Young people, new media

Research report

YOUNG PEOPLE NEW MEDIA

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Report of the Research Project
Children Young People and the Changing Media Environment

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FOREWORD

The Nuffield Foundation Study on Television and Children, the Himmelweit Report as it came to be known, was launched in 1954. The BBC was then running Britain's only television channel, which remained out-of-reach for significant numbers of people. There were about three-and-a-quarter million licences in operation. It is not easy, even for those who were then working in broadcasting, to recapture the atmosphere of that year. Opposition to the principle of commercial broadcasting was ensuring a rough ride through Parliament for the Bill to create Independent Television. Compared apocalyptically by Lord Reith to the scourge of the Black Death, the first commercial television stations were still a year away. In the era of 'The Toddlers' Truce', hours of broadcasting were heavily restricted. Under the truce, no programmes could be transmitted between 6.00 pm and 7.00 pm on weekdays, allowing the nation to put its smaller children to bed without the distractions of television. By today's standards, it was a time of relative innocence. Parental responsibility within the setting of family life was much less a subject for constant exhortations than an accepted part of the national culture. The ITC has preserved a letter written in 1957 about television and children to a regional newspaper which the writer felt able to sign with the uncontroversial pseudonym of 'Bachelor child-lover'.[1]

Despite the limited amount of television available, anxieties about the medium were widely voiced. Many of the concerns were focussed upon the child-audience, as they had been in the case of the cinema a generation earlier. The child-viewer, it was alleged, was suffering a range of harmful consequences including the loss of sleep, neglect of reading, and incitement to violence. (Anyone inclined to be sceptical, however, should remember that, in 1980, objections were seriously raised to the introduction of breakfast television on the grounds that children would delay their departure for school, heightening their vulnerability to road accidents). The recognition of television's power to inform and stimulate was inevitably overshadowed. In such a climate, the time was ripe for a positive response from the Nuffield Foundation when the BBC invited it to sponsor an enquiry into television's impact on children and, coincidentally, on family life.

The research team led by Dr. Hilde Himmelweit, then a Reader in Social Psychology at the London School of Economics, acknowledged that much changed in television during the four years the Report took to compile. At the outset, it was still possible to find sizeable numbers of children with no access to television, making comparisons between the two groups still a possibility. The BBC Archives contain a report from a woman invited by the BBC in 1952 to criticise six weeks of children's programmes. She wrote that she had watched without children, 'unwilling to take the responsibility of creating an appetite for television which some of the neighbours might have resented'.[2] By the time the Report appeared in the middle of 1958, much of the population could watch ITV. Both adults and children were turning to the new network in numbers which deeply embarrassed the BBC, provoking at the end of the decade a strong counter-attack from a much-changed Corporation.

The Himmelweit Report caused a considerable stir among the public and among broadcasters. Apart from the details of its research, which in general disproved the more extreme fears about the effects of the medium, it included a number of suggestions for action by parents, teachers, and youth-club leaders on how they might make the best use of television to benefit the children in their care.

It was, not surprisingly, the chapter of suggestions for producers which gave pause to the BBC and the ITA, the forebear of the ITC. One suggestion was for an agreement that the BBC and ITV should transmit educational programmes at the same time so that, in a world with only two channels, children might not be tempted to switch to an alternative programme of a different kind. Another was for the certification of programmes as suitable for children. While it was important, for political reasons, that the suggestions were seen to be taken with great seriousness, the broadcasters

[1]Evening Sentinel, Staffordshire.

[2]BBC WAC ref.T 16/46.

had legitimate interests to protect. While not the least of them was the struggle for profitability by the new and still-incomplete ITV network, there was the shared conviction that television had wider obligations than those it did not deny owing to children. Within a short period, the BBC had established an internal committee, chaired by Cecil McGivern, then the Deputy Director of Television, to review the recommendations. Similar enquiries were conducted by the Independent Television Authority and its franchise-holders.

These separate responses to the Report were, however, felt by the BBC and the ITA to be insufficient to convince public opinion of the seriousness with which broadcasters took their responsibilities to the child-audience. They therefore established an independent committee, each contributing four members drawn from their advisory bodies. I had been Secretary to the BBC's internal enquiry and went on to act in the same capacity for the joint committee, under the chairmanship of May O'Conor, Chairman of the Isle of Wight Education Committee. The Committee was asked, in the light of the conclusions reached within the BBC and ITV, to consider the recommendations for action made in 'Television and the Child'. Having drafted the Committee's report, I was subsequently asked to draft a preface for the published version. While polite and complimentary, the preface amounted to a brush-off by the two sponsoring bodies for those proposals, including one for a body of specialist advisers on children's programmes, which they felt would unduly subordinate the interests of the adult audience to those of child-viewers.

Although the place the broadcasters prescribed among the television audience for children was not quite that suggested by Himmelweit and endorsed by the O'Conor Committee, the result of all this activity was to give a new prominence to the production of programmes for children which was to survive, not always without difficulty, for many years. A subsequent Television Act required the ITA to establish a Children's Advisory Committee and the BBC in 1960 produced a code of practice for children's programmes.

Although the pioneering role of the Himmelweit Report was widely praised in Britain and elsewhere in the world, it never received the ultimate flattery of imitation. It was not until the end of the eighties that I and David Docherty, then my colleague at the Broadcasting Standards Council,[3] agreed that we should try to set on foot a new enquiry. Television had, of course, altered profoundly in forty years, so that a replication of the earlier design would have made no sense at all. Docherty and I believed that a change of particular importance had taken place in the way children were coming to regard the television screen. The receiver no longer simply brought them programmes to be watched passively. They were making regular use of the screen for a whole variety of different purposes, with the prospect of many more in the future.

It was a phenomenon affecting not only the British. It could be observed in many other parts of the world, including the rest of Europe. However, in one respect the situation could be compared with that in which Hilde Himmelweit and her colleagues began their work in the nineteen-fifties. Many children are still without regular access to the new technologies, but just as television became increasingly pervasive in the years immediately following the launch of the Himmelweit study, so we must expect these technologies, in school and at home, to become everyday realities for more and more children in the next decade. The need to know more about the ways in which children are already using the new technologies and about their impact was all the more urgent.

At the start of the 1990's, the broadcasting industry was in turmoil. The ITV companies were coming to terms with the consequences of the latest franchise round and the presence of powerful commercial competition while the BBC, with its finances increasingly straitened, continued to be under political attack. Sociological research, however significant, was not high on the agenda and funding support was lacking.

It was going to be an elaborate and, therefore, costly project. The earliest attempts we made to gain support made little headway. David Docherty then moved on, leaving the idea in his pending tray for his successor, Andrea Millwood Hargrave. When together we put to her the possibility of relaunching the proposal, Lady Howe, who became the Council's Chairman in 1993, responded vigorously. She won support from the EU and was able to pave the way for the initial partnership between the Council and the London School of Economics. Then, by what might be called a feat of guided serendipity, a number of British institutional funders, recognising the potential value of the new research, agreed to join in, ensuring that the study could go ahead. Widespread interest was also

[3]Now Director of New Services and Deputy Director of Television, BBC.

expressed from several European countries in pursuing the same research objectives, underlining the concerns about children and the new technologies which the European Parliament, a further source of funding, had already put on record.

I believe that the research set out in the following pages will be a worthy successor to the Nuffield Study. It will, I hope, encourage and inform serious reflections in Britain and elsewhere on the social and cultural consequences which may flow from the political and economic choices made in Britain and elsewhere over the development of the new technologies.

Colin Shaw

12.2.9

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CHAPTER 1

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

1.1 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A group of boys choose to visit the friend with a new video game. A teenage girl checks out the web site of her favourite pop group. In the playground everyone discusses recent events in an Australian soap opera. A mother asks her young son how to work the family computer. Children ask for a mobile phone for Christmas. Parents buy a multimedia computer for their children but are unsure how to use it. With cable television, a fan watches cartoons whenever she wants to. Newspaper headlines spread panic about 'computer addicts', about 'the younger generation', and about the end of family conversation. What is new here? What is important?

The family home is now a key site for the integration of telecommunications, broadcasting, computing and video. Together, these technologies are making the domestic television screen the centre of an evolving multimedia culture. There are many questions and concerns which arise from these changes. Satellite and cable television, and interactive video and computer games are already part of the everyday lives of children and young people. After an uncertain period, the domestic computer market has taken off and, currently attracting the most attention, the Internet is becoming a reality for children - at school and, increasingly, at home.

The research project presented in this report is about children, young people and their changing media environment, focussing on the diffusion, uses, experiences and significance of media and information technologies among 6-17 year olds.[1] The subject of children, young people and the new media attracts considerable public and academic interest.

Indeed, as the electronic media rapidly diversify in both form and function, grand claims abound. Optimists foresee new opportunities for democratic and community participation, while pessimists lament the end of childhood, innocence and respect for authority. Yet while there is widespread speculation concerning many of these questions, little empirical research has been conducted to suggest answers. Hence discussions of 'new media' often rest less on actual research than on extrapolation from the past combined with speculation about the future.

When we began this project many things about the new media were unknown. For example, how many children have a personal computer or Internet access at home, what are parents' hopes and anxieties about the so-called new media, in what ways are family space and time being reorganised by the multiplication of media in our homes, and, most important, who is getting 'left out' of the new information-rich environment?

Our first task, then, is to address rather prosaic, but important, questions, generating reliable data to document which young people have access to which media and how they are using them. Following this detailed mapping exercise, as academic researchers we aim to explore the consequences for children and young people of technological and societal developments, to identify new opportunities and dangers, to critique misleading claims and to inform debate. Here we must be more tentative, for we can only begin to address the many issues concerning social and educational inequalities and exclusion, the transformation of traditional notions of leisure, the diversification or fragmentation of the mass audience, and the implications of globalised media for young people's identities and lifestyles.

This research project has several origins. Hilde Himmelweit and colleagues at the LSE investigated

[1] In addition to the British project reported here, parallel projects are being conducted simultaneously by national research teams in eleven other European countries (see Appendix 1.1).

the place of television in the lives of children and young people during the 1950s, and the idea for an update has hung in the air ever since. Now that new information and communication technologies are entering the homes of children and young people, the same sense is abroad that major changes are occurring whose significance parallels that of the introduction of television in Britain in the 1950s. Thus, a new research project which systematically surveys the place of media in children's lives should prove valuable.

Jay Blumler and Colin Shaw played a key role in crystallising the idea by effecting an introduction between the LSE and BSC at a moment when funding, energy and ideas came together. The present authors, together with Andrea Millwood Hargrave and others at the BSC, took the idea forward. The result, we hope, is a complex and informative picture of the changing place of media within children and young people's lives in Britain in the late 1990s. In what follows, we elaborate our guiding principles and research questions, and outline the research design.

1.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Given the prominence of public concern and debate, we adhered to two guiding principles in framing the research project. First, we tried to put to one side the considerable public anxieties surrounding our key terms - 'children', 'youth', 'new' and 'media'.[2] Instead, our aim was to begin by understanding the perspectives of young people and their families and only then to link this understanding to public policy and academic agendas. Second, we set out to contexualise children and young people's meanings and uses of new media in relation to their 'environment' or 'life-world', as discussed below. Both of these principles led us to listen to views of the media as told to us by children, young people and their parents and teachers. The point was to reveal not only the 'facts' of media use in the late 1990s but also observable patterns that are likely to be informative in the longer term.[3]

In addition to the public debate, there has been a considerable volume of research on the place of the media in daily life. Most broadly, three metaphors may be said to capture contemporary thinking about the media (Meyrowitz, 1993):

- the media can be seen *as a conduit* for the transmission of certain meanings; this is often the metaphor behind public concern over undesirable or harmful contents;
- the media can be seen *as a language;* here technological and text-oriented researchers may ask about media codes or 'grammar'.
- the media can be seen *as an environment;* this raises questions about the interactional and

[2]The introduction of each new medium has generally been accompanied by a 'moral panic', and anxieties typically centre on children and young people (Drotner 1992; Bazalgette and Buckingham 1995). While each new panic displaces earlier panics, thereby facilitating acceptance of earlier 'new' media, each moral panic also has its own particularities. For example, Haddon (1993) shows how concerns over computer and video games were stimulated by the combination of the hobbyist image of early home computer games (i.e. the anoraks and hackers who arouse anxieties about vulnerable and isolated loners) together with the sleazy image of the arcade games (with their addicts, gamblers and other antisocial or deviant characters).

More broadly, children and youth are targets for panics also in relation to sexuality, the family, crime, delinquency and political apathy. Pearson (1983) suggests therefore that while public concerns about new media might express valid and real fears, they tend to be conservative, often masking anxieties about difference and change, and about the loss of traditional values. Even the terms of the debate are value laden, the assumption being that 'children' need protection from us, and that we need protection from 'youth'.

[3]It was this orientation which allowed Himmelweit et al's *Television and the Child* to stand the test of time, remaining relevant to contemporary thinking about children's media use. As Himmelweit et al (1958: xiii) comment, 'in minor ways, therefore, our data were out of date even before they were tabulated, but the major findings and conclusions have not been affected. The role of television in children's lives, the manner of children's reactions and the underlying principles that determine them remain constant in the face of the superficial changes in television itself.'

relational possibilities of different media, with the media seen as framing the social context for communication as well as its content.

Conceptually, this project begins with the third metaphor, emphasising the notion of the 'media environment', though we also explore questions arising from the conduit and language metaphors. This emphasis leads us to ask how far the media are involved in every part of children's lives, whether in the background or foreground.

Importantly, without thorough contextualisation in the everyday lives of children and young people, media research tends to lose sight of the bigger picture, tending to transform the positives and negatives of people's lives into images of positive and negative children or young people, particularly negative ones (- the Internet addict, the nerd, the screen-zombie, the social isolate). Similarly, without contextualisation research tends to pit 'old' media against 'new' media ('the end of print', the end of the 'mass audience', etc), failing to recognise the complex ways in which they are mutually entangled in everyday life.[4]

In any attempt to analyse social change, the concept of 'environment' is important in two respects. First, changes in the media environment add to and, in the process, transform, existing leisure options. Second, existing leisure practices mediate the appropriation of new media into daily life. To illuminate both these kinds of process, we consider 'new' media in the light of older media, and we explore media use more generally in relation to non-mediated leisure and other aspects of children and young people's lives.

The case for change should not be overstated. Each decade may see dramatic technological change, but in many respects children's lives are as they were ten or even forty years ago. Children grow up, watch television, ride their bikes, argue with their parents, study hard or become disaffected with school, just as they always did. Much of the portrayal of children's lives in *Television and the Child* is recognisable forty years on, for even then children preferred to play with their friends, incorporating television into their lives to fill the boring gaps, and while parents and teachers wished children would read a good book instead, children preferred to watch television and, especially, to watch prime-time programmes rather than 'children's programmes'.

When significant changes are discernable, these are often only indirectly connected with new media technologies (Thompson, 1994). Instead, they concern the transformation of time, space and social relations. For example, children no longer walk to school or play in the streets as freely as they used to, and yet they are becoming global citizens, increasingly in touch with other places and people in the world. In the family too, larger changes are occurring. Comparing children's lives with those of their parents, the divorce rate has escalated, more women engage in paid work and the structure of families has diversified. More children are better off but more too are poorer, more young people are going into further or higher education while entry into the workplace is more difficult, with the prospect of a job for life diminishing.

Even larger changes are also at work, as globalising economic, political and technological developments challenge the autonomy of the nation state. How are we to link all these changes? Does lack of freedom to play outside influence time spent watching television, or does use of global media impact on consumerist values, or does children's new-found expertise with computers affect family authority?

1.3 FROM THE TV OF THE 1950s TO THE PC OF THE 1990s

LaFrance (1996) characterises the children of the 1960s as the TV generation, those of the 1970s as the video generation, those of the 1980s as the Nintendo generation, and those of the 1990s as the Internet generation. As the leisure experiences of young people in the late 1990s differ in many ways

[4]The stress on contextualisation allows us to be eclectic in drawing on past theory and research. Throughout the age of mass television, it proved difficult to produce big answers to the big question, namely what social changes were brought about by the introduction of television? Thus it may be more productive to explore new media inductively, examining how they are used by particular audiences under particular conditions.

from those of their parents, this raises new questions about whether young people are being drawn into new forms of technological expertise, 'mediatized' leisure, and consumer participation not readily available to their parents.

Yet if the PC, and its associated innovations (multimedia, Internet), is the radically new mass market screen medium of the 1990s, forty years ago it was television which drew all the attention. In those early days of the mass child television audience, it was *Television and the Child* (Himmelweit, et al 1958) which really established our understanding of the place of the then new medium in the lives of children. The present research was originally conceived as a forty year update on that seminal British "effects" study.

Himmelweit examined many of the possible effects of television on children's lives following its introduction in Britain during the 1950s. Thus the project took a comprehensive look at a new media technology entering children's lives, examining both immediate and longer term implications of television use. At the time, almost nothing was known about the likely impact of this new medium on children, and consequently, the design and findings of the study were integral in framing the new field of media research both in Britain and elsewhere, and played a key role in informing broadcasting and educational policy for years to come (Himmelweit, 1996; Oswell, 1995).

Television and the Child systematically examined the impact of television on children and young people by comparing those with and without television (and for a subset of children, those before and after it entered their homes) in the early years of its introduction into Britain. Four main types of effect were considered: displacement effects (- how children made their leisure choices); programme content effects (- children's perceptions of meanings); effects on family life; and effects on children's emotions. Contrary to the impression sometimes given by subsequent critics of media effects research, the conclusion of that project, which subsequent research has supported, was that television has a diverse range of moderate effects on children.

The main findings of Himmelweit et al's substantial project, which employed both qualitative and quantitative methods, can be summarised briefly as follows:

- television rapidly became children's main leisure activity, to some extent displacing reading and 'doing nothing,' especially immediately after adoption, and providing functionally equivalent leisure with little detrimental effect on school work;

- the effects on beliefs and behaviour were few, and in particular no negative effects on levels of aggression were found. Viewers tended to become more ambitious and more middle class in their aspirations having seen middle class, comfortable situations being portrayed on television, while girls became more concerned to adopt feminine roles;

- children were found to watch, and to prefer all kinds of programmes, of which many or most were 'intended' for adults (notwithstanding the primary focus of parents, teachers and regulators on specifically children's broadcasting). Looking within the family, parental control and example proved important to mediating and even determining the viewing habits of their children;

- the uses and impacts of television depended on the child's ability and critical perspective (with less informed or less critical children being most affected by the new medium) as well as their gender, age and personality.[5]

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[5]Since the 1950s, intelligence has become a vexed issue. In the mid-50's, teachers made children's IQ results available for *Television and the Child* (Oppenheim, personal communication, 1998), but today IQ results are neither readily available nor straightforwardly acceptable for research purposes. However, as one of the key findings had been that the impact of television depends on the child's intelligence, in the present project we attempted to interview children of a range of abilities, relying on teachers' assessments. However, in practice we felt we could not rely on these assessments and made no use of them beyond assuring ourselves that we had interviewed a diversity of children. In the survey we asked parents how well their child was doing at school, but this too tells us little more than the parent's confidence in their child.

