys make regarding preferred online activities.
- The exploration of body and sexuality sometimes crosses the boundary and becomes risky when teens have a poor understanding of its consequences.
- Girls who mature earlier than peers may use the media as a 'super peer' to learn about sexual information.
- While little is still known, it seems that age, gender and social grade make a difference in civic participation. Livingstone and Bober's findings (2005) revealed that girls, older and middle-class teens visit a broader range of civic and political sites.
- Productive media technologies offer opportunities for the development of (feminine) identity and may empower girls with the means to 'speak up' and disrupt hetero-normative ideals.

### *Social class*

- On a country level, there is a positive correlation between the percentage of broadband subscribers in a country and the Gini coefficient.

- Household inequalities in SES have consequences for risks as well as opportunities, with classic patterns of exclusion mirrored in engagement with ICT.
- Two-parent households are much more likely to provide a media-rich home, reflecting their considerably higher incomes; single parents are just as likely to provide media-rich bedrooms for their children.
- Class differences remain significant in the nature of participation online. Boys, middle-class children and older teenagers are more likely than girls, working-class children and younger teenagers to engage in online communication, information seeking and peer-to-peer connection.
- There are widespread policy efforts to overcome social exclusion by means of encouraging digital inclusion.
- Livingstone et al, in their review of adult media literacy (2005a), found that the barriers to access are demographic.
- Buckingham (2005) noted that social class and economics status are among the interrelated barriers to media literacy.

### *Cultural differences*

- Ethnic differences link importantly with media consumption; 57% of non-European ethnic migrants have internet access at home (41% of non-immigrants; see Eurobarometer 66.2, 2006); 85% of immigrants from outside Europe have a mobile phone (78% of non-immigrants; see Eurobarometer, 2006).
- There is evidence that access to ICT leads to solidifying within group bonds (within the family or minority community) but not necessarily to increased connections with those in other groups (Byrne, 2007; Parker and Song, 2006).
- The literature points to significant differences across European cultures in parenting styles, media consumption and other practices.
- Media strategies vary with socialisation cultures. Kirwil (2009) noted that the effectiveness of time restriction in European countries shows that the significance of the strategy differs with the socialisation cultures of the countries.
- The context of family viewing is a crucial determining factor in what causes offence.
- The gendered control of the remote control, for example, is an element of the discussion of diasporic media consumption.
- Television consumption shapes a cultural space of commonality for diasporic families and cross-generational communication.
- Diasporic media consumption is diverse. Individual family members consume diasporic media in the banal ways they consume any other media, making their choices based on preferences and interests, not based on essentialist identities and pre-given commitments to a specific (national) community (Aksoy and Robins, 2000), and the media, especially television, become important tools in sustaining ethnic and transnational identities and transnational connections (Brinkerhoff, 2009; Adoni et al, 2006).

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## 8. Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> See Eurobarometer (2008).

<sup>2</sup> See EC (2008).

<sup>3</sup> These points are drawn from Livingstone in Deveraux, and chapter 2 of Livingstone, S. (2001). Young people and new media.

<sup>4</sup> Source: [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov). Internet statistics (dated 31/12/08 and retrieved 6/3/09 from [www.internetworldstats.com/stats9.htm#eu](http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats9.htm#eu)).

<sup>5</sup> EU internet statistics updated for 31/12/08. Usage figures from sources published by Nielsen//NetRatings, ITU, GfK, local NICs etc. Retrieved 6/3/09 from [www.internetworldstats.com/stats9.htm#eu](http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats9.htm#eu)

<sup>6</sup> Eurostat, January 2007.

<sup>7</sup> EU27 figures (from parents of 6- to 17-year-olds) from Eurobarometer (2008).

<sup>8</sup> EU25 data (from guardians of 6- to 17-year-olds) from Eurobarometer (2005).

<sup>9</sup> EU27 figures (use frequency recalculated as ever/never) from Eurobarometer (2008). EU25 figures from Eurobarometer (2005).

<sup>10</sup> Capacent Gallup (2009).