There appeared, then, to be a number of significant consequences of the rapid way in which the new medium of television became a major leisure activity for children during the 1950s, although these consequences were not always those popularly expected and subsequently debated.

While in historical terms, forty years ago is very recent, in terms of media history forty years ago is a different world - both television, and media research itself were only just beginning. Thus when updating a project from the 1950s to the 1990s there are inevitably both similarities and differences in research

Describing media access in the 1990s means mapping complex combinations of di focus and design. The present research, like that of *Television and the Child*, coincides with the introduction of new media into children and young people's lives and research is once again needed to inform both academic and public policy debates. However, in three key respects, the present project is rather different.

From 'the child' to 'children and young people'

The social segmentation between children, young people and adults was very different in the 1950s compared with today. Then, Himmelweit could say that 'in many ways a 13-14 year old does not differ much from an adult in his tastes and reactions' (Himmelweit et al, 1958: 10); now we have teenagers and a semi-autonomous youth culture.

The awkward absence of a single term to cover our age range, extended from her 10-14 year olds to cover 6 to 17 years, signals the considerable difference between researching 'the child' and researching 'children and young people', as reflected in the titles of Himmelweit et al and the present project, with the post-1950s emergence of youth culture, among other factors, leading to childhood and youth becoming reconceived as connected but distinct phenomena.

From 'television' to 'the media environment'

The questions faced by the Himmelweit project seem, in retrospect, relatively straightforward when compared with the present day. While then, the key issue was what happens when a new medium - television - enters children's lives, today all kinds of new forms of technology are becoming available for young people's leisure and education.

Research on 'new media' involves studying a moving target. In selecting the video recorder, multiple television channels, the personal computer, video games and the Internet for study, we assume that the electronic screen (which now encompasses broadcasting, print and computing) will remain central to the changing media environment. Indeed, having to resolve the question of "what's new" represents one of several differences between Himmelweit's study and the present research, thus highlighting ways in which new media - as well as the intervening forty years of research - raise new challenges.

From 'media effects' to 'media meanings and uses'

Reflecting subsequent developments in academic theory, the main focus of our project is not on media effects but rather on the meanings, uses and impact of media in the lives of children and young people. This is partly in response to the sustained critique of the effects tradition[6] as well as to the practical impossibility of constructing a before-and-after research design given that multiple forms of media are gradually diffusing through society.verse media, and both the determinants and consequences of these combinations are of interest. Instead, therefore, of regarding television viewing as a *cause* of attitudes and behaviours in children's lives, we seek to *contextualise* the uses of new media within a broad analysis of children and young people's lifeworlds, including their use of traditional media.

[6]Critiques of research on media effects include concerns over using experiments on children, the artificiality of measuring the impact of brief and controlled media exposure, as well as concerns over the tendency to scapegoat the media for society's ills (Livingstone, 1996).

1.4 NEW MEDIA, NEW QUESTIONS

1.4.1 The focus on new screen media

It is easy to use the terms 'old' and 'new' media without specifying exactly what is meant. This is partly because different terminology has become associated with different debates as well as differing technologies.

In the home, we tend to think of 'new media'; in relation to educational policy, the unwieldy term 'information and communications technology' (ICT) is widespread; the European Commission talks of information technologies (IT).[7] Although we problematise the old/new distinction below, we generally use the phrase 'new media' in this report in order to capture the widespread sense of change as experienced by children, young people and their parents (see Chapter 2).

All commentators agree that the screen - focus of the convergence of broadcasting, telecommunications and computing - is central to the changing media environment. As screen media include both familiar and new technological developments, our focus on the domestic screen will capture the key features of the changing media environment. We encompass terrestrial television, cable and satellite television, the video recorder, computer games, teletext, the camcorder and, most important, the personal computer and its associated technologies - the CD-Rom, Email and the Internet. Some of these are already to be found in most homes, others are being adopted by a growing number of households, and still others may be widely adopted in the coming decade, subject to a host of economic, technical, regulatory and sociocultural factors.[8]

Throughout this report we avoid a narrow, technical definition of new media. Rather we look broadly at the range of information and communication technologies as they are used by children and young people at home and school. It is important to note that new media (or new information and communication technologies) may refer to either or both of the means of delivery or the contents thereby delivered. Given our focus on the contextualisation of media use as much as on engagement with particular contents, a practical starting point was often to ask children about particular media goods - where are they located, how long do they spend with them, how do they use them, etc. Our aim, however, is to illuminate the meanings and uses of both hardware and contents in the daily lives of children and young people. The linkages are important, for new media contents often go hand in hand with new media hardware, as we try to draw out in this report.

1.4.2 Time-scales for diffusion and appropriation of the 'new'

What counts as 'new' for children and young people is not obvious partly because the time scale of technological development differs from that of cultural and social change. By the time a new medium has reached the market place much development work has already been completed. Information goods especially are already technologically out-of-date by the time they go on sale.

But their social uses and impacts, whatever these may prove to be, are the result of processes which can only begin when the new entrant to the market becomes available. These processes are, first, that of diffusion through the market (Rogers, 1995) and, second, of appropriation - of domesticating an unfamiliar object by incorporating it into pre-existing social practices (e.g. Haddon and Silverstone, 1995, describe the 'career' of a new medium within the home).

Both diffusion and appropriation must be understood as thoroughly social as well as market processes, and hence both occur according to several time scales. Diffusion may be analysed cross-

[7] See for example the *European Green Paper on the Convergence of the Telecommunications, Media and Information Technology Sections and the Implications for Regulation: Towards an Information Society Approach (1997)*, Martin Bangemann's (1996) speech, *The European Vision of the Information Society,* the Secretary of State for Education and Employment's White Paper, *Excellence in Schools (1997)* and the Technology Colleges Trust's *Vision 2020 Journal: The Re-engineering of Schools with Information and Communications Technology (1998)*. In these and other documents, a variety of terms are used, including 'Information Society', 'Convergence', 'Digital Age', 'Electronic Media', and so forth.

[8] As digital television was launched after data collection was complete it is not included here.

nationally (- what is new in Britain may seem old, or may not yet have arrived, elsewhere), cross-generationally (- what is familiar to children may still seem new to their parents), and cross-sectionally (- what is new to the majority is already familiar to early adopters). Appropriation also occurs on several time scales, from the days or weeks in which the initial thrill of newness leads the user to rearrange domestic time and space to experiment with the new toy, to that of generations, in which today's parents must figure out how to incorporate media which played no part in their own childhood into their expectations for their own children.

The difficulty for research is that key questions often concern long term implications of the introduction of new media - for example, the consequences of social inequalities or knowledge gaps (the so-called 'info-rich' and 'info-poor'), of changed media habits, of displacement, and so forth. But for recently introduced media, these long-term adoption consequences cannot as yet be addressed; indeed some media currently attracting attention may yet fail in the marketplace, at least in their present form.[9] If key questions cannot be addressed until relatively late in the diffusion process this provides further justification for our sense that a broad and social, rather than narrow and technological definition of new media will best serve our purposes.

What then are the opportunities and risks associated with the new media? The video recorder raised new possibilities for personal control over scheduling and for children's access to 'adult' materials; the Internet raises new possibilities of interactivity and participation in virtual social relationships as well as, again, access to inappropriate contents; multimedia offers more individually-tailored information searches, with implications for educational uses. Research is needed to explore how far these possibilities are actually taken up by children and young people.

However, we also need to be wary of technological determinism. In other words, rather than simply attributing observable changes to the introduction of particular technologies, we might instead ask what it is about a culture at a particular historical point that leads it to adopt one medium rather than another or that leads to the attaching of certain cultural meanings and practices to a new medium. Thus, if we are to understand what's new for children and young people about the new media, we must locate technological developments within an understanding of ongoing cultural processes.

1.4.3 Key dimensions of social change

Having argued for a relatively inclusive conception of new media, we now map out some of the domestic and cultural changes which accompany them, each of which is subsequently explored within the body of this report. Four themes suggest how new media may be contributing to the changing social environment, as elaborated below.

- Does the multiplication of *personally owned* media contribute to the shifting boundary between public and private spaces?
- Does *diversification* in media forms/contents contribute to the growing importance of individualised (and globalized) lifestyles?
- Do emerging screen technologies contribute to the *convergence* in information/ education/ entertainment/ work?
- What are the consequences for communication and social relations of the *shift from one-way, mass communication towards more interactive communication* between medium and user.

Public/private contexts for media use

First, and most simply, we are seeing a significant multiplication of personally owned media. 'Old'

[9] In general, policy makers and the public are most interested in those information and communication technologies which are on the horizon: as yet, researchers cannot research them, users cannot use them and policy makers cannot gauge their significance. In practical terms, then, for the majority of the population we can only study technologically familiar media. And by the same token, for the newest media, we can only explore social meanings, uses and impacts for the early adopters - inevitably an unrepresentative group of the population, although it may prove valuable to investigate their experiences.

media familiar to us all are being used as part of *new spatial and temporal arrangements* as households come to possess multiple televisions, telephones, radios, etc. Facilitated by the reduction in price of media goods and by the growth of mobile media (e.g. mobile phone, walkman), what's new here is also to do with social contexts of use rather than the technologies themselves. These social contexts of use are themselves part of a wider reformulation of the relation between public and private. The traditional notion of 'family television' (Morley, 1986), with its associated hierarchies of gender and generation, is undergoing change, for the very possibility of personal/private television viewing created by multi-set homes is transforming the meaning of both solitary and shared viewing.

Diversifying lifestyles

Second, both 'old' and 'current' media are diversifying in form and contents, resulting in local and global, general and specialized television channels, in diverse kinds of computer and video game, and so forth. This diversification itself encourages the multiplication of familiar goods, for as new forms of media come onto the market, families upgrade their existing goods, and thus the older media are passed down, from parents to children, from living room to bedroom. As argued elsewhere (Livingstone, in press -a), such diversification facilitates the broader Western trend towards *individualisation of lifestyles* in which media use is ever less determined by traditional factors such as social class, and is instead being incorporated within individual lifestyle practices (Beck, 1992; Buchner, 1990; Reimer, 1995).[10]

Converging activities - work/leisure/education

Third, the more technologically radical shift towards convergent forms of information services, as media, information, and telecommunications services become interconnected is facilitated by the emergence of the more recent media, cable television and the personal computer especially, as well as by both the multiplication and diversification of media. Much remains to be explored in relation to the *blurring of key social boundaries* through such convergence (home/work, entertainment/information, public/commerce, education/leisure, masculine/feminine, etc.).[11] And as the structures which hitherto maintained such boundaries rest on, and sustain, traditional authority relations, convergence can be construed as part of a general trend towards democratisation, including - on the level of the politics of everyday life - the 'democratisation' of the family (Giddens, 1993).[12]

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[10]It is easy to confuse privatisation and individualisation because the shift towards multiple media involves both processes, but it is useful to keep them distinct. Privatisation typically refers to the shift towards domestic spaces where people are conceptualised as consumers or audiences and the move away from publicly accessible spaces where people are conceptualised as citizens (e.g. Meyrowitz, 1985; although the Habermasian account differs in important respects). Individualisation refers instead to the shift away from all-important traditional socio-structural determinants towards more diversified notions of lifestyle; hence 'every child is increasingly expected to behave in an "individualised way"... children must somehow orient themselves to an *anticipated* life course. The more childhood in the family is eclipsed by influences and orientation patterns from outside the family ... the more independent the opportunity (and drive) to making up one's own mind, making one's own choice...described here as the *biographization* of the life course' (Buchner, 1990:77-8).

[11]For example, in charting patterns of television use by the family from 1950-90, Andreasen (1994) suggests that the shift from family co-viewing towards individual viewing was facilitated both by technological developments - the purchase of multiple sets, the individualising effects of multi-channel cable television and of the remote control, and by the emergence of more democratic families with non-traditional views about parent-child power relations.

[12]Giddens argues that through the historical transformation of intimacy, children have gained the right to 'determine and regulate the conditions of their association' (1993: 185), while parents have gained the duty to protect them from coercion, ensure their involvement in key decisions and be accountable to them and others. This is part of long-term social changes in which children, traditionally subordinated by or excluded from civic society, are repositioned as citizens in a democratic society and as partners within the home. Various kinds of support exist for the 'democratisation' of childhood, from historical accounts (Aries, 1962) to international policy (notably, the UN Children's Committee concerned with Article 12 of the UN Convention of Human Rights which stresses the need to respect and listen to children, to act in the child's best interests and not to discriminate against children). In England, the Children Act 1989 marked the shift from treating children as the passive objects of parental rights to

Changing modes of communication

Fourth, the potentially most radical change of all (although still more prospective than actual), is the shift from one-way, mass communication towards more interactive communication between medium and user. The notion of interactivity, a much used but ill-defined term, focuses attention on the relationship between the user and the medium. With 'old' media, standardised content was beamed out to a mass audience and relatively small opportunities for choice were available: people could choose which channel to watch (or listen to) and how much to watch but that was all. However, through the introduction of new media, it has become possible to choose, and control, media contents.

Interactivity incorporates several dimensions which characterise the *changing modes of involvement* with media: the mutuality and exchange of roles involved in a two-way interaction; the degree of user control and management of content and timing of the interaction; individual and asynchronous rather than shared mass experience (Williams et al, 1988). Interactivity also transforms our notion of media content, for unlike any medium before, the dominant data structure of the Internet is flexible, impermanent, non-linear, hypertextual. Internet communication particularly opens up possibilities for reframing the relation between public and private, for constructing individualised lifestyles, and for challenging traditional knowledge hierarchies through various forms of democratic participation.

1.5 ON CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

1.5.1 What's special about the child and youth audience?

The child audience has long had particular priority within the agenda of researchers, the public and policy makers. The intersection of children and the media raises broad questions concerning educational, moral and social development, and these have contributed to policy discussions of the regulation of media technologies and contents for this 'special audience' (Dorr, 1986).

This is not the place to review the extensive and often contentious research literature on children and television conducted over the past forty years or so (see Comstock, 1991; Hodge and Tripp, 1986; Wartella, 1988).[13] However, it is generally acknowledged that coverage of the field is uneven and disjointed, with rather little work to date on young audiences for new media,[14] with poor integration between research on child and adult audiences,[15] and a generally problematic separation between what

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being treated as legal subjects in their own right.

[13]Here we face the opposite problem from that of Himmelweit et al (1958: 1), for whom 'our assignment proved a difficult one because there was no baseline on which to build'.

[14]As Hodge and Tripp (1986:2) note, we 'have been trying to answer the wrong questions in the wrong order, with theories and methods that have been overly partial and inadequate (and generating) remarkably inconclusive and contradictory results'. They were speaking of children and television, and despite high levels of public concern, rather little research thus far has been concerned with children and young people as users of new media, with some notable exceptions (Buckingham, 1993; Kinder, 1991; Seiter, 1993).

Such research as exists tends to confound this public concern. For example, Durkin's (1995) review of the literature shows that computer games tend to be used by children in a social rather than a solitary manner (see also Lindlof, 1991), and that children express more interest in games of mastery and control than in specific aggressive contents; Griffiths (1993) shows that very few children become 'addicted' to computer games; Buckingham (1996) suggests that children are rather rarely frightened of what they see, for they practice self-censorship and understand the reality/fantasy distinction; Neumann (1991) reviews data showing that despite anxieties over audience fragmentation, considerable consensus still underlies media choices.

[15]Most media research focuses on adults, the family or the household, as if the lifeworld of young people may be either assumed from a knowledge of adults/households, or simply tacked onto an existing knowledge of adult society. Yet sociological and cultural studies of these age groups have been fundamentally motivated by the recognition that childhood and youth are not simply stages through which individuals pass but are sociological phenomena in their own right, neither prior to nor separate from society as a whole (e.g. James, et al, 1998).

might be termed the child-centred approach and the media-centred approach to the field.[16]

For the study of new media, children and young people represent an audience neglected by the adult-centred focus on households as the unit of media consumption. Yet children and young people are usually the early users of new media (households with children lead in terms of media diffusion). It is also possible that they are more flexible or creative users, having fewer already-established patterns and routines of daily life; indeed, their main pattern is already that of development over time, and they lack the conceptual baggage of many adults which leads them to fear new technologies and, more generally, the future.[17]

For young people especially, as they are preoccupied with making the transition from their family of origin towards a wider peer culture (and as they are not generally part of the world of work), the media often serve as the very currency through which identities[18] are constructed, social relations negotiated and peer culture generated (Ziehe, 1994). And lastly, of course, young people today are the adult users of the future.

Sociologists of childhood (e.g. Corsaro, 1997) stress that through their daily activities, often unnoticed by adult eyes, children contribute to the construction and reproduction of social structures which have consequences for both children and adults; hence the importance, methodologically, of listening to children's own accounts of their experiences. In their everyday lives children and young people weave together a huge diversity of activities. This interconnection across activities may be more or less *ad hoc*, but it may also be deliberate, as in the intertextual integration of content themes across diverse media forms (e.g. Disney fans; see Drotner, 1998).

The leisure environment affords access to certain kinds of activities and interconnections among activities, depending on social arrangements of time, space, cultural norms and values and personal preferences and lifestyle. Within these arrangements, children and young people (and their families) construct their own local contexts and it is within these that media use becomes meaningful (Qvortrup, 1995). Moreover, every choice is made meaningful by its mutual relation with all others: watching television means something different to the child with nothing else to do compared with the child who has a PC at home or friends knocking on the door.

Thus conditions of access and choice within the child's environment are central to an understanding of the meanings of media use. And conversely, their actions and interactions not only respond to, but also influence, changes in their immediate environment, including their mediated environment.

1.5.2 Distinguishing childhood, youth and adulthood

In this project, we decided to investigate the age range of 6 to 17 years for several reasons.[19] Pragmatically, we wanted to include young children who are still primarily focussed within the family. We also wanted to include older children and young teens as they make the significant transition to peer-culture. And we were interested in older teens as youth culture becomes all-encompassing and adulthood looms.

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[16] The former, in trying to understand how the media affect existing child development theories and family systems, tends to be naive about the distinct forms and contents of different media, while the latter, in trying to understand how children fit into general theories of audiences tends to lack, or reinvent, a theory of child development (LSE Media Research Group, 1995).

[17] In his review of adolescence research, Coleman criticises the widely held notion that 'youth is, as it were, the advance party where innovation or alteration in the values of society are concerned' (Coleman, 1993: 139-40), for this view confuses youth with radical social forces, overstating the break between ordinary young people and the parental generation.

[18] As LaFrance (1996:307) comments, 'it is not surprising that pre-adolescence, the most favourable time for finding oneself and forging an identity, is also the time of greatest enthusiasm for video games...The game creates a space for the possible, and a time for the symbolic and imaginary reorganisation of one's existence, without any impact on the course of real life'.

[19] Himmelweit et al had researched 10-11 and 13-14 year olds. Methodologically, expanded range meant that we needed to consider different methods for younger and older children, as we note below (see also Appendix 1.2).

Theoretically we wanted to be able not only to survey particular age groups but also trace the shifts across key transition points to develop some integration of research on childhood and youth, while also demonstrating the central role played by the media in childhood and youth. In terms of policy relevance, different concerns arise for different age groups (for while in British civil law a person is a minor until the age of 18, the various milestones of development - being allowed to drive, smoke, work, marry, buy a house, see certain categories of film, be held responsible for criminal acts - all imply different, and hence confusing, definitions of 'adulthood').

In this report we face a persistent linguistic problem: how to refer to those from 6-17 years old? As Baiserman and Magnuson (1996) say,

> Youth *qua* youth is a cultural symbol, a population group, an age category, and a definition of what it means to be someone under 22 years old (Baiserman and Magnuson, 1996:48).

There is no single term in the English language to cover people aged between infancy and adulthood. Shall we call them children? Young people? Teenagers? Youth? Kids? Minors? Lacking any consistently appropriate solution to this very real problem of status ambiguity, we generally use the term 'children and young people', or just one or the other of these depending on the end of the age range being referred to. The concept of the child, or the young person, has a tendency also to homogenise those within this category: for this reason, we also try to use these terms in the plural, so as to stress the diversity within any imposed social category.

In order to identify the changing significance of the media within the context of children and young people's everyday lives, our project inevitably touches on many aspects of childhood and youth. Extending well beyond the public anxieties surrounding young people in relation to the media, Qvortrup identifies a series of paradoxes which reveal the deep ambivalence with which our culture regards children and young people:

- Adults want and like children, but are producing fewer and fewer of them, while society is providing less time and space for them;
- Adults believe it is good for children and parents to be together, but more and more they live their everyday lives apart from each other;
- Adults appreciate the spontaneity of children, but children's lives are more and more organised;
- Adults state that children be given first priority, but most economic and political decisions are made without having children in mind;
- Most adults believe that it is best for children that parents assume the major responsibility for them, but, structurally, parents' conditions for assuming this role are systematically eroded;
- Adults agree that children must be given the best start in life, but children belong to society's less affluent groups;
- Adults agree that children must be educated to freedom and democracy, but society's provision is given mostly in terms of control, discipline and management;
- Schools are generally seen by adults as important for society, but children's contribution to knowledge production is not recognised as valuable;
- In material terms, childhood is important for society rather than for parents themselves; nevertheless society leaves the bulk of expenses to parents and children'. (Qvortrup, 1995:9)

Each of these paradoxes tells us something about the locus of concern over young people, and each warns us of the traps into which we as adult researchers are liable to fall. Taken together, they also pinpoint the research agenda, reminding us to balance the views of children and parents.

Hence we consider the relation between parents and children in terms of leisure-related decision making, choice and responsibility on the one hand, and control, discipline and management on the other. We investigate some of the inequalities between more or less affluent households, and the implications of new, media-related expenses for family budgets, and we consider the relation between children's experiences at home and at school, for what they learn at home with new media poses a challenge to the traditional authority of school.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS

1.6.1 Questions and Objectives

The widespread uncertainty about the significance of contemporary changes in both media and childhood and youth makes the present research particularly timely. Research is needed to understand the social conditions and consequences of the changing media environment for children and young people, especially as this relates to their home and school life. At a time of rapid and ongoing change, there is a need for a baseline against which to understand and measure future changes.[20] Pressing research questions include:

- *Access*. As yet, we do not know who is using new media and under what conditions. Which children and young people have access to which media? How do inequalities in media access and use affect opportunities for social participation?

- *Lifestyle*. What do young people think of the variety of media now available to them, what influences their choices, and how do they weave them into the pattern of their everyday lives? How do young people's experiences and views of media relate to those of their parents and teachers?

- *Competition*. Does increased availability and diversity of media mean more media use, or more audience satisfaction? Do some new media displace others or depend on others? What determines interest in particular media genres or contents?

- *Uses of new media*. Is it still meaningful to distinguish between non-mediated and mediated leisure? Do young people now spend long hours engaged in virtual, rather than 'real' relationships? Are British children and young people more concerned with globalised media forms and contents than with media rooted in their national or local context?

- *Social change*? Are new media being fitted into existing social contexts of leisure, play and learning or are they transforming more traditional leisure activities? Do such changes give rise to new opportunities and dangers for young people and their families?

Our focus is on the domestic electronic screen. The meanings and uses of screen-based media are then related to other media, leisure and non-leisure activities both at home and beyond, in order to reveal patterns and to illuminate social trends in the media environment for children and young people.

The specific objectives of the project are:

- to chart the extent to which access to, and the use of, new forms of media and communication technology is already widespread among young people, or whether this remains, particularly for more interactive multimedia uses, potential rather than actual;

- to generate a comprehensive and detailed description of children's current media-related activities and changing patterns of media consumption in order to identify those existing patterns of media use as a baseline with which future changes can be compared;

- to explore uses of media in relation to the material constraints, principles of choice and the role of stratification systems - social class, gender, education, etc. - in creating inequalities in media access, knowledge and use.

1.6.2 Research Design

To achieve these objectives, the theoretical commitment to contextualisation discussed earlier was

[20] On the horizon, yet newer media are poised to effect even more dramatic changes. The Internet may soon become a mass market phenomenon, digital television is just arriving in Britain, with 200+ channels promised for the UK market in the near future, and a variety of other interactive media, from home shopping to virtual reality arcades and cybercafés - all these and more are spreading fast.

matched by a commitment to a multi-method design to allow the combination of qualitative and quantitative data sources (described in detail in Appendix 1.2).

For the most part, the qualitative methods preceded the quantitative, but neither was subordinated to the other. After all, some research questions are only amenable to one or other approach. For other questions, the qualitative data were used to inform the quantitative both by feeding into the survey design and then in the interpretation of the survey data. And for yet others, the quantitative findings of the survey were used to guide the interpretation of the qualitative interviews.

Through this kind of to-and-fro process between data sources, along with much discussion among the research team, we hope to offer findings throughout the report which can be backed up by both quantitative and qualitative methods. When on occasion the two kinds of data appeared to contradict each other, this was taken as a cue to examine the findings more closely in order to construct a more nuanced picture.

Following a series of pilot interviews to test both research questions and research materials, we entered the main qualitative phase, stressing the importance of listening to the views of children and young people themselves, without treating a parental account as superior. This was conducted at the same time as a series of pilot surveys. Throughout the project, we selected respondents from a diversity of backgrounds in order to maximise coverage and representativeness of the findings.

The insights from this qualitative phase - based variously on family interviews, depth interviews and focus groups - were used to construct a detailed questionnaire covering many aspects of the uses, meanings and experiences of media as well as questions designed to map the demographic and lifestyle patterns and contexts of media use. Based on national sampling frames and administered through a face-to-face, computer-assisted interview at home, the main survey was completed by over 1300 children and young people in April/May 1997.

Developing appropriate methods for the various ages that we surveyed and interviewed was a particular concern during the pilot work. Following this, we decided to treat the 6-8 year olds a little differently from the rest of the age group for the main project. They received a simpler form of the survey, with either more restricted response options or fewer questions. In interviews the younger children were invited to draw pictures, to wear and discuss name badges with pictures of media, to talk about picture cards depicting different media and, when at home, to show us their bedrooms and the possessions they were proud of.

Some terminology proved tricky, especially for younger children, as the names for some media are confusing or in flux. For example, getting a clear picture of exactly what technology was used to play computer games was difficult, as our distinctions were not always those of our interviewees. Thus in this report we may sometimes discuss particular media goods while at other times we talk of (and asked our interviewees about) 'computer games' in general. More generally, for several media it was easier to define them according to use.[21]

1.6.3 Research Methods

In brief, the research methods on which this report is based include three phases of data collection as follows (see the Technical Report in Appendix 1.2 for details).

Preparatory phase:

[21] Thus throughout this report, uses (but not ownership) of the personal computer were defined for the interviewees as 'the PC - not for games', to distinguish these from 'playing computer games' (whether on the PC or another medium). Similarly, when we asked about books, we wanted to know about ownership and use of books other than those specifically bought for, or provided by, school. Hence we use - to our interviewees and in the report - the phrase 'books - not for school'. Lastly, we often found it difficult to get our interviewees to be clear about the medium on which they listened to music (radio, cassette player, hi-fi, cd-player, even computer, etc - especially confusing as these increasingly are contained within the same box) and it would interrupt the flow of a conversation, or complicate the survey, to keep checking on the exact medium. Thus the report usually refers just to 'listening to music'.

- a variety of pilot interviews with children in families and school;
- surveys of parents and children, with the broadcasting industry's Television Opinion Panel;

Qualitative phase (interviews with over 200 children and young people):

- group interviews in 13 schools (6 primary, 7 secondary) with approximately 6 same-sex children in each of 27 groups;
- individual interviews with children, and separately, with their parents, in 32 homes;
- interviews with heads of IT in 13 schools;
- a booster sample of Internet users for qualitative interviews (21 in cybercafés and 15 in boarding schools).

Quantitative phase:

- a detailed survey questionnaire administered in a face-to-face, in-home interview to a random location quota sample of 1303 young people aged 6 - 17 years;
- a detailed self-completion questionnaire to the parents of those surveyed (achieved sample n=978);
- a time budget diary for one week from 334 young people aged 9-10, 12-13 and 15-16;

1.7 SUMMARY

The research project presented in this report focuses on the diffusion, uses and significance of new information and communication technologies among 6-17 year olds. It updates an earlier project which investigated the consequences of the introduction of television into British homes by now exploring the role of new media in children's lives.

Despite much speculation, and considerable public concern, little empirical data on young people's access to and use of new media is available. This detailed research project aims to provide a baseline understanding of media use in the late 1990s.

We adopt a broad definition of new media, focussing on the electronic screen as the point of convergence for domestic audiovisual, information and telecommunications services.

Our guiding principles are to explore the changing media environment, placing new media uses in the context of young people's lives, and to listen to the voices of children as well as those of their parents and teachers.

The project uses a variety of research methods, combining a large body of in-depth qualitative interviews with a detailed national survey of children, young people and their parents.

Notes on the Presentation of Findings in this Report

Focus. As our primary emphasis is on the home and on the screen, relatively less attention is paid to young people's activities with non-screen-based media and/or outside the home.

Figures. Where appropriate, figures are rounded to the nearest whole for ease of comprehension. This may lead to rounding error on occasion. In certain tables, figures in bold are above the average for the group, figures in italics are below the average.

Quotations. The use of quotations in this report is designed to illustrate key points and to provide a flavour of media experiences as seen by children and young people. Care has been taken not to quote misleadingly out of context or to present unusual experiences as typical.

Sample sizes. Base sizes vary, depending on whether the data source was the children's survey, the parents' survey or the children's diary. Measures derived from combinations of variables may involve only a subset of the sample. All data have been screened for outliers.

Statistical analysis. As a general analytic strategy, we divided our respondents according to age, gender and social grade (SES), adding in other factors such as region or family composition when appropriate to the question asked.[22] All findings reported as "significant" have been tested using the appropriate procedure ($p<0.05$) unless otherwise stated. Statistical procedures are described briefly in this report: details are available on request.

[22]We would echo Himmelweit et al (1958: xiv) when they note that 'television is used by different children in different ways. In describing television's effects we had, therefore, time and again to consider the way these effects differed according to the ability, maturity, background, and personality of the children concerned. This has not contributed to lightness of presentation, but to gloss over the differential effects of television would have vitiated the whole purpose of the survey.' Moreover, given the concerns surrounding young people and the new media, it may be as important to report the absence of expected differences as to report observed differences.

CHAPTER 2

MEDIA MEANINGS

2.1 OLD AND NEW MEDIA

In this chapter we begin by asking how children and young people regard the media. Which particular media do they see as 'new' and what expectations do they have of them? Do they see 'old' media (such as print media and even television) as in the process of change and, if so, how do they regard these changes? And how are new media related in their eyes to old and familiar media? We explore such questions so as to understand the perspective of children and young people and, to inform our subsequent analysis of how new media are combining with, or even transforming, older media.

The chapter is based on in-depth interviews and group discussions with 6-17 year olds around the UK. Children were asked to generate free associations to particular types of media and were encouraged to make media maps, grouping media in the ways which seemed most natural to them, and then discussing these with us. The metaphors they used to describe, the values they imputed to, and the gender or age stereotyping they associated with, different media allowed us insight into their perspectives on both new and old media.[1]

2.1.1 Differentiating the old from the new

We begin with the observation that, perhaps unsurprisingly, the adult distinction between old and new technologies is not particularly salient to children and young people.

In a 'media mapping' task, they grouped media according to the use they made of them - watching (TV, video, cable/satellite), listening (radio, Hi-Fi) or communicating (telephone, fax machine). PCs, Gameboys, games consoles, multimedia computers were grouped on their own, defined in terms of their technology. The key distinction is that between computer and non-computer-based media rather than old and new, and they are well aware that we are increasingly getting 'chips with everything'.

While the notion of 'old' seemed awkward, 'old-fashioned' is a term they use more readily:

> Uh, books look a bit old-fashioned. And the newspapers might be old-fashioned...Um magazines a little bit I think so and comics and the things that are new are the camcorders and the telephone a little bit old-fashioned and computers and camcorders are new, the mobile phone, the computer, the Gameboy, the television is a little bit old-fashioned, a tiny little bit. And the video's new and the hi-fi's a little bit new and the CD-Rom thing that's a little bit new. The radio's old-fashioned I think. The printer - the printer is just like where you type things?... Well that's a little bit new and satellite dishes are new and modem, the Internet link is new. And (pause) that's it.
>
> (9 year-old girl living in a working-class family)

This nine-year-old girl has a ready explanation for why books are 'old-fashioned', associating things that are 'old' with fragility, disintegration, heaviness and the burdensome need for care.

> People have been reading them for hundreds of years. We've got a dictionary in school and it's got more than a thousand pages and I think it's two thousand

[1] Bartlett (1932) introduced the term 'anchoring' to describe the social psychological process whereby culturally unfamiliar objects are made familiar and comprehensible by relating them - directly or metaphorically - to well-known objects.

three hundred and fifty pages in it I think but um the pages are nearly all ripped like you've got to be dead, dead careful with them and it's hundreds of years old. And because some books are very, very tatty and even if you touch them you could break them that's all they're from hundreds of years ago. And that's it.

She contrasts this to looking at the screen and pressing buttons, which is 'new':

Interviewer: How's it different to playing on the Playstation which you said is a new thing?
S: 'Cos it gives you like - look at the screen. And reading things 'cos sometimes you just think... You just look at the screen and press buttons and that's it. And you couldn't get a computer or playstations hundreds of years ago like um in the eighteenth century something like that. You couldn't get them yet.
(Working-class girl, aged 9)

Other children are just as ready to fit 'old' media into their account of the past:

Interviewer: Can you explain to me why you chose those as being old-fashioned?
J: The newspaper you can buy every day and it wouldn't be electricity so you could have buyed it in the old times, and the TV was invented in black and white a long time ago.
(Middle-class boy, aged 7)

2.1.2 Familiar media appear 'transparent'

However they may define or exemplify the terms 'new' and 'old', these media are clearly distinguishable in the *way* that children talk about media. Established media are scarcely noticed *qua* technologies or consumer goods, being seen primarily as a means to an end. Thus the hardware of familiar media (e.g. television or video, radio or hi-fi) are treated as if they are 'transparent': children 'see through them' to their contents and may confuse the means of delivery.

Hence in interviews, younger children especially confuse television and video so that it is difficult to tell which they are talking about. In another case, an interview about a favourite book proceeded some way before the interviewer realised the child was talking about an audiotape of the book. And as we discussed in the previous chapter, the technologies by which music is accessed are so little noticed that for the most part we gave up on the attempt to determine whether children were talking about radio, records, compact discs, or tapes. The terminology may also be blurring, as we observed from the three year old sister of one interviewee who asked, when looking for the remote control for the video recorder, 'where's the mouse, I want to save the programme'.

On the other hand, the newest technologies, although they might be desirable in terms of conspicuous consumption (see Chapter 7), often appeared as goods in search of purpose, lacking a content to which many children and young people can relate. When we discussed their ideal bedrooms of the future, for example, several children were keen to have a fax machine, but had little thought of whom they might send a fax to or why. While a fascination with technology for technology's sake - on the part of parents as well as children - may lead to purchase, it is only the association of such goods with desirable contents or uses which can make them an integral part of the leisure environment.

2.1.3 The fascination with the new

Why then do children desire goods which as yet have little use in their lives? The association between 'new' and 'expensive' makes goods interesting and covetable:

It's [multimedia computer] got a lot of stuff and it's really expensive and stuff, so that I think that means it's newer.
(Middle-class girl, aged 7)

'New' also has connotations of glamour and excitement. New media belong to them, not to their parents, and are desirable within the peer group as status symbols (mobile phone, multimedia

computer) or objects of conspicuous consumption.[2] Children loved to boast about such possessions:

E:	I've got two computers in the house, I've got Sega, and a Nintendo. No I've got three, Sega, Supernintendo and the normal Nintendo.
Interviewer:	I want to know how many channels you've got on your television sets.
D:	I've got a hundred.
F:	I've got nine.
S:	I've got ninety nine
G:	I've only got four.
P:	I've got a hundred and ninety nine.

(Group of working-class boys, aged 6-7)

What expectations do children have of new media? A class of 12 year-old boys was asked to draw and describe some technological inventions that might be around in the year 2020. They had no difficulty in coming up with a host of different suggestions, but it was the communicative and entertainment possibilities of the media future which interested them most, although more altruistic uses were also appreciated.

Further, they were attracted to the possibilities of both miniaturisation of media hardware (the computer-watch for convenience and portability) and enlargement (wall-size TV for conspicuous consumption and increased effect), as well as to the convergence of technologies (video-phone, television/computer). One saw a role for new technologies in creating aids for the handicapped and alternatives to blood sports: players could stalk and shoot virtual animals in his target room - 'it's animal friendly and there's no pigeon deaths'. Some felt this future was very near:

Interviewer:	Do you think in 2020 that these things will have happened?
C:	I don't think my target room will, but I'm sure the virtual life for the disabled, I think that might because that would be, it'll be a really good idea because all the people who can't walk and talk and so on, can.
D:	Miss I've got something ... a huge teleporter.
Interviewer:	A teleporter would be a possibility you reckon?
D:	Yes because they've already made one twice the size of the school but it can transport like...

(Class of 12-13 year old boys)

There is a sci-fi feel about children's visions of the media future - new technology is a new kind of magic and mystery whose miraculousness adds a dimension of excitement to an otherwise rather drab world.

2.2 CHILDREN'S REPRESENTATIONS OF MEDIA

As the conceptual or metaphorical associations of different media are likely to provide a means by which new media are rendered meaningful, we now explore these associations for each media type, as grouped by the children we interviewed:

- '*things you listen to'* (Hi-fi, radio)
- '*things you communicate with'* (telephone, mobile phone)
- *'things you watch'* (television, teletext, cable or satellite, video recorder, camcorder)

[2]The importance of visual presentation for children and young people is very striking. Thus 'new' is a good thing and 'old' a bad thing particularly if interpreted as being 'unstylish'. Even the details of the pictures of media we used as prompts had enormous impact: rather than responding to these simple outlines as archetypal representations of a technology as we had intended, they but instead focussed on their style, seeing some of them as examples of old-fashioned hardware, especially our pictures of a television and a telephone. The implication is that something quite old could be rendered new overnight if it is repackaged appropriately.