<sup>11</sup> For children, see Medietilsynet (2008). For parents, see SAFT (2006).

<sup>12</sup> See Eurobarometer (2008).

<sup>13</sup> These and more detailed findings have been published in the Network's report on research availability and gaps in the evidence base in Staksrud et al (2009).

<sup>14</sup> European Parliament Council Commission (2007).

<sup>15</sup> [www.oii.ox.ac.uk/research/project.cfm?id=47](http://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/research/project.cfm?id=47)

<sup>16</sup> From Livingstone and Haddon (Eds.). *Kids Online*.

<sup>17</sup> This curvilinear relationship tells us that 21% of between-country differences in children's content online risk experienced at home is explained by between-country differences in how many parents set limits on time spent by children online.

<sup>18</sup> The UK Council for Child Internet Safety was established by the UK government in 2008, following Byron's (2008) report.

<sup>19</sup> Parts of this section have previously been published as Livingstone and Das (2009).

<sup>20</sup> Much of this is textual analysis exploring the number of swear words uttered by television characters or characters in advertisements, quantitative counts of the number of terms deemed offensive in programmes broadcast on specific channels at specific times in the day and similar work on provocative advertising and other media content

<sup>21</sup> See press release at

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/1970&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

<sup>22</sup> See [http://ec.europa.eu/comm/avpolicy/media\\_literacy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/avpolicy/media_literacy/index_en.htm). See also the EC's Expert Group on Media Literacy at [http://ec.europa.eu/comm/avpolicy/media\\_literacy/expert\\_group/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/avpolicy/media_literacy/expert_group/index_en.htm) as well as the wider definition adopted by the European Media Literacy Charter at [www.euromedialiteracy.eu/index.php?Pg=charter](http://www.euromedialiteracy.eu/index.php?Pg=charter). The Council of Europe also stresses the importance of media literacy, focusing on child protection and empowerment. See [www.coe.int/T/E/Com/Files/Ministerial-Conferences/2005-kyiv/texte\\_adopte.asp](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Com/Files/Ministerial-Conferences/2005-kyiv/texte_adopte.asp)

<sup>23</sup> See [http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/docs/reg/modernisation/proposal\\_2005/avmsd\\_cons\\_may07\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/docs/reg/modernisation/proposal_2005/avmsd_cons_may07_en.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> See [http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/media\\_literacy/studies/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/media_literacy/studies/index_en.htm)

<sup>25</sup> See [http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=23714&URL\\_DO=DO\\_PRINTPAGE&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=23714&URL_DO=DO_PRINTPAGE&URL_SECTION=201.html)

<sup>26</sup> See [www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media\\_literacy/ml\\_audit/](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media_literacy/ml_audit/)

<sup>27</sup> See

[http://ted.europa.eu/ExecJsessionid=682564A321DFAE5FCDEDC6FA7292965D.instance\\_1?DataFlow=N\\_one\\_doc\\_access.dfl&Template=TED/N\\_one\\_result\\_detail\\_curr.htm&docnumber=335589-2009&docId=335589-2009&StatLang=EN](http://ted.europa.eu/ExecJsessionid=682564A321DFAE5FCDEDC6FA7292965D.instance_1?DataFlow=N_one_doc_access.dfl&Template=TED/N_one_result_detail_curr.htm&docnumber=335589-2009&docId=335589-2009&StatLang=EN)

<sup>28</sup> See See Aufderheide (1993).

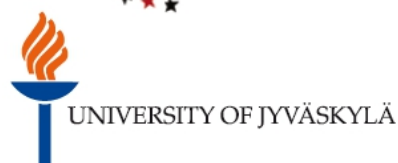
<sup>29</sup> "MoLeNET is the UK's, and probably the world's, largest and most diverse implementation of mobile learning, involving approximately 20,000 learners and 4000 staff in 115 colleges and 29 schools. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and consortia led by English further education (FE) colleges have together invested over £12 million in MoLeNET during 2007 to 2009" (Attewell et al, 2009: 1).



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