- '*computers'* (TV-linked games machine, PC computer, CD-ROM, Internet)

- '*things you read'* (books, magazines, comics newspapers).

In this chapter, we quote extensively from our interviews with children and young people, as they can convey their views and feelings more eloquently than any adult translation can hope to do.

2.2.1 'Things you listen to'

Music

For music, the form of delivery is almost irrelevant, provided it is ubiquitous (achieved through multiple/portable goods), and the content is popular partly because it can be both intensely in the foreground or comforting in the background.

After about the age of 10-11 for girls and a little later for boys, music, like television, is an integral part of everyday life. Indeed, one might argue that music is the medium which most signifies changes in identity: reaching the age at which they start listening seriously to music is shorthand for gaining an interest in fashion, consumerism, girl/boyfriends, etc. Pop music belongs to the young - they make it, and often only they appreciate it. As noted above, here content so obviously transcends the mode of delivery that talk about music could not be tied to any particular piece of media hardware but moved seamlessly from talk of radio to television to hi-fi and video (and those with access can check out the websites of their favourite stars).

Interviewer:	So you get up in the morning and you turn on the radio in the bedroom and the bathroom, does everyone do that?
R:	Yes I do.
A:	And headphones while I'm eating my breakfast because my Mum don't like it loud.
Interviewer:	Right, and this is on a walkman or something is it?
A:	Yes.
Interviewer:	Does anyone else have their headphones on at breakfast?
C:	I don't have breakfast, I don't eat breakfast. I don't have time.
Interviewer:	Right, does anyone watch TV in the morning?
F:	Yes, sometimes, the *Big Breakfast*.
A:	Yes, or sometimes MTV in the morning.
Interviewer:	Right, so you might watch some TV, and is that the same time as getting dressed, or - ?
F:	Same time as listening to music.
R:	Yes, and sometimes the stereo on and the TV.

(Class of working-class girls, aged 13-14)

In terms of content, music is always changing, and so always 'new', though several of the means of delivery are 'old'. Part of the broad appeal of music is that it can offer an experience of total immersion or just be there as background, to create an ambience for some solitary or social activity.

V:	Because it's music you can dance.
M:	And you can turn it up dead loud until your ears pop.

(Class of working-class girls aged 12-13)

Interviewer:	What about a hi-fi/stereo player, tell me how you feel about it.
H:	Hyper.
W:	Energetic.
V:	Relaxed.
H:	Dance in the mirror
Interviewer:	When you listen to music, do you dance to it?
W:	Aye sometimes.
H:	You just feel it.

R: Sometimes when I go to my bed it takes me to sleep.
Interviewer: When you're listening to music is it sort of, you give your full attention to it or -?
W: No, I just sometimes I'm doing other things.
(Class of middle-class 15-16 year-old girls)

Knowing what music someone likes, like observing their style of dress, is also to know what kind of person they are, even what values they are likely to have. Pop music comes in many different forms - Indie, Chart, Soul, Dance, Hip Hop, Garage, House, Techno - all of which were discussed in our interviews as young people described how they choose among individual bands or stars, each associated with an image, a fashion style, and even a philosophy of life. Young people can buy into any one package or 'mix and match' an individual identity for themselves through a unique mix of preferences.

Interviewer: So you said that music really matters a lot to you...
K: Well I suppose me and my friend really got into music when we were about twelve or thirteen and most of my music now is unheard of and people say 'Who?' and I think 'Yes! It is someone that they haven't heard of''.
Interviewer: Are you into one particular kind of music?
K: I suppose so, just anything that is not ordinary though.
Interviewer: Sort of Indie music?
K: Well it used to be and then it sort of got blasted into the charts. I mean I quite like a lot of the hip hop stuff and I love The Cure and other Gothic and I quite like a lot of old stuff like the 70's, like the Kinks and things but I don't like the Beatles much though.
Interviewer: So you have been giving me the impression that the kind of music that you like is what other people don't like, is that right?
K: Well I suppose so, yes.
(Middle-class girl, aged 16)

For some, pop stars often are aspirational figures with whom they identify - they have 'made it' they are rich, famous yet in other ways 'just like us'.

Interviewer: I'd like to ask you about what you do when you're not at school?
S: Listening to music and the girl who was singing, wishing I could be like her, you know, dead glamorous and all the clothes and all that, fast car. I don't know why though.
Interviewer: But if you could see her - was that on the TV you were listening to?
L: No, no, it was on the radio but I've seen the video and I just wanted to be like her there. I just wanted to be grown up already.
(Working-class girls aged 13)

Media stars set fashions in clothes which in turn become indicators of more than mere lifestyle, suggesting what kind of a person you are, how much fun you will be to with, even what your opinions are likely to be on a whole range of diverse issues.

Interviewer: Who it would be absolutely great to wake up as?
G: Ah yes, brilliant to wake up as Emma out of the Spice Girls. Emma or Melanie.
Interviewer: Alright now tell me why?
G: I just, they're just really good, and I like the clothes that they wear, the shoes, the hair, I like the way that they act. It's just good really... Melanie she's like sporty and she likes to wear track suits and that, Emma she like wears dresses and sandals and that, and she has her hair in pigtails here and all like that... They're nice, they like shopping, like which I do, they like all sorts - what other girls like really.
Interviewer: Right and who would be just awful to wake up as?
G: I think Gary Barlow out of *Take That*, I hate him. I hate all of *Take That*, it would be just horrible to wake up as one of them, oh I hate them... None of our class likes *Take*

That anyway so we ain't really bothered. I just don't like them.
(Middle-class girl, aged 13)

The portability (tapes can be taken anywhere), ubiquity (there are magazines, fashion items and styles of dress, videos, TV programmes, and clubs associated with bands), and affordability of music (pocket money is sufficient to buy a tape) also helps to make it a key social medium. Young people swap tapes, discs or magazines with friends, go to concerts together, watch MTV together, dance with friends in clubs and so forth.

2.2.2 'Things you communicate with'

The telephone

The telephone tends not to be seen as a leisure medium at all, yet is used recreationally, and highly valued, as children get older, partly because of its advantages over face-to-face communication for 'difficult' interactions.

The telephone has a positive image, although this is not associated with its being in any way 'new'. Indeed, its connection with the Internet, for example, is not really appreciated. The pattern of telephone use changes and develops as the child grows older. First they use it occasionally to talk to family (e.g. an absent father or a grandparent). Then they begin to use it more often, and increasingly talk to friends rather than relatives. From simple calls to make arrangements they progress to chat. Increasing interest, and changing focus mark the child's passage to maturity. Above all the telephone is the teenager's thing and it is as something inherently sociable that it has a head start.

Unsurprisingly, free associations to the word telephone commonly produced such responses as: *'Phone your friends and say 'Do you want to go out?''*. The telephone is not generally thought of as a medium, or as a leisure activity: it is a way of arranging leisure (as important but uninteresting as the local bus route or parents giving a lift). Yet for teenagers (especially older girls) it is also used as a form of recreation, and both boys and girls use it as a safe entree into the difficult terrain of girl/boyfriends. For teenagers the telephone is sometimes preferred to face-to- face interaction because, as they see it, it gives them control over difficult social interactions. The following extracts are from discussions with teenagers living in a run-down, violent inner city area:

Interviewer:	(Prompting free associations) Alright what about telephone?
T:	People.
R:	Phone your friends.
T:	Speech.
R:	Phone your friends and say 'Do you fancy going out somewhere, the leisure centre'.
Interviewer:	I mean do you use the telephone a lot?
T:	Yes...because, instead of like walking straight to his house and then they'll say no to your face and you have to walk all the way back.
R:	I phone my neighbour and he lives next door.
Interviewer:	Is there anytime you would prefer to talk to somebody on the phone rather than speak to them face-to-face?
D:	I would prefer the phone like.
Interviewer:	You would, why's that?
D:	Just in case like ... you say something wrong.

(Class of working-class boys aged 12-13)

Interviewer:	Is there anything there on the table that you use that makes you feel sort of powerful, you know, like in control?
K:	Aye the telephone because I can just hang up on them when I want... Say <girl's name> was seeing <boy's name> - she had finished with him, and she phoned me to tell him, and you wouldn't feel embarrassedon the phone but you would telling them in their face.

Interviewer: So you would prefer to talk about some things on the phone that you couldn't actually talk about face to face?
L: You might want to phone to meet a lad or something, on the phone to him and ask to meet at Iceland or something.
(Class of working-class girls aged 12-13)

This wish to hide from, or at least control, face-to-face interaction make some view any future developments of view-phones with horror:

Interviewer: Thinking about the future, what do you think will change?
R: Books will go more on to computers.
S: Telephones will go more to mobiles, maybe with pictures.
Interviewer: Would you like that?
S: No!
R: I'd hate it!
(Class of middle-class girls, aged 15-16)

The telephone has a reassuring image: it has associations with being safe - keeping in touch with family and having a link to those who can help in times of need.

Interviewer: How important is the telephone in all of your lives?
E: Oh it's important.
L: Quite important. 'Cos my auntie lives in Germany -
E: Emergencies.
L: Like it takes about four weeks to get a letter over there. So - telephone you just have to pick up the phone dial the number she answers it and you just tell her what the problem is or whatever.
Interviewer: Do you use the phone a lot?
Chorus: Yeah.
L: I'm always phoning <E> and <P>. (Giggles)
P: Yeah we always phone each other.
E: If someone's had like a house burgled, they can phone the police straight away.
P: And the Fire brigade.
E: I've had my house burgled twice like just here in a week.
(Class of working-class girls, aged 9-10)

However the telephone has some negative connotations. It is considered costly and parents complain if it is used too much. The fact that the telephone (and, potentially, Internet), have to be paid for, sets it apart from electronic activities which, once initial outlay is made, come free.

Mobile phone

Some still think mobile phones are 'for posers'.

G: I just do not like mobile telephones because they're just a waste of money-
R: They go like this, they're crossing the road-
G: Yes hello, can you hear me-
R: - and they get knocked down.
T: And then they get hit over by a bus.
(Class of mixed social grade, ages 12-13)

However, it is also a status symbol, and highly attractive to children.

Interviewer: All right, what about this kind of phone? It's a mobile phone.
S: Great.
P: Great.
H: Excellent, fab.

Interviewer: What's so good about this one then, a mobile phone?
S: You just put it in your pocket.
(Class of middle-class girls, aged 6-7**)**

Most see it as likely to become increasingly important in their lives:

Interviewer: Anything there that you think is going to be much more important when you're an adult than it is now?
B: Telephone.
D: Mobile phone.
N: Mobile phone.
Interviewer: Right, okay. And why's the telephone going to get more important?
N: 'Cause it's a quicker way of communicating.
B: Quicker than letters or something.
D: Quicker than walking, quicker than letters (laughs).
(Class of middle-class girls, aged 12-13)

2.2.3 'Things you watch'

Television

Television provokes two responses. As a medium it is 'boring', meaning that it fills gaps when there's nothing else to do, yet it is essential for just that reason. But as a source of favourite programmes it is 'great'. Television is not new but deeply familiar, but cable/satellite channels are still new, if not hugely interesting but for a small number of channels.

Watching television is not thought of as new or glamorous - it is a pastime in the original sense of the word - something to keep boredom at bay. It is not a challenging activity - it is something you do to unwind, relax, fill the time. Girls in particular associate watching TV with being snuggled up in a comfy chair, lying on the floor, curling up with the cat.

Interviewer: So tell me, what sort of mood do you have to be in to watch television?
A: Well I usually watch television even if I don't want to watch it... I just put the TV on and if there is something that, if I am playing with the dog and if I hear something then I will just look at it and I just have it on just in case. I just sit in my bed and curl up and I turn it on to a channel where I know that there are things on.
(Middle-class girl, aged 11).

Others eat in front of television, do their homework with it on, fall asleep watching it. This is not to say that children do not find television highly enjoyable: they do. However it is a second choice activity - the opportunity of being out and about with friends is always preferred. Children, like their parents, seem to feel there is something wrong about watching too much. Younger children talk of watching too much being bad for you ('It gives you square eyes) and teenagers see it as a 'sad' thing to do ('Haven't you got any friends?').

If I look in the paper and I see a really interesting programme but I want to go outside, so then I switch the TV on and then I mean to watch it just for a minute to see what it's like and then it turns out to be really good and I don't get my time to play outside.
(Middle-class girl, aged 7)

Television can make a bridge between the child's home life and social life with friends if they watch the same programmes when apart and can talk about them when they are together. However, when children/young people have friends round, they may watch television if nothing better materialises, but it is rarely the prime excuse/reason for contact. It's not 'special' enough: the friend could watch at home and it limits social interaction. If the child is truly interested in the content they prefer to watch alone or with another fan and social interaction takes second place - a rarity as friends are the most important things in life.

Teletext

Teletext is discussed by those who use it as a source of varied information, especially fun, a source of good games to play. The youngest children are often unfamiliar with teletext, and those who do know about it are sometimes unimpressed. However even the youngest if they had come in contact with games on teletext could be enthusiastic:

Interviewer:	Have you ever heard of teletext?
Chorus:	Yeah!
T:	Boring
Interviewer:	Nobody likes teletext?
G:	I do
T:	No!
Interviewer:	What do you use teletext for in your houses?
G:	To watch the lottery.
H:	And to see the scores in the football.

(Class of working-class boys, aged 6-7)

In fact we were surprised at the number of older children who spoke of teletext with enthusiasm. They clearly used it and enjoyed the interactive nature of it:

G: When that TV used to be in there I used to use it ever such a lot, like on all the cartoons, it showed pictures of the cartoons on teletext which I thought was really funny... It was Cartoon Network, Tex, Nictex, which is Nickleodeon, they just wanted to get you into competitions and that, and then one thing I did on Nickleodeon about *Rugrats*, I got the whole questions right, and it was really funny.

(Middle-class girl aged 13)

Teletext was associated with many different informational functions, such as television listings, weather reports, news, football results, horoscopes and quiz games:

Interviewer:	What about teletext?
C:	Oh brilliant, that tells you the weather and everything.
S:	Sometimes you can get a teletext with a game on a quiz.
R:	Yes that's good, there was this football quiz. It was like, well it wasn't just football it was sport because it had Damon Hill
C:	It saves you buying a newspaper.

(Class of mixed social grade boys, aged 9-10)

D	You can type on it, you just plug the typing thing in.
H:	If you press 127 it gives you the contents and you can pick like horoscope and that.
J:	And it tells you what's on at the cinemas.

(Class of working-class girls, aged 12-13)

Cable/satellite

While the response to 'television' very rarely provoked mention of particular terrestrial channels, the response to a prompt of 'cable or satellite' frequently produced enthusiastic mention of particular dedicated channels, as well as particular programmes:

Interviewer:	What about cable, satellite, what do you think about that?
T:	Sky TV.
C:	Sky.
L:	Eurosport.
T:	Football.
D:	Films.
P:	Wrestling.

B: Cartoon Network.

(Class of mixed social grade boys aged 9-10)

Favoured cable/satellite channels are: Sky 1, Sky Sports, Nickelodeon, TCC, Disney, MTV, The Cartoon Network and The Box channel. The Box channel is interactive, and enjoyed precisely because of this, for being a kind of electronic juke box which plays your requests. The Cartoon Network fascinated the smallest children, often to the consternation of their parents. The difference between cable and satellite was not really of much interest to most children and the fact that Sky was available on cable channels confused the issue. Once again, their concern was with the content delivered, not the technology.

Interviewer: (Prompting associations) Cable, satellite?
D: Good.
R: Good
S: Good.
T: The cable not that good, but Sky is.
R: What's the difference between cable and satellite then?
T: You haven't got a satellite dish with cable.

(Class of working class boys, aged 15-16)

Many children had memories of family debates over the decision to get cable or satellite. Mothers' aversion to wall-to-wall sports coverage was often mentioned and children are often aware of the cost:

F: My dad's got a programme on Sky, so you, and Sky Sports, so you have to get Sky Sports instead of Movie Channel 'cause he said if he got both it would be too expensive.
D: Yeah, it's like my Mum. We, she said we were only getting cable but we're not going to get like any extras. She said we'd be watching too much.

(Class of middle-class girls aged 12-13)

Children with cable/satellite in their homes are delighted to have it, and would usually also like to have it in their bedrooms. We visited some homes where a fair amount of effort was being put into seeking out technical solutions to the problem of how to get cable or satellite into bedrooms so as to maximise viewing options.

B: Most of the time Dad watches what he wants 'cos he pays for the telly... And sometimes if there is something on Sky that we want to watch - it's often on normal TV that he wants to watch sometimes - and he sits in one of our rooms to watch it and we watch it downstairs.

(Working class boy aged 15)

Other parents are not so accommodating:

Interviewer: Can <C> get satellite on the telly in his room?
Father: No.
Mother: No, we've gone through that, he would like it, but I think that he is too young. I mean he does want it, but he's only 14 and I feel that as a parent I wouldn't want him to watch *Beavis and Butthead* in his room.
Father : He likes it, and I mean I suppose that it is quite funny in parts, but all that I'm saying is that it encourages him to go up to coppers and say ''Up yours!' and so on.
Mother: Well I don't agree with that but I do feel that, I mean I like to know where he is. I don't like the idea of him seeing things which are inappropriate in his room.

(Working-class parents with an only son, aged 14)

Children and young people in families *without* cable or satellite, however are rarely clamouring to get it, although most would not turn down the offer, particularly if they are sports fans. Moreover,

none of those with access to cable or satellite talked of the pleasure of having 40+ channels. Rather they told us that they had identified the three or four which, together with the four terrestrial channels, provided the choices for their viewing. Thus these children choose among seven or eight favoured channels in total, and do not typically explore many more.

Interviewer:	Tell me about cable and satellite - is it good?
R:	Yeah.
P:	What I thought, like when I knew I was going to get it, I thought that there would always be something on, at any time, but like...
G:	There's, on Wednesday's there's like nothing on.
P:	Yeah.
W:	The only channels I watch are like three channels... Nickelodeon... MTV and The Box, and all the others are just like... they don't need to be there really.
T:	So many different repeats.
H:	You have to wait every month before they put on a brand new film and then it's okay.

(Class of middle-class girls, aged 12-13)

Videos

Videos are discussed with great pleasure by both younger children generally and by teenagers particularly in relation to viewing horror films with friends. They are an important resource for young children, who often prefer videos to television, watching them repetitively for their familiar pleasures, and simultaneously pleasing their parents by engaging in a nostalgic and safe activity (such as watching Disney videos). Very young children watch their favourite videos time and again, just as they re-read favourite story books, and presumably acquire visual literacy in the process.

K:	I don't like the TV but I like video recorders.
Interviewer:	Why's that?
K:	I don't know... I watch some of the TV.
Interviewer:	But you prefer to watch a video film than watch a programme on TV?
L:	Yes, because they're longer.
S:	They're not on every day so if you, if you watch them Saturday and then you watch them again, the next week then they're sort of new.

(Class of middle-class girls, aged 6-7)

Watching videos is more often done in the company of friends than watching television. They may have a friend round to watch a video they have just acquired. Although this can be a bit boring for the host child, they get to show off a possession and may acquire status and accrue goodwill (see Chapter 10). Watching videos at 'sleep-overs' in friends' houses, or on Saturday nights also figured largely in children's accounts. This makes watching a video more 'special' than watching television.

Children from as young as nine or ten watch horror videos, which provoke lots of group interaction and emotion. Many boast of this experience, and possibly exaggerate it, as it functions almost as a rite of passage:

Interviewer:	When you think about watching a video what's the atmosphere...
L:	Terror!
	[Laughter].
Interviewer:	Terror, are you into horror videos?
L:	Aye.
Interviewer:	Tell me about it. You know, do you like being terrified?
A:	Yes.
Interviewer:	Well why?
A:	Because like you and your pals and that and you're all like screaming and that, you just get a laugh.
L:	Turn the lights off
	[Laughter].

Interviewer: When you watch a video is it normally alone, or with other people?
D: With other people.
A: You get too scared when you watch it by yourself.
Interviewer: So tell me when you think about wanting to watch a horror video?
L: At the weekend, night time.
Interviewer: Can you tell me any of the titles you've really enjoyed most?
L: *Candyman.*
A: It's good.
F: I can't remember which one it was, but it's *Nightmare on Elm Street*, I think it was 2 or 3.

(Class of working class girls aged 9-10)

Younger children however often fail to make a clear distinction between watching television and watching a video - they focus on the remembered content, and the screen-based delivery is after all the same. Older children are clear about the difference, but conversation slips easily from discussion of videos, to film and television programmes, as clearly it is the content which interests.

Camcorder

Those with a camcorder nearly all see it in terms of the programme, *You've Been Framed*, and so make comic videos of family. They are associated with fun, holidays and some devilment - sneaking up on the unsuspecting:

Interviewer: You'd choose the camcorder for your birthday. What would you do with it?
E: Take it outside. I'll sneak into the sitting room and take photos of mum and dad. And I'll run outside and take photos of everything.

(Working-class boy, aged 7)

Interviewer: Tell me anything that comes in to your head when I say 'camcorder'.
A : Well my mum when we go to Pleasure Fields or Alton Towers she is always filming us. When we went on the log flume she said to us 'Be careful' and we came off soaking and we were on the log for ages and she said 'Where on earth are they?' and you could hear it on the video. And she makes lots of jokes up and I like the family videos.

(Middle-class girl, aged 11 years)

2.2.4 'Computers'

TV-linked games machines

Playing computer games was associated with feelings of exhilaration, excitement and mastery, of being in control. The enjoyment came from meeting a challenge. This could be achieved through many different kinds of game - from violent fighting games, simple platform games like *Sonic*, or more complex and creative games like *Sim City*.

Interviewer: (Prompting free associations) So this one is a games console, Play Station... What does it make you think of?
R: *Doom*.
T: *Discworld.*
P: *Doom, Discworld, Made For Speed.*
Interviewer: How does it make you feel, What feelings?
R: Happy.
T: Excellent.

(Class of mixed social grade boys, aged 12-13)

The interactive nature of the enjoyment was central. While television was equated with being passively entertained, playing with a games machine was about 'controlling things', pitting yourself against the machine and trying to win. Particularly with boys their engagement with the computer was a very

physical one: they loved games involving fast reactions. Children have to concentrate hard on a computer game and they can become completely absorbed in it. Younger girls are often just as enthusiastic:

Interviewer:	Let's say you get home from school and you start, would you play right up till mmm- when?
E:	I don't know. Half three - four o'clock. Half an hour and that.
K:	I've got a Sega.
Interviewer:	And how long do you play for?
K:	About three hours.
Interviewer:	Three hours? Really?
N:	I do, and sometimes I play more.
Interviewer:	Why do you keep playing so long?
K:	I don't know it's just interesting.
N:	'Cos it's good fun.
Interviewer:	What's so interesting?
L:	'Cos like you get to control people and things.
K:	You make them run and get things and that.

(Class of working class girls, aged 9-10)

Older children however talked of growing out of computer games - total absorption is a phase they go through when they first get their games machine, when they get a new game, or when they are a certain age.

Personal computer

The key to understanding children's reactions to computers (see also Chapter 7) is the fact that the very term 'computer' for most children is synonymous with the computer games machine. Hence the most striking thing is the association, particularly for boys, between computers *in general* and play and fun. Although 'ordinary' PCs are associated with work and school, multimedia computers in particular are associated with games, enjoyment, status and glamour. Those who are interested in computers may be fluent in computer jargon, but some did not really know what the terms exactly meant. 'Rams', 'Pentiums', 'the Internet', etc. are counters in the game of conspicuous consumption.

There was however an important gender difference - both young girls and boys like computers. Boys' enthusiasm lasts, but after about 10-11 girls turn away and their attitude becomes at once more serious, work-oriented and less confident. Teenage girls talk of computers in much the same way as they talk of books - they are too much effort and not enough fun (see Chapters 7 and 8).

> Boys play football at school... and then when they get home they're too tired out to play football so they just go on the computer.
>
> (Middle-class girl, aged 11)

CD-Roms are universally thought to be fun, even though they are mainly first encountered through the school. They are felt to be much more convenient than looking things up in books or encyclopaedias. Although some complain that the games are not as good as those on dedicated game machines, CD-Roms are seen as combining the pleasures of games with a fun way of getting information which combines words with pictures and which gets quickly to the point.

And while the idea of the Internet is felt to be exciting, most children have as yet no personal experience of it and thus have only a sketchy notion of what it might enable them to do. Children are most likely to have become aware of it by noticing that adverts and programmes on television etc now advertise their Internet address.

Interviewer:	Have you ever heard of a modem?
L:	No.
D:	No.
M:	Yes.
P:	No.
Interviewer:	The Internet, heard of it?

P: No.
D: No.
K: Yes, you can, if it's on your computer you can erm ... if you went on holiday into America and you go back home and contact them on the computer if you've got their address.

(Class of middle-class girls, aged 6-7)

Although most often put in the 'computer' group, when children described the Internet, it is clearly as a communicative technology that it made an impact. The attraction of the Internet is the possibility of a world wide circle of contacts with people with like interests. However cybercafé culture is an interesting development (see Chapter 9). If it persists after Internet access becomes cheaper and/or more widespread, it will be yet another indication of the attraction of real social contacts. It may well spread in the future and may provide an alternative kind of club, but virtual friendships seem unlikely to replace real life friends.

2.2.5 'Things you read'

Books

Books aren't trendy.

(Middle-class girl, aged 10)

Books are widely seen as old-fashioned, boring, frustrating, and on their way out. Books are what your parents want you to do. Books are what you read at school. They are associated with being lonely, indoors, separated from friends. Exceptions to this very negative view are found among younger children, especially girls, among fans of specific genres such as horror, and for specific times of day, particularly bedtime. This suggests that books will survive in children's leisure as a more specialist medium with particular niches rather than the widespread interest of most screen-based, visual media.

Interviewer: What is the most boring thing on the table?
P: It's got to be the books.
Interviewer: Right, what is so boring about the books?
P: You open the pages and 'No I'm not reading that'. There's too many pages.
W: And there's hardly no pictures.
T: The writing's really small.

(Class of working-class, 15-16 year-old boys)

Interviewer: Books. Why are they your most boring thing?
A: Well because I don't really enjoy reading books very much.
J: It's too long. It gets boring half way through it.
A: Yes sometimes I get a little bit bored with reading because I think I'm just like... at home like, if I'm reading something I think I'm missing out on something, because I'm just reading my book and everyone else is doing something different.

(Class of mixed social grade, 9 year-old boys)

Interviewer: Books, what do you want to say about that?
T: Words.
R: Writing.
Interviewer: Words, writing, how does that make you feel?
T: I don't like books really - because I don't like reading.
S: I can enjoy reading sometimes but sometimes it gets boring.
Interviewer: When do you enjoy it then?
S: Mainly when I go to bed, like say I can't get to sleep so I just read a book and then I fall asleep.

(Class of boys from mixed social backgrounds, aged 12-13)

Books, we were told, particularly by boys, are too long, take too much effort and they don't always make it clear from the outset exactly what you will be getting - you have to wait and see. They have too many words and don't get to the point, the action is too slow, and there are no pictures. There are of course a few children and young people for whom reading books was pleasurable. Those who read for pleasure are usually middle-class children, girls or younger children for whom being able to read is a novel accomplishment.

H: They're great because you can read them in your head, but I don't like reading when my little brother's around because he's shouting all the time and I can't concentrate on the words.
L: It's at bed time we read books.
Interviewer: Right, what did you want to tell me, <B>?
B: Well I love those kind of books because I've got one and it's a chapter book and sometimes read it at bed, it's great fun, it's got lots of giant stories in it.
(Class of middle-class girls aged 6-7)

Yet even amongst those who class themselves as fans of books, the association between boredom and 'writing books' and between excitement and 'pictures' creeps in:

A: Well, I like information books, especially about worms and snakes and things because I like snakes and my favourite snake is the cobra I think. And especially information books because they give you lots of information about them and they have lots of good colourful pictures and they give more detail than writing stories and they are a bit more exciting I think.
Interviewer: So, you are telling me that for you it is informational books. But story books you are not so keen on?
A: No, because mostly you turn the page and it is a double page like 'Oh my gosh' and once there is a picture it is a little bit more exciting and but I don't like reading story books very much.
(Middle-class girl, aged 11)

Certain genres, horror and adventure stories, are, nevertheless, mentioned with general approval by older children:

Interviewer: So what sort of book would you read?
G: Sort of like horror.
S: Adventure.
T: Adventure like say spooky.
G: Ghosts.
P: I like, read *The Rats*. My dad's got *The Rats*.
Interviewer: *The Rats*. Who's it by?
P: Steven King, I think.
(Class of mixed social grade boys, aged 12-13)

However, as this class of 12 year-old boys continued their discussion, the conversation quickly swung from those few books they identified as enjoyable to film and video versions. Our interviews show that horror in particular is anchored to videos or films, not to books, which may explain why children do not seem to generalise their enjoyment to include other kinds of reading. Indeed, interest could be sparked off by seeing the film, but this did not always carry the child through the first few pages of the book.

S: *Mice and Men.*
G: Aye that's good.
Interviewer: Did you read that at school?
G: Aye, in English.
T: Watch it on video now.
Interviewer: Have you ever watched a film that's been a book, or a book that's been a film?
G: Aye, they always change the words though.

Interviewer:	Which ones?
G:	*Watership Down.*
S:	*Mice and Men.*
P:	*The Rats.*
Interviewer:	Has that been a film as well?
Interviewer:	You would rather watch the film then than read the book?
G:	Because you know what's happening-
S:	Because you can actually see them things -
T:	- what they do.
G:	You get the whole picture of what's happening in a film.
S:	As well, in a book it's going to take much longer, it could be days or weeks.

There was at least one boy who stood up for books:

P:	You get like, the book goes into details but the film doesn't.

These 12 year-old boys also made an exception for game-books, in which the 'reader' is an active protagonist in a way reminiscent of narrative-based interactive computer games. The enthusiasm of the group came over clearly as they talked:

Interviewer:	What's a game-book?
G:	A game-book will be like you start a page and you can go -
S:	Yes it says like turn to page 167, so you can look -
G:	And you can die and you can fight in it and everything...
T:	*Flight of Fantasy* books. They're about that thick and you've got to roll dice for it.
S:	You sap your skill and stamina and all that and you get -
G:	And you have to get an opponent and beat them.

(Class of mixed social-grade, 12-13 year-old boys)

Such books represent a fundamental change in the whole reader/ writer relationship. As game-book readers, children are able to influence the direction of the plot. Reading is no longer exclusively about entering into the writer's world. But with these notable exceptions, there seemed to be a general consensus particularly amongst most older children that books are on their way out.

Magazines

Unlike books, magazines (and comics) are very popular, undermining the sense that it is print itself, rather than books in particular, which children often dislike. But magazines and comics allow for both specialist and up-to-date interests and a casual approach to use which is less easy with books, and of course they also have pictures.

Girls, once more, are particularly keen. Magazines are seen as contemporary and on the child's side.

Interviewer:	*Bunty*, why? Why's that the most new?
F:	Because it just kind of seems not old-fashioned or anything, it's more (pause) now.

(Middle-class girl, aged 7)

Of course pictures are a major feature and the reading component is relatively unchallenging. Children talked of dipping in and out of this type of reading, while they listened to music or talked with friends.

S:	I like reading magazines and listening to that in my bed.
C:	Really great.
H:	I like *Twinkle* ones, *Bunty* ones, *Girl Talk* ones, *Pony* ones, *Puppy in their Pocket*, *Teddy*-

(Class of middle-class girls aged 6-7)

The interest of specialist magazines (football, computers or cars) had attractions for a number of boys. They helped them keep in touch with the latest news and there was the additional attraction of posters:

Interviewer:	Alright, now magazines?
J:	*Match.*
P:	That's football.
A:	*Rangers,* because there's a Rangers comic.
P:	*Celtic View*.
A:	*Rangers News* because I like catching up with all the details of what's happened.
J:	And the posters.

(Class of mixed social grade boys aged 9-10)

However at least one older boy talked enviously of the girls' lifestyle magazines:

Interviewer:	What about magazines?
A:	Magazines suck...
D:	There's no boys' magazines that's what really sickens me. The boys' ones, the magazines for boys are all on a specific thing like football or cars ... you never get this thing for boys that are like the ones that the girls get. It's kind of like giving you information about - like streetwise and so on sort of thing. Street cred.
Interviewer:	Do you think you would like a magazine like that for boys?
D:	Aye.
A:	Aye, lasses or something in it.

(Class of mixed social-grade, 12-13 year-old boys)

Newspapers

To the extent that children read newspapers, they make almost no association with the news: rather newspapers are seen as a specific way - only liked on occasion - of reading about sport and other kinds of popular culture.

Indeed, newspapers are rarely spontaneously mentioned by children as a medium which engages them, although, when prompted, some mention the cartoons with pleasure and some of the older children, particularly boys, show interest in the sports pages. Once again pictures and puzzles, rather than print seemed for most the key.

B:	They are so boring.
A:	Absolutely boring.
L:	I like the children's bits.
P:	I like the game.
S:	<R> loves them... She always heads for the cartoon bits.
F:	I like them because it's very difficult words and because you can read them for ages and ages, and I that like seeing what's going on everywhere because it's good.

(Class of middle-class girls, aged 6-7)

Interviewer:	(Prompting free association) The daily newspaper?
D:	Boring.
P:	Boring.
T:	Interesting articles. Page 3 (Laughter)
D:	Aye, in The Sun.
J:	Sports section.
D:	Aye, in The Star.

(Working class boys, aged 15-16)

Comics

'Comics' in children's eyes cover very different kinds of publications, and therefore provoke very different kinds of reaction:

Interviewer:	Alright. Comics?
K:	(Enthusiastically) Yes!
P:	Rubbish.
K:	*Beano, Dandy.*
W:	*2000 AD, Scouts*.
T:	There's the *X Men*.
W:	*X Men, X Factor, Excalibur* everything like that.
D:	*Postman Pat.*

(Class of mixed social grade boys aged 12-13)

There is an overlap with 'magazines', with some preferring this label for the football publications and others happy to call them comics. However there is for older children a feeling that comics are babyish, only for the youngest age groups:

Interviewer:	And comics?
A :	Errm, I don't have comics at all I haven't had any comics since I was about seven because I don't read them.

(Middle-class girl, aged 11)

2.3 MEDIA PREFERENCES

We explore children and young people's media preferences in a variety of ways throughout this report. In this section, we consider what they would miss most, of a long list of 16 media goods, and what they would most like to get for their next birthday. Having discovered these to be good questions in interviews, we incorporated both into the survey.

2.3.1 Which media would children miss most?

Television is far and away the medium that children say they would miss most (see Table 2.3a).

INSERT TABLE 2.3a HERE

Almost half (45%) of all children make this choice. Interview after interview contained expressions of horror at the very idea of losing the television set.

G:	What I'd miss? I think it's the TV... Because it has broken before and I really missed it.
Interviewer:	Did you, what happened, what did you do instead?
G:	I just had to come downstairs and watch it, so like I do sometimes like going up in my room and watching it when I've [tidied]. Yes I had to come down here or I had to read a book or something.

(Middle-class girl, aged 13)

The nearest rival is the sound system (hi-fi or stereo), but this is named by only 13%. All other pieces of media equipment are named by fewer than one in ten children.[3] Girls are twice as likely to name books and three times as likely to name the telephone as the thing they would miss most. They are also more likely to name a hi-fi. Boys on the other hand are more than twice as likely to name a PC

[3] If we consider in each case only those children who actually had the piece of equipment in the home (thus taking out of consideration all those who did not identify an object simply because they did not have access to it) there are no really major differences. Television is still overwhelmingly identified as the most likely to be missed. It is however interesting to note that PC's with CD-Rom drive are twice as likely as PC's without CD-Rom to be named as the thing children would miss most.

of any sort and more than four times as likely to name a TV-linked games machine.

There are also age-related differences. Television is most likely to be missed by those between 9 and 14, and the same is true for cable/satellite television. Hi-fis and the telephone are almost three times as likely to be named as the thing they would miss most by young people aged 15-17. The youngest children are as likely to name a PC without a CD-Rom drive as they are PC with one, but older children are much more likely to name a PC as the thing they would miss most if they have a multi-media computer. Finally, the youngest children, if they had such equipment available in the home, are by far the most likely to say they would miss a TV-linked games machine and a Gameboy.

There are no startling differences between the choices of middle-class and working-class children, although there is a tendency for children from working class families to be more attached to hi-fis and TV-linked games machines.

2.3.2 Which media would children most like for their next birthday?

We also asked children which, out of a list of sixteen media items, they would like to have for their next birthday (see Table 2.3b). Top of the list, at around a quarter, is a personal computer of some sort; this is wanted by more than twice as many as want any of the other items. Next most frequently selected is the mobile phone (by 11%) and a TV-linked games machine or a hi-fi (by 10% in both cases). Only 7% would choose a television.

Interestingly, a PC without CD-Rom is almost as often chosen as one with CD-Rom, and possibly this reflects ignorance of the difference. Certainly younger children and children from working-class families whose parents are less likely to be familiar with computers are more likely to choose a PC without a CD-Rom drive.

If we consider only those who do not have access to each piece of equipment anywhere in the home (Table 2.3b), the choice of the PC is even more striking: a third who do not have one anywhere in the home chose a PC of some sort as what they most wanted. There are no differences between boys and girls, or between children from middle-class or working-class families. Age however does have an influence. Desire for a PC is at its peak amongst 9-11 year-olds and 15-17 year-olds are least enthusiastic.

Boys are four times as likely to choose a TV-linked games machine if there was not one in the house. Here interest peaked between the ages of 9 and 14, falling off sharply thereafter. Mobile phones are more likely to interest girls and interest increases steadily with age.

INSERT TABLE 2.3b HERE

In Table 2.3c we consider those who do not have the piece of equipment in their own rooms, but do have access to it elsewhere in the home. This gives some insight into the proportion of children who are interested in personal ownership of the equipment. For example, slightly more chose a television set and almost as many chose a mobile phone. Girls are significantly more likely to want their own television set, but there is no significant difference in the numbers of children from different age bands or social classes making this choice.

Once again, boys are much more likely to want their own TV-linked games machine and interest is at its height amongst the youngest children. Mobile phones on the other hand are of more interest to 15-17 year-olds and girls.

INSERT TABLE 2.3c HERE

2.4 FROM PRINT TO SCREEN?

Interviewer:	(Prompting free associations) I don't want the obvious things, I want mostly feelings or something like that. Games Console, Play Station?
D:	Electric.
T:	Good.
S:	Exciting.

P: Your hair's sticking up.
Interviewer: Shelf of books?
T: Boring.
P: Boring.
S: Literature.
D: Dumb.

(Class of working-class boys, aged 15-17)

There has been considerable public concern over the possible displacement of reading by screen media (see Chapter 6). However, something more than a simple notion of displacement seems necessary if we are to explain this dissatisfaction with books. There is evidence of a restlessness amongst children and an appetite for active participation which makes books seem uninteresting and inaccessible. Few seem to find the investment of time and effort worthwhile. It is not however simply an aversion to the printed word: comics and magazines, as we have seen, remain popular.

The balance between the visual and print media as conduits for information and sources of pleasure seems to have clearly swung towards the visual as a result of the new technologies. This suggests a shift away from the skills needed to read extended text with pleasure towards skills for the interpretation of visual material. For example, a conversation about the attraction of horror movies leads this working class boy, not an academic high flier according to his parents, to discuss film techniques for building suspense:

Interviewer: What do you think it is attracts young people to horror movies?
S: I think the thrill of them.
Interviewer: Yeah.
S: I was, um, learning about them in school, the drama and how they make them and all that. Like they keep you watching by like doing twists and going into something so that you want to see what happens in one story, now the other thing comes on after it and then cuts into something else and they cut back and they keep on doing that. Also you don't know what you what you're going to have next.

(Working class boy, aged 15)

A few children are exploring the potential of camcorders and learning to make their own films. This teenage girl would like a camcorder for her birthday, and although her family don't own one, she has access to one at a friend's house and has tried her hand at film making:

G: I love camcorders.
Interviewer: So is this at school that you've been doing it?
G: No at my friend's house. But we just can't seem to get it right, we keep on doing it wrong for some reason, we just don't know what we've done wrong but it's wrong for some reason. We just either end up laughing or saying speeches wrong, saying the words wrong, or missing out something, or saying goodbye when someone has got to read the other bit of the news.

(Middle-class girl, aged 13)

This busy girl, who confesses she hasn't the time to read and whose parents don't take a daily newspaper, uses television as her main source of news and as a spur to family debate. She shows herself to be more than capable of making an informed choice of viewing:

K: I do spend quite a lot of time in my room...But I often if I go downstairs and sort of catch the 10 o'clock news and we can start having massive debates about things... Mum will be doing her cross stitch and she sort of sits there doing that and I will come down after doing homework to watch the news. I like to have a good debate, me and my Granddad used to do it, he got me into it, so me and my dad will discuss current affairs and whatever is going on really.
Interviewer: Which news programmes then do you watch? Is it always the 10 o'clock?

K: Well it is usually when I have finished my work but I do sometimes catch it at 6pm after dinner, or a current affairs programme. I like *Cutting Edge*, that is quite good, and *Panorama*, as long as it isn't about Princess Di or something, just any current issue.

Interviewer: So if you had to describe TV to a Martian, what would you say?

K: Erm, television is what your grandparents say is completely unnecessary and in their day they found other entertainment and you get some little kids saying that it is the best thing since sliced bread because of the kids programmes. But I would say that it has got a load of crap on it but it has got some good stuff in it. I mean you know when you are ill, and you sit and watch daytime TV and think 'Oh my God, what is this?'. But it is really quite educational, because I mean if you don't get time to read then you can learn quite a lot from TV, but then again there is a load of crap on it.

(Middle-class girl, aged 16)

Even young children consistently show signs of being able to maintain a degree of critical distance from their favourite programmes and of being encouraged by some of them to think about serious issues. These nine-year-old girls are devoted to their cartoons, but they distinguish between good and bad and are progressing to appreciate programmes which have something to say about 'normal human beings'. They are also keen to communicate that they know the difference between fiction and reality - 'it's not true but'.

Interviewer: Alright. What's so good about the Cartoon channel?

K: It's got loads of good cartoons.

A: Some of them are babyish.

K: It's got Porky Pig on, Daffy Duck.

A: Mickey Mouse... it's got Gargoyles on.

S: I was bored with Gargoyles.

A: I mainly don't watch cartoons I mainly watch things like you know like real like on programmes on TCC that've got like normal human beings just like living their lives and stuff and it's good that. It's not true but....

(Class of working-class girls, aged 9-10)

This group of children, from an inner city area then entered into a lively dispute about the educational potential of soaps:

A: In *EastEnders* now Phil's like getting an alcoholic -

L: That's what everyone thinks

A: - and er if somebody was an alcoholic and in the acting if he finds his way out of it if like, somebody in real life was an alcoholic and watched *Eastenders,* watching him get out of it, they could do the same. I know you normally find out that information like on Chat Shows like but you can get it from soaps as well if you just see them acting -

L: What happens if somebody was smoking and they die? Some people could learn how serious it could be so that would make them calm down more like.

Maybe new skills are being learned, maybe old skills are being lost. While in this chapter we can only open up questions about how children engage with different media, we pursue some of these questions at least in the chapters to follow.

2.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter we draw on depth interviews and focus groups with children and young people to discover how they think about a range of media, and to understand what the distinction between old and new media means to them. When asked explicitly to classify media goods, children separate off computer-related media as 'new' from 'things you listen to', 'things you communicate with', 'things you watch' and 'things you read', even though for adults these latter categories also contain so-called 'new media'.

Yet what is new for children is implicit in the way that they focus on the technology of newly-available media, being enthusiastic about the goods themselves but vague about their uses. In contrast, familiar media are almost invisible and hence functionally substitutable as technological goods, as children 'see through them' to their contents while being vague about the hardware. Thus while they are very open to new media, such goods can only be meaningful as 'things to show off with' until incorporated into daily practices.

Children are highly sensitive to the style or look of media goods, and will dismiss a relatively 'up-to-date' object as 'old-fashioned' and therefore as 'boring' if it physically resembles previous media. But they are very interested in media which involve miniaturisation, enlargement or multiple functions.

We asked what children and young people would most miss, of the media they already have, and what they would most like to get for the next birthday, of the media they do not already have. Television was far and away the medium children would most miss, with nearly half choosing this option, and music coming far behind as the next most missed medium (13%). Girls are more likely to miss books and the telephone, while boys are more likely to miss computers and games machines. For their next birthday, the most popular ‘gift’ would be a personal computer (24% overall, but as many as 1 in 3 of those without a PC at home), followed by mobile phone or TV-linked games machine. Among those who do not have a television in their bedroom, 16% would like one, and PCS and mobile phones remain popular.

We end by suggesting discussing the shift in meaning which makes books seem uninteresting and inaccessible to most children. This is not simply an aversion to print, for comics and magazines remain popular. Contrasting talk of books with talk of screen media it would seem that the balance between the visual and print media as conduits for information and sources of pleasure has clearly swung towards the visual, presumably in part because of the arrival of new technologies.

TABLE 2.3a

Percentages choosing as the thing they would miss most (Base: all having medium)

	ALL	ALL WHO HAVE EQUIPMENT SOMEWHERE IN HOME								
	1303	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
			Boy	Girl	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	MC	WC
Television	45	45	45	45	43	**49**	**51**	38	49	43
Hi-fi/stereo	13	14	11	**18**	9	8	11	**27**	11	**17**
TV-linked g.machine	8	13	**18**	4	**25**	14	9	4	9	**15**
Telephone	7	8	4	**12**	3	3	9	**15**	9	7
Cable	5	11	13	9	6	19	12	7	13	10
Radio	5	5	4	6	6	3	4	5	3	**6**
Shelf of books	4	5	3	**6**	5	**7**	4	4	5	4
PC with CD-ROM	3	11	16	7	10	13	11	12	12	11
PC w/out CD-ROM	2	6	9	4	**12**	7	4	2	6	6
Video	2	2	2	2	**4**	3	2	1	1	**3**
Gameboy	2	5	5	4	**19**	5	1	0	4	5
Walkman	1	2	2	2	**4**	0	2	1	1	2
Teletext	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	**2**	**2**	1
Camcorder	0	1	1	1	**2**	0	0	0	1	1
Mobile phone	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	**3**	0	**2**
Modem	0	1	0	3	0	0	**4**	0	1	0

TABLE 2.3b

Percentages choosing as thing they most want

	ALL	ALL WHO DO NOT HAVE EQUIPMENT IN HOME								
	1303	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
	%		Boy	Girl	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
PC	**24**	**35**	34	35	34	**41**	36	27	35	34
with CD-ROM	14	17	17	17	13	19	19	17	19	16
without CD-ROM	10	13	15	12	16	16	14	8	9	16
Mobile phone	11	11	8	14	8	8	10	16	9	12
TV-linked g.machine	10	13	**21**	5	9	**18**	**15**	4	13	9
Television	7	#	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hi-fi/stereo	10	5	3	#	0	0	0	0	#	0
Camcorder	8	9	8	10	10	9	8	9	11	8
Gameboy	6	5	9	4	**12**	9	4	2	7	7
Video	5	11	#	#	0	0	0	0	#	**9**
Modem	5	6	6	5	1	6	**7**	8	7	5
Cable	5	6	**9**	3	4	2	7	**11**	7	5
Walkman	4	7	5	10	**5**	8	6	#	11	6
Telephone	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Shelf of books	2	1	0	**1**	#	0	0	0	0	1
Radio	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	#	**2**
Teletext	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

Note: # = cell sample size too small for reliable reporting

TABLE 2.3c

Percentages choosing as thing they most want

	ALL	ALL WHO HAVE EQUIPMENT ELSEWHERE BUT NOT IN BEDROOM								
	1303	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
	%		Boy	Girl	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
PC	**24**	14	**18**	11	11	12	16	15	13	15
with CD-ROM	14	7	15	14	7	3	7	9	7	7
without CD-ROM	10	5	8	6	6	4	6	4	4	6
Mobile phone	11	13	10	15	13	7	11	19	14	11
TV-linked g.machine	10	11	**20**	4	16	**9**	**8**	9	11	10
Hi-fi/stereo	10	8	8	8	3	9	16	11	9	7
Camcorder	8	4	3	5	6	7	0	3	7	2
Television	7	16	10	**21**	18	15	17	13	14	19
Gameboy	6	6	7	6	**14**	10	4	0	6	7
Video	5	6	5	7	3	3	8	**12**	5	7
Modem	5	3	2	3	#	#	#	#	3	#
Cable	5	4	5	4	2	4	5	**5**	4	4
Walkman	4	7	6	9	**5**	5	12	#	4	10
Telephone	3	4	2	5	4	4	3	3	3	4
Shelf of books	2	1	0	2	3	0	1	0	2	1
Radio	1	1	1	1	2	1	0	0	1	1
Teletext	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1

Note: # = cell sample size too small for reliable reporting

CHAPTER 3

USES OF MEDIA

In this chapter, we examine how children and young people use the media - their preferences amongst media and the satisfactions they associate with each - in order to illuminate the choices children and young people make within a multi-media environment. We will look at four broad areas:

- the kind of gratifications children and young people derive from media
- favourite types of content, and which media cover these interests best
- modes of engagement with different media
- the relation between media, social identity and values.

3.1 MEDIA USES

3.1.1 Uses and gratifications

Different media provide different kinds of gratification, and this guides the choice to use a particular medium on a particular occasion. We asked children and young people to tell us which medium they choose (out of 11 possibilities) when they want excitement, relaxation, the opportunity to learn about something, escape from boredom or escape from the feeling of "being left out" (see Table 3.1a).

Most striking is the dominance of television. No other medium attracts so many for such a variety of satisfactions. Television ranks first (with playing computer games a close second) when children are looking to escape boredom. When they don't want to feel left out, it is marginally preferred to the telephone. It falls not far behind computer games for excitement. For relaxation it is the second choice after listening to music.

Even when children want to learn about something, television ranks next (along with newspapers) after books and PCs. Moreover, the attractions of television are relatively stable over all demographic groups (see Table 3.1b), although rather more 6-8 year-olds choose it for relaxation and more middle-class children choose it, rather than computer games, for excitement and when bored.[1]

The radio is first choice of very few, and some media are associated primarily with one type of use only. Thus listening to music is chosen for relaxation, the telephone for not feeling left out, and books and PCs for learning. Computer games, by contrast, are chosen for both excitement and to counteract boredom.

Apart from television, most media are gendered in their appeal. Computer games, for example, tend to be the choice of more boys for most gratifications.[2]

INSERT TABLE 3.1a HERE

Similarly phoning someone provides more girls with these kinds of satisfaction, as does listening to music, and reading books or magazines.[3] The choice of these media - computer games for boys and

[1]Choosing television for relaxation, 30% 6-8, 21% 9-11, 21% 12-14, 20% 15-17: for excitement, 22% ABC1 and 17% C2DE: when bored 31% ABC1, 21% C2DE.

[2]Choosing computer games for excitement, 35% boys, 13% girls: for relaxation, 5% boys, 1% girls: when bored, 35% boys, 11% girls: not to feel left out, 20% boys, 4% girls.

[3]Choosing phoning someone for excitement, 35% boys, 13% girls: when bored, 2% boys, 9% girls: not to feel left out, 14% boys, 26% girls.

print, music and the telephone for girls - when young people don't want to feel left out is indicative also of the priorities of the peer group and the role of media within this (see Chapter 10).

Again with the exception of television, the appeal of most media is age-related. Television is cited by all age groups as something to turn to when bored, in need of excitement or when wishing not to be left out.

INSERT TABLE 3.1b HERE

On the other hand, the excitement of playing computer games is greatest between 9 and 14, reading books is chosen more by children than teenagers, and reading magazines is most popular with those in their early teens.[4]

Listening to music and phoning people are more gratifying to teenagers.[5] Videos are an interesting exception, for they tend to appeal to older children for excitement and younger children for relaxation (as we shall see, children of different ages watch very different kinds of videos e.g. Disney films versus horror).[6]

Only a few, relatively small differences in media gratifications are to be found between children from middle-class and working-class families. Somewhat fewer working-class children associate books with relaxation and more children from working-class families turn to magazines when they are bored or want to learn something.[7]

In the case of PCs there are also social grade related differences: more middle-class children say they would choose a computer if they want to learn something or if they didn't want to feel left out. However this clearly reflects the fact that, as we will see in Chapter 4, there are fewer PCs in middle-class compared with working-class homes.[8] Considering just those who actually use a PC in their leisure time, we find that nearly half turn to it if they wanted to learn about something (48%, compared with 30% overall), while only 26% would turn to a book for this reason, reversing the picture in Table 3.1a.

Choosing listening to music for excitement, 6% boys, 16% girls: for relaxation, 28% boys, 33% girls: when bored, 9% boys, 15% girls: not to feel left out, 9% boys, 15% girls.

Choosing books (not for school) for excitement, 2% boys, 5% girls: when bored, 4% boys, 10% girls: not to feel left out, 2% boys, 5% girls.

Choosing magazines for excitement, 5% girls, 1% boys: when bored, 8% girls, 4% boys: not to feel left out, 9% girls, 2% boys.

[4]Choosing computer games for excitement, 24% 6-8, 29% 9-11, 27% 12-14, 17% 15-17.

Reading books for excitement, 3% 6-8, 7% 9-11, 3% 12-14, 1% 15-17: to learn about things, 40% 6-8, 41% 9-11, 35% 12-14, 27% 15-17: for relaxation, 18% 6-8, 22% 9-11, 12% 12-14, 4% 15-17: not to feel left out, 6% 6-8, 7% 9-11, 2% 12-14, 1% 15-17.

Choosing magazines for excitement, 2% 6-8, 1% 9-11, 7% 12-14, 2% 15-17: when bored, 2% 6-8, 6% 9-11, 9% 12-14, 8% 15-17: not to feel left out, 3% 6-8, 6% 9-11, 9% 12-14, 2% 15-17.

[5]Listening to music to relax, 14% 6-8, 20% 9-11, 38% 12-14, 48% 15-17: when bored, 8% 6-8, 11% 9-11, 12% 12-14, 16% 15-17: not to feel left out, 9% 6-8, 11% 9-11, 12% 12-14, 16% 15-17.

Phoning someone for excitement, 4% 6-8, 2% 9-11, 6% 12-14,12% 15-17: when bored, 2% 6-8, 3% 9-11,6 % 12-14, 11% 15-17: not to feel left out, 7% 6-8, 16% 9-11, 23% 12-14, 34% 15-17.

[6]Choosing videos for excitement, 11% 6-8, 17% 9-11, 21% 12-14, 25% 15-17: to relax, 10% 6-8, 8% 9-11, 5% 12-14, 4% 15-17: not to feel left out, 8% 6-8, 5% 9-11, 7% 12-14, 3% 15-17.

[7]Books for relaxation: ABC1 16%, C2DE 12%. Magazines when bored: ABC1 4%, C2DE 8%, and to learn: ABC1 3%, C2DE 5%.

[8]If we select just those children who do the activities we asked about, even higher proportions choose media because of the satisfactions associated with them.

Thus, it appears that while in general more turn to a book than a PC to learn, those with a PC at home prefer it to a book when they want to learn about something (see Chapter 7):

Interviewer:	If you needed to look something up, would you look it up on the CD-Rom?
S :	Yes, we usually go to *Encarta* first and if it is not on there then we go to a reference book.
A :	What I'd do first is ask Dad and then if he didn't know then I would go on to the computer.
Interviewer:	So is it quicker to put the computer on, find the CD, than it is to get it off the shelf?
M :	Yes, probably because we have got like the Pears Encyclopaediawhich is in all different places. With the computer you just type in exactly what you want and it will come up.
Interviewer:	And do you think that it gives you enough information and tells you what you want to know?
M :	Usually, unless it is some minor detail.
Interviewer:	How could it be better?
S :	If it had a voice or something.
M :	With more illustrations.

(Middle-class brothers, aged 10, 13 and 14)

3.1.2 Reasons for watching television

Overall, it seems that television dominates children's leisure because it provides a breadth of gratifications for a heterogenous audience. We asked the children on the broadcasters' YoungView panel to tell us in their own words why they watched television (see Table 3.1c). As accords with the research literature on television uses and gratifications (Blumler and Katz, 1974), the largest single proportion (65%) cited entertainment (variously described as enjoyment, entertainment, relaxation or fun) as a major reason for watching television.

Over half (53%) said they watched simply to have something to do, including a third (34%) who specifically mentioned boredom. The numbers citing boredom rose to around half of those aged 12-13. Specific programmes were mentioned by around the same numbers (49%) with soaps being the most frequently named genre (by 30%). And nearly half (43%) mentioned the educational or informational potential of television.

INSERT TABLE 3.1c HERE

A selection of the children's answers gives an idea of the range and content of the answers:

I like the soaps.
I like the cartoons.
It gives me something to do.
(Working class girl aged 9)

To follow my favourite programmes.
To be entertained.
To be educated about the world.
(Working-class boy aged 11)

Because it's there.
Because it's funny.
Because my brother does.
(Middle-class girl aged 8)

I like some programmes very much (*Power Rangers*).
I like to watch soaps with my mum.

I watch in the evening because there is nothing else to do at that time.
(Middle-class boy aged 7)

Bored
No one's playing
To talk about soaps
(Working class boy aged 13)

To see Manchester United live
To have a good laugh
To be entertained
(Middle class boy aged 14)

Our interviews with children and families allowed us to pursue what watching television means to children. Children assimilate the media into uniquely different lives and we can expect a multiplicity of reasons to explain their interest in particular programmes, as discussed below and elsewhere in this report.

3.2 FAVOURITE MEDIA CONTENTS

3.2.1 Children's interests

One way of thinking about the media environment is to see if children's use of media is theme-driven rather than medium-centred (compare McLuhan, 1982). While we have considered how certain media *qua* media are associated with certain gratifications, it may also be that children select those media which they see as serving their interest in a particular topic.

In our survey we asked all children over the age of eight which topic they were most interested in from a list which included hobbies and interests, cultural activities and narrative themes (see Table 3.2a).[9]

For boys, there is no contest - sport is named by 51%. However, for boys who did *not* identify sport there was considerable diversity in interests: the most commonly identified were music and humour/comedy (each chosen by 8%) and science fiction (chosen by 7%). No single interest unites as many girls. The largest proportion (23%) choose music, 15% choose sport and 14% nature/animals, with humour/comedy, stars, horror and art/theatre following behind. Thus, whereas one common interest unites half of boys, it takes a minimum of three very different interests to account for a similar proportion of girls.

There are also age differences. Nature/animals is chosen by more younger children. Similarly interest in horror and pop stars drops off after the age of 14. Interest in humour, on the other hand, increases from around 12, and young people aged 15-17 are much more likely to be interested in music. Interest in sport peaks between 12 and 14.

INSERT TABLE 3.2a HERE

Overall, gender appears a more important discriminant of interests than age: boys are more interested in sport than girls at every age, and girls at every age are more interested in music, as well as in horror, stars and romance.

3.2.2 Linking interests to media use

Which media are associated with which interests? To pursue our theme-based approach, we asked children which of ten media they found best for following their particular interest (see Table 3.2b).[10]

[9]Although the list is not comprehensive, fewer than 1% chose the 'other' category.

[10]Radio and hi-fi were not listed, but would have been chosen by music lovers.

Television was top overall, being picked out by twice as many as selected the next most popular option, magazines. Generally, narrative-based screen media dominate the picture. However, print media are also popular, with half choosing a print medium for following up their interest.

Beyond this, children follow up different topics through different media.[11] Television is best for sport and humour, magazines for following an interest in pop stars and TV personalities, and videos for horror. Television and magazines are popular with those interested in music, while those interested in nature/animals choose either books or television.

INSERT TABLE 3.2b HERE

Neither computer games, CD-Roms or the Internet are chosen by many children, reflecting the relative rarity of access to computer technology. Where they are chosen, it may be indicative of future trends that an interest in animals and nature is most often associated with use of these media, especially the CD-Rom, with sport, music and horror all following. However, for only three minority interests (news, romance and crime) are no computer technologies ever mentioned. Yet the attraction of these technologies does not, as yet, seem explicable through an association with particular themes which interest children and young people. Presumably it lies instead with their own intrinsic qualities (see Chapters 2 and 7).

Do children follow their interests across different types of media? There are several ways in which media content permeates children's lives, forging connections between otherwise separate areas. The mutual referencing of different content themes across media may be conceptualized as "intertextuality", a term stemming from literary studies. Three kinds of intertextuality can be distinguished (Drotner, 1998):

Intra-textuality:	connections between different texts within the same medium
Inter-textuality:	connections across different types of media
Trans-textuality:	connections between media and other real-life actions

Producers and marketers increasingly maximise synchronicity across video games, television cartoons, competitions, films and videos, comics, the toy industry and children's goods from bedclothes to school bags. As well as maximising profits, this,

> '... helps to surround the child with a coherent environment of signs. Surrounded by multimedia, children have no difficulty in shifting from one medium to another. While adults see the multimediatization of cultural firms such as Nintendo, Disney and other American majors as harmful (it enables these firms to market a wide range of products derived from a film or videogame), children find the recurrence of signs reassuring in their attempts to organize their environment' (LaFrance, 1996:313; see also Kline, 1993).

To discover whether children themselves follow up their interests across media ('intertextuality'), or whether some interests are medium specific ('intratextuality'), we allowed children to choose more than one medium from the list if they wished. As Table 3.2c shows, two thirds follow up their interest through just one type of medium: 38% use screen narrative media exclusively - most especially humour fans, while 24% use print media and 5% computer-based interactive media exclusively, each in connection with a variety of interests. Around a quarter (24%) say they use *both* screen and print media, most notably those interested in pop stars and TV personalities.

INSERT TABLE 3.2c HERE

'Transtextuality' is also evident within our interviews with children and young people. The huge popularity of television soap operas, for example, may be partially explained by the resonance between certain storylines and events happening in children's own lives, especially problematic areas which they feel the need to understand more about. <A> is the daughter of a divorced mother who has little time to spend with her children:

[11] Here we focus on the six most commonly chosen topics, chosen by 4 in 5 respondents.

Interviewer: Do you think that soaps are realistic? Do you think that you can learn about real life like that?

A : Erm, well you learn a bit. Like on *Neighbours* when Hannah had her first period and she was talking about them and her dad was telling her what to do with them and I learnt a bit about that when I was younger.

(Middle-class girl, aged 11)

<E> lives in a street with "loads of fighting". She identifies *Street Fighter* as her favourite computer game and recalls the domestic violence in *EastEnders* when asked to talk about the programme.

E: I like *EastEnders* 'cos they have like arguments and they fight/

K: Yeah it's good. They fight.

E: (continuing) /and Kathy got knocked over by him

L: Phil

E: (continuing) /like punched him/

L: /And now they're going to make it up

E: /and that so it's like exciting /

K: Did you watch *Coronation Street* last night when she had a big lip?

(Class of working-class girls aged 9-10)

In the following extract <B>, a six-year-old little girl whose favourite programme is *Home and Away* and whose second-time-around parents couldn't refrain from cuddling during the interview, talks in school about the educational potential of soaps:

Interviewer: Do you think that you learn anything from a soap or is it just fun?

A: You learn, you learn.

F: Aye you could learn some things from it.

B: You learn a lot of naughty things.

Interviewer: You learn naughty things says <B>. What sort of naughty things?

B: Rude (Giggles)

Interviewer: What sort of rude things, you can tell me in here.

B: Too rude.

Interviewer: Too rude, alright.

A: Oh go on, we won't laugh, promise.

F: Go on say.

B: I will say it to <F>

(Whispers amidst much giggling)

Interviewer: Whisper to me go on [MAYHEM] ...

F: It was like snogging.

(Class of middle-class girls, aged 6)

Nine-year-old <A> whose dad "works away from home", likes watching *Friends*:

A: On Four there's a programme called *Friends* and that's good because you like learn how a big group of friends and they have problems and like they move away and then you find that they get back together. Like if you were in a big group of people - just say you were family and one of them went away and you wanted - like after forty years or ten away - and they want to come back. Well, if you watched that it might.

(Working-class girl, aged 9)

Such accounts show that their real life experiences affect what children find interesting. In this sense, television especially seems effective at providing a range of experiences from which children can select something meaningful for them. There are indications that causality works in the other direction too, with children taking images and themes from the media into their everyday lives.

For example, the start of this particularly lively interview with a class of small boys, shows how a video, *The Sword in the Stone*, watched by one of the boys the previous evening, coloured these children's day, not to mention facing the interviewer with a particular challenge:

B:	I'm King Arthur!
F:	I'm King Charles!
A:	I'm King Henry the Eighth!
Interviewer:	Right ... You're King Arthur. Right, well you're all royal here that's splendid. Let me tell you who I am. My name's George.
B:	George! King George!
Interviewer:	No I'm not a king, but I'd like to be. But I'm doing some research...

(Class of middle-class boys, aged 6-7)

The youngest children often include media characters both when playing with brand-name toys and in free play inspired by media characters or themes. In the playground Power Ranger fantasies mix with old-fashioned games like Hide-and-Seek, Hopscotch and Tag as well as new games which reflect computer platform games. Although there are no equivalents of Power Rangers, Ninja Turtles, or Barbie for older age groups, other forms of trans-textuality take over: sports and music feature in radio and television programmes, appear in bedroom posters, tape or CD collections, influence fashion trends and stimulate outside events such as football matches and discos.

Thus children and young people express preferences for content themes and for media channels, both of which direct their media choices. But they also express clear preferences for particular contents, and following our focus on the screen, we now report on their favourite computer games and television programmes.

3.2.3 Children's favourite types of computer game

Many computer games have similar plots to traditional folk or fairy tales - with a narrative line and archetypal themes of enduring appeal. They feature journeys, obstacles to be negotiated, the struggle of good versus evil, a precious goal, an active male protagonist, a female figure to be rescued and transformations into monsters or superhuman figures. As with earlier forms of these narratives, such themes are the source of considerable pleasure:

J:	l like adventure games. Dizzy that's amazing. You jump through, you pick up objects and stuff.
G:	Aye, I've had that, I've had two of them.
L:	Conquer problems like ... there's one where you're stuck in a jail and there's leaves, matches. Then you put the leaves against the door, get the matches, light the leaves it sets the door on fire, pick the water up and put it over the fire so that you can escape.
G:	There's the one game that's almost my favourite, it's name's Discworld. There's this wizard, it's the funniest thing you've ever seen because you're walking around and you talk to this guy and he's like a librarian but he's been turned into a monkey-
A:	Aye, and he insults you.
L:	And every time you mention monkey he whacks you, and what he does is you go to this person and she says that "I'll be going away now" and he goes " Aren't you going to guard the gates?" and then he goes "Oh who gives a monkey" and then you hear "Ohhhh!"

(Class of mixed-social grade boys, aged 12-13)

Computer games are developing fast, and dividing them into clear generic types is thus difficult, both for researchers and for users. Yet as we know from television viewing, both different modes of use and different segments of the audience as associated with specific genre preferences. Thus we asked all those who play computer games the type of computer game they like best from a list of nine possibilities (see Table 3.2d).

INSERT TABLE 3.2d HERE

Two types share top place - sports games and adventure games/quests, both of which are named by around a quarter of games players overall. Preferences are strongly gendered. Unsurprisingly, sports games and fighting games are boys' favourite genres (chosen by 35% and 23% of boys respectively):

Interviewer:	So what's your favourite game, computer game these days?
D:	Racing games like car racing or football.
W:	*Fifa Soccer 95*.
R:	Action games as well, like fighting and that.
T:	Things like *Mortal Combat*.

(Class of working class boys, aged 12-13)

Adventure/ quests are by far the most popular games with girls (35% choose these), and they are also enjoyed by a sizeable proportion of boys (19%):

P:	I prefer games like *Super Mario*, you want to just control them and jump on the mushrooms. I try to kill them and things like that. It's better than like fighting and that 'cos these are just jumping on them to kill them instead of punching them.
N:	In *Wonderboy* there's this old man. He's got the princess prisoner and the Wonderboy's got to try and stamp on all the points to get him.
P:	I like *Super Mario* because it's just really like a challenge kind of thing you've got to jump over, there's like gaps you have to jump over.
Interviewer:	Some of these games have got stories attached - like you were saying about the *Wonderboy* one -
P:	Mario's got a princess trapped and everything hasn't he?

(Class of working-class girls, aged 9-10)

More girls than boys favour drawing and painting games, card or board games or puzzles and educational games. A minority are also attracted to fashion or design games. There are some differences in the preferences of children from different social grades. More middle-class children favour adventures or quests, while working class children are more likely to prefer fighting games.

There are significant age differences. Sports games and games involving cars or aircraft are more popular amongst the oldest children and adventure games or quests amongst the 9-11 year-olds. Interest in fighting games peaks between the ages of 12-14. For older children, particularly boys, the quality of graphics is extremely important:

Interviewer:	So what do you look for in a game that makes it really interesting?
S:	Good graphics and everything.
N:	Good graphics like.
S:	The way it moves and that.
Interviewer:	So what's a good graphic if you had to describe it?
N:	Movements all 3D and that - that's like good graphics. So you see them from the side, the front, the back. The Master System, the normal Nintendo, they've only got 8 bites but like the up-graded ones like the Sega Megadrive and the Super Nintendo have got 16 bites. But the CD's got 32, so that's more advanced and you get better graphics on it.
F:	My CD, my Megadrive CD - if you put discs in it, it's like a real film that you're watching, it's like a film.

(Class of working-class boys, aged 12-13)

This same class described how the element of competition is also an attraction. However playing against the computer is too challenging for many - "you keep getting beat" - and playing against a friend provides more excitement:

Interviewer:	So when you actually play those computer games do you like to play them by yourselves or do you prefer to have a mate to play with?
F:	A partner because you like you race and beat them like on the computers and that, because my mum, like my step mum and my dad like we play on columns and that.
B:	Aye because you want some like competition... Because if you just want to be boring, just play by yourself.
Interviewer:	Do you have two kind of control sets?
N:	Yes, two control pads.
B:	Well there's just one computer and there's like two wires coming out and there's two control pads.
Interviewer:	You can't just get satisfaction playing against yourself?
F:	You can play against the computer but sometimes you get bored because you keep getting beat.
B:	If you can put the cheat in... I've got an action replay, and I cheat.

(Class of working-class boys, aged 12-13)

These same preferences - for archetypal themes, good graphics and competition against one's friends - prove important in Chapter 9 when we examine the pleasures of early adopters playing networked games in the cybercafés.

3.2.4 Children's favourite television programmes

As the numbers of television sets, and television channels, in homes multiply (see Chapter 4), so that children are increasingly able to watch a diversity of programmes unsupervised, three concerns predominate - the diversity or homogeneity of audience preferences, the future of dedicated children's programming and the future of programmes of national origin. How do children and young people's favourite programmes inform us in relation to these three concerns?

Having asked our survey sample to give us the name of their favourite programme, we first report on these favourite programmes as individual titles.[12] We then categorise all favourite programmes in three ways (see Appendix 3.1):

- by genre (13 programme types)[13]
- by target audience (family/adult or dedicated children's programme)
- by origin (national or international)

Favourite programmes

As with computer games, preferences for television programmes or genres are also age- and gender-specific, as well as being matters of individual preference or family culture. Thus in interviews we were told that cartoons are for children (*Rugrats*, *Daffy Duck*) and young people (*The Simpsons*); parents are rarely mentioned as sharing this interest. News is for fathers, and can irritate children who want their parents' company or to watch something else but are told to go away or be quiet. Soaps are for mothers and daughters, although boys also watch and enjoy them; fathers are often seen as hostile. Talk shows are popular with teenage girls (especially American ones - *Oprah Winfrey*, *Ricky Lake*) while sport is for fathers and sons, with only the occasional mother or daughter sharing their enthusiasm. Particular films have appeal for either boys or girls or for particular age groups or life stages (Disney for the little ones, Kung Fu movies for boys, Horror movies for adolescents). Humour/comedy again is potentially for the whole family, but accounts emphasise more the individual nature of preferences. Light Entertainment or family shows, such as *Jeremy Beadle* and *The Gladiators*, are once again family entertainment.

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[12] As we asked for favourite programmes, one-off programmes may be underrepresented.

[13] In a few instances we could not assign a programme to the categories of origin (4%), target audience (3%) or genre (4%).

Do these broad-brush impressions relate to children and young people's favourite programmes? This information is rather different from that gathered in broadcaster ratings, which reflect numbers watching. In the case of child audiences, ratings may be misleading because of the comparative rarity of programmes specifically targeted at children and because of their lesser power in determining what programmes are watched in the household.

The top five programmes named by boys and girls within each age band are listed in Table 3.2e. The diversity of children's answers, particularly in the youngest age group, is notable. No single programme in any age group is named as favourite by more than a quarter, reflecting little change since Himmelweit et al (1958) obtained similar findings 40 years ago.[14]

INSERT TABLE 3.2e HERE

The main trajectory is from considerable diversity at the youngest age to less as children get older. Thus 6-8 year-olds name 103 different programmes and the programme which proves to be most popular for all age groups, *EastEnders,* is chosen by 6%. At 9-11, 97 programmes are named, *EastEnders* being chosen by 17%; at 12-14, 82 programmes are named and *EastEnders* is now the choice of 23%; at 15-17, 72 programmes are named and *EastEnders* is chosen by 24% (of whom 83% are girls).

Broadly, favourite programmes fit the picture obtained from the qualitative interviews regarding genres in general. It would seem that children and, especially, teenagers, are indeed watching soaps and sport because of their own preferences rather than because these are their parents' choices for the family set.

Genre

Based on children's replies, we identified thirteen "genres", which broadly overlap with the broadcasting industry's classificatory system (we adopted this classification, rather than the standard developed by broadcasters, as it reflects more closely the material given to us by children; see Appendix 3.1).

Overwhelmingly, the genre most favoured is soap opera (Table 3.2f): a quarter (26%) of all children and young people choose one as their favourite programme. Next most frequently chosen are cartoons (named by 15%), sport (14%) and other series or serials (13%).

INSERT TABLE 3.2f HERE

There are strong gender and age differences, but no noticeable social grade-related trends, except possibly a preferences for cartoons among working class children. Particularly marked is girls' preference for fictional narrative (soaps and other series/ serials), while for boys a more varied diet is in evidence, although sport and cartoons are particularly popular. The taste for soaps, humour/comedy and sci-fi increases with age, as does interest in sports programmes: interest in cartoons and magazine programmes on the other hand declines sharply after the age of eight.

When we select the top three genres for boys and girls within each age group (Table 3.2g), gender appears more determining than age also for the analysis of favourite programme genres, just as we saw with the analysis of interests and themes earlier. While at 6-8 both boys and girls are most likely to name a cartoon as their favourite programme, they specify rather different kinds of cartoon (as seen earlier; Table 3.2h). Girls' favourite is *Rugrats*, while boys are most likely to name *Power Rangers*, *Tom and Jerry* and, as, they get older, *The Simpsons*.

At age 6-8, girls' interest in drama is already emerging, as is boys' in sport, and from 9 onwards, sport dominates for boys and soaps for girls. By 9-11, gender differentiation in programme

[14]Interestingly, Himmelweit took the fact that only one third of children named the same programme to indicate a diversity of preferences; from the vantage point of the present, we would consider that a high degree of consensus.

preference is well established. Now girls overwhelmingly choose fictional narrative (41% choose a soap and 20% another series or serial) while 29% of boys choose sport. However, fictional narrative is also important for boys, and a soap is second most frequent choice for boys also. This pattern is maintained through to 15-17, with the third most frequent choice for boys being sci-fi and for girls, humour/comedy.

INSERT TABLE 3.2g HERE

Looking back to preferences for computer games, the importance of gendered themes and genres is obvious: in both television and computer games, sport is top for boys, while girls' interest in television narrative clearly parallels their preference for adventure games.

Children over 9 years old had listed their *three* favourite programmes, so we could explore how eclectic they are in their tastes. Given the opportunity to choose three favourite programmes, do they choose them from the same genre or from a selection of genres? We found that this depends on the type of programme they favour (see Table 3.2h). We had grouped the 13 genres into four broad categories and found that those who choose one fictional narrative programme are much more likely to choose a second and third programme from this same genre.[15] By contrast, most of those who favoured other types of programming choose their other favourites from different types of programme or genre.

INSERT TABLE 3.2h HERE

Target audience of children's favourite programmes

All programmes named by children as their favourites were categorised as either children's programmes or as family/adult programmes.[16] Amongst all children over the age of eight, there is a strong preference for family/adult programmes and even amongst the programmes named by 6-8 year-olds, around a third were not programmes made for children specifically (see Table 3.2i).

INSERT TABLE 3.2i HERE

In short, over the age of 8, children and young people's preferences have moved on from dedicated children's programming and they are now following their interests across channels and schedules to where ever their favourite programmes are to be found. How far the introduction of dedicated children's cable and satellite channels will affect this picture remains uncertain, but to the extent that these concentrate on cartoons, it is relevant to note that children also leave behind their great interest in cartoons from a similar age.

Friends and parents are seen to concur in children and young people's programming tastes, for most - around seven in ten - also felt that the peer group were interested in and their parents were approving of their favourite programme (see Table 3.2j). The importance of discussing one's favourite programme with friends is particularly important for teenagers.

Why this preference for family/adult programming over that dedicated to children? We wondered who children think the intended audience for their favourite programmes is, and so asked them

[15] These types were fictional narrative programmes (including soaps, series/serials, sci-fi and films), funny programmes that make you laugh (cartoons, comedy/sitcoms, quizzes/family shows), sport and other, mostly presenter-led programmes (animals, magazine programmes, chat shows, news etc).

[16] As there is no common term for all programmes which are not dedicated to the child/youth audience, we have labelled such non-children's programmes under the rubric Family/adult programmes. This includes programmes such as *EastEnders* which are broadcast before the watershed and aimed at a family audience and sports programmes watched by all age groups and broadcast at all times of day. It also includes programmes broadcast later in the evening, such as *Friends*, *Casualty*, *The X Files* or *E.R.* which are watched by children, but not targeted at them. Programmes explicitly targeted at the teenage audience (like *Byker Grove*, *Heartbreak High*, *Hang Time*, *California Dreams*, *Sweet Valley High* and *Saved by the Bell*) were classed as children's programmes.

whether they think older or younger people would enjoy the programme they had chosen (see Table 3.2j).

INSERT TABLE 3.2j HERE

The great majority think that people both older and younger than themselves would also like their favourite programme.

Interviewer:	Who do you think the soaps - *Home and Away* - are aimed?
G:	Women basically, women from 10 all the way because my nan even watches. She's about 75 or something like that.
	(Middle-class girl, aged 13)

However it is also notable that children and, especially, teenagers are more confident that older people like their favourite programme than younger: while of course they know most people to be older than they are, it may also be that the causality works the other way around, so that children prefer a programme partly because they see it as liked by people older than themselves. Certainly in a variety of respects, we found a high valuation placed by children on participating in the culture of adults or those older than themselves.

Children have a very clear idea of the ages associated with different signifiers of maturity and they are impatient for the next age or stage. Indeed, generally speaking, children and young people expressed a near universal desire to be around two years older, whatever their current age, so as to have access to those opportunities and facilities which they are constantly being told they are too young for. They want to be old enough to go out further, and later, than they are allowed to at present. At twelve, they want to be thirteen so they can earn. At fifteen they want to be sixteen so as to earn more. At sixteen they want to be seventeen so they can drive.

Although the key changes in children's lives generally concern access to public or commercial facilities (see Chapter 4), the media serve as important markers here. For the youngest it is being allowed to stay up later to watch television or to watch more 'grown up' programmes. For teenagers it is being allowed to have legal access to certain videos or films. Children also mark their development in terms of personal ownership of goods (Chapter 4). Being the one in a group who has access to drink, videos, transport etc is worth a lot. As they see it, childhood is significantly about the hurdles to be crossed to obtain greater freedoms:

Interviewer:	Tell me boys, what is it like being six years old?
A:	Nice, but I'd like to be ten years old, I always do.
Interviewer:	How will it be different being 10 years old to being 6 years old?
A:	Because you can stay up later.
Interviewer:	And what would be the point of staying up later?
A:	So we can watch TV.
F:	And play computers.
P:	And put videos on.
D:	And so you could go to more places.
	(Class of working-class boys, aged 6-7)

In relation to the preference for family/adult programmes, we suggest that media content preferences serve as markers of maturity. The less realistic a television programme is the more it tends to be classed as "for kids". By nine or ten, for example, children grow out of cartoons (Table 3.2e) and begin to say they are for babies. To watch a horror movie is also a sign of maturity. At around twelve (Table 3.1d), children begin to take a more adult interest in informational programming ("It's good to know what's going on in the world"). They talk differently about television as they get older, becoming more critical of unrealistic plots, happy endings etc., and though they don't necessarily stop watching the programmes they criticise, voicing the criticism allows them to continue doing so without loss of face. Moreover, media content targeted at their age can seem to them patronising, as they resent reminders of what being their age is actually like: they prefer media intended for older people or which blurs the boundaries between child and adult, as with the teen soaps where teenagers act like adults or comedy shows where adults act like kids.

Origin of children's favourite programmes

We classified children's favourite programmes as either national or international (see Table 3.2k).

INSERT TABLE 3.2k HERE

The intention was to distinguish those programmes which incorporate a British perspective from those which have been produced elsewhere (mainly in the USA or Australia) and sold to an international market. Thus programmes which follow an international format but have been adapted for British television (like *Gladiators*) were considered national.

Overall, just over half of children's favourite programmes are national. By contrast with popular anxieties about the swamping of young people's culture by American products, the proportion of national programming actually increases as children get older, due to the shift away from cartoons and to the considerable popularity of British sport and national soaps. The huge popularity of *EastEnders*, outstripping as favourite programme such soaps as *Neighbours* or *Home and Away*, suggests that young people prefer national to imported productions (as also shown in other European countries; Silj, 1988). Yet in interviews many children claim to know little about the nationality, origins or private/publicstatus of their favoured media producers or productions. As this conversation with a group of teenage girls shows, they are little concerned with the origin of programmes and more with their availability.

Interviewer:	Is *MTV* British?
K:	Yes.
M:	No.
A:	Well anyone can watch it.
Interviewer:	How do you mean?
A:	Scotland can watch it.
K:	Anyone can watch it whose got cable or Sky.
Interviewer:	And what about *Nickelodeon*, is that made in Britain too?
M:	Cartoons.
K:	Cartoon Channel.
A:	It's the same thing, it's a channel.
K:	Like *Sister Sister*, *Twins* and that is on.
A:	Right ... Do any of the rest of you know? Is *Nickelodeon*, the channels that you get through Sky, are they British?
A:	Yes.
Interviewer:	They are, they're British, they don't come from somewhere else?
K:	Some of them are foreign.
M:	How do you know which ones are British?
R:	Because like I'm talking normal now and the other ones just talk a different language.
A:	France and that.

(Class of working-class girls, aged 12-13)

The suggestion is that channels in English are national.[17] The issue is somewhat confused by the fact that channels like *Nickelodeon* have British studios and make efforts to acculturate their products to a British market. There is some residual snobbery about American programmes, but by and large if children note differences they are trivial.

Interviewer:	We were talking about where *Nickelodeon* and *Cartoon Network* were made...

[17]In view of some parents' confusion, children's vagueness becomes even more understandable. This middle-class mother apparently classes *I love Lucy* as British: 'I like the historical things, like *Poldark*, I watch *Eastenders* and I like watching films, particularly old films ... I like the comedy programmes, especially *Dad's Army*. We like all the comedy, like *I Love Lucy* and *Wisdom*, anything like that - you know traditional British comedies.'

G: Originally they were born in America, and they've got a *Nickelodeon* studios now in England, which is alright I suppose, yes, but *Cartoon Network* that's made in America, and the *Children's Channel* which is *TCC* that's made in here, England or Scotland, but in Britain anyway.

Interviewer: When you said *Nickelodeon's* now made in England and "that's alright, I suppose", you didn't sound very sure, can you tell me a bit more about that?

G: Well I mean it's alright for [xxx], it still goes on in America, some people phone from America to here, and they phone from America so like swop over. It's alright, I mean I wouldn't really like to have a *Nicklodeon American* because I've seen it before, because when I went over to America, it's not very good at all. American TV is not very good at all.

Interviewer: And which is your favourite <soap>?

G: *Neighbours*.

Interviewer: So do you think Australian TV is better than American?

G: Yes, it's like our own really I think.

Interviewer: Do you think of *Neighbours* and *Home and Away* as being in Australia or do you just think of them as stories?

G: I don't know really, I've never thought of that. In Australia because like it's really sunny, they talk in the accent, they wear the type of clothes, it's all Australianish ... I mean you can tell it's Australian by the way the boxes and the chocolate bars are... you know in the coffee shop they've got like a fridge and then they've got like a row of chocolate bars, and you can tell because the boxes are made differently to ours and the wrappers are different.

(Middle-class girl aged 13)

Children and young people say they prefer soaps with exciting events happening to people like them and with some humour added, but say they don't care much if those people are American, Australian or British. Similarly, they don't care where their favourite pop group comes from, though differences in accents and setting are occasionally noted:

Interviewer: Do you always notice if a programme's an American or Australian?

P: Yes.

E: The way they speak.

J: Either by that or where it's set.

(Class of middle-class girls aged 15-16)

Provided the language is English, the particular brand (British, American, Australian) is unimportant. American or Australian accents are certainly not off-putting. On the other hand, foreign language films are not popular amongst British children, who, like most adults, hate subtitles and dubbing. Most children seem unaware, or are not interested in the fact that programmes are made elsewhere or are set in the context of different national cultures. They focus on the content and characters which they see as being like them, or which have universal relevance. This very lack of awareness may, of course be considered evidence in itself of globalisation.

3.3 MODES OF ENGAGEMENT

Without an observational study, it is difficult to explore how children and young people engage with different media. However, in the interviews and survey we gained some understanding of they make use of different media. In the context of public anxiety that children 'can no longer concentrate', and notwithstanding the difficulties of self-report, we gave children our list of eleven media and asked them to tell us which ones, if any, they "really concentrated on" (Table 3.3a). They could choose as many from the list as they wished, and we report the figures only for those who say they use the medium.

INSERT TABLE 3.3.a HERE

Books (46%), personal computers (43%), television (43%) and computer games (40%) came top of

the list of media which children say they really concentrate on. Music (28%) and other print media (magazines, 26%, newspapers, 23% and comics, 14%) are used in a more casual manner. Fewer than one in five think they concentrate on videos (18%), the telephone (15%), or radio (12%). Thus while clear distinctions emerge among media used in a concentrated or casual manner, this is not based on a simple classification of print versus screen-based media.

As we shall see throughout this report, there is most consensus about television and video across gender, age and social grade differences. For other media, however, there are clear gender- and age-related differences and some differences between social grades (see Table 3.3a). Girls are significantly more likely to say they concentrate on books and magazines (though not comics) and boys on interactive media. Bearing in mind that these figures all refer to users only, this suggests gender differences not only in the frequency of reading books or playing computer games (see Chapter 5) but also in their manner of use. Girls are also more likely to concentrate when talking to someone on the phone and when listening to music (although the numbers here are small).

Older users of the PC, music and telephone are more likely to report concentrating on these media, with the reverse holding true for comics and computer games. More middle-class children say they concentrate on books and telephone conversations, and more working-class children say they concentrate on newspapers, but otherwise social grade differences are few.

These results are in some ways surprising. Commonplace comparisons between television and the computer might lead one to expect more to claim that they really concentrate on interactive media, such as PC computers and computer games, by comparison with television. However, while just as many say they concentrate on television as concentrate when using computers or reading a book, the qualitative interviews suggest that different media are associated with different kinds of concentration.

Children's engagement with television is variable, depending on the degree of interest in particular contents. Because television is 'wallpaper' in many households, and because different family members watch different things at different times while sharing the same (often restricted) living space, most children continue to watch, sometimes even when they are not particularly interested. However, when children speak of "really concentrating" on television they are thinking about those occasions when they really want to watch:

Interviewer:	When you watch your favourite programme, do you actually sit there and are you really concentrating on it, or do you sort of watch it on and off and do other things at the same time?
F:	Concentrate.
R:	Concentrate.
C:	Nothing gets in the way when *X Cars* is on.
D:	I sit and concentrate.
F:	If my brothers make a noise I give them a dig while I'm watching it.
C:	Same with my little sister, [if she gets xxx] "Shut up!"

(Class of working class boys aged 15-16)

This kind of concentration may be intense, but it is also effortless.[18] Indeed, the attraction of television for most children is precisely that it absorbs them easily, so they need make no effort to follow or pass the time. Computer games, on the other hand, necessitate more taxing concentration, albeit of an enjoyable sort. They require constant vigilance and often quick physical reactions, providing a challenge for players.

For many children and young people, books are associated with disagreeable amounts of concentration - they are thought demanding, difficult, intimidating, often disappoint and carry no status (see Chapter 2). However, at least one fan of horror books found that the greater effort could be an advantage. Watching a video is easier - it leaves enough of your mind unoccupied to achieve

[18] As we noted in Chapter 2, music also offers both these modes of engagement. It can be enjoyed as the irreplaceable background to talking to friends, trying on clothes or doing homework. On the other hand, you can "let go" and immerse yourself in music completely.

a critical distance from the experience - but reading, just because it requires more effort, can be scarier:

Interviewer: Which do you prefer, to read a horror story or watch a horror video?

E: I read more horror stories than I do watch. I suppose with the horror stories on video it's easier, plus you get to see the gruesome stuff. But with the book it's in more suspense because you've got to imagine it all and it's all in your head. Like with watching on TV, you can just sit there and watch it and it doesn't scare you as much as it does reading it, because, you know, just sitting there. And when you're reading it, you're feeling it more, and it gets you more going because you don't know what's coming next. Like when you watch it you can predict it. But when you're reading it, it's going through, you're imagining it yourself, you're imagining it as you're reading it and so you don't know what's coming. But when you're watching it you can watch it and you can think ahead at the same time, but when you're reading it, you're concentrating on reading and imagining what's happening so you can't... You can't predict what's going to come next, because you're too involved with what you're reading there.

Interviewer: So it's actually more scary to read.

E: Yes it's more scary to read it, but then you don't get to see the gruesome stuff which I like... I like gory stuff... That's a load of rubbish about the kids can't take the gruesome stuff - they can take it better than the adults.

(Middle-class girl, aged 13)

We explored further how children and young people make use of television in particular, asking them about how they choose what to watch, for habits of zapping or channel hopping may also be taken as an indicator of the concentrated or casual nature of viewing (see Table 3.3b).

> I switch it on, and I start at the one channel which is like a menu, a bit boring ... then I just flick and then watch what's on there for about a minute and then if I don't like it I flick, flick. I watch things about half an hour through, and then if there's something like a film on, which I definitely watch because we normally have a TV book and it tells you what's on, so I like that, and films are good on there, but you just flick and flick.
>
> (Middle-class girl, aged 13)

INSERT TABLE 3.3b HERE

The majority of children say they channel hop at least sometimes during a programme (79%) and when the adverts come on (66%). We wondered if this habit of use was more widespread for those with a much greater variety of channels to choose from. Although those with cable or satellite television say they do so "usually" a little more often in both cases, the differences are not significant.

Thus, those with a large number of channels are no more likely to report zapping or channel hopping than those with terrestrial television alone. Nor does the availability of more channels seem to make a difference to the frequency of consulting a TV guide to decide what to watch: once again there are no significant differences in the behaviour reported by children in homes with and without cable or satellite television.

Clearly, it is difficult to obtain evidence that a greater range of content options, or a more interactive user interface, makes a clear difference to children and young people's style of using media.[19] And

[19]The term "interactivity" is undoubtedly used rather loosely, a buzz word, often over-claimed in the sales pitch for new pieces of hardware which offer only limited opportunities for user input. Interactivity, if it is to be a useful concept, should be regardedas involving a number of scalable dimensions, such as the amount of user input, the amount of user involvementand the degree of intellectual challenge. Researchers will also need to develop a way of measuring both actual use and potential use of interactive technologies.

interactivity involving the television screen in any meaningful sense is hardly available for today's children, though they await its arrival, as all other technological innovations, with interest and an open mind. In Chapters 7 and 8 we develop the question of expectations and uses surrounding newer information and communication technologies when focussing on computer use at home and school.

3.4 THE MEDIA, IDENTITY AND VALUES

Implicit in the foregoing discussion is the assumption that media use is wrapped up in children and young people's sense of values, ambitions and developing identity. Indeed, media use and media contents play an important part in young people' family and peer culture, thereby contributing to their social construction of identity. Since communication is fundamental to the social construction of reality, the new opportunities and dangers which arise in a changing media environment are likely to have a profound effect on society.

While it is beyond the scope of the present project to fully address such issues, we end this chapter by laying the groundwork by exploring children and young people's values - their beliefs about what is important within their peer group and what will be important for them when they grow up. We then look at how these relate to the values of their parents and to their media use. It remains for future research to chart how these values may alter as the new media future unfolds.

3.4.1 Children and young people's peer values

We asked children and young people over the age of eight which three things out of a list of nine alternatives make someone their age popular (see Table 3.4a).

The quality most often identified as important is *having a good sense of humour* (chosen by 55%), followed by *wearing the right clothes* (42%) and *being yourself/ natural* (40%). These qualities can be seen as having to do with self presentation, style and image.

INSERT TABLE 3.4a HERE

It is easy to be cynical about this stress on the right clothes, but to be seen in the wrong clothes can have devastating effects on self esteem and peer group acceptance. This is an issue which young people themselves reflect upon:

Interviewer:	Imagine that someone new was going to come to your school and that they're a bit worried about how they're going to fit in. Are you new?
T:	I started in January.
Interviewer:	Is that something that you worry about, about how you're going to fit in when you arrive and have you got to have the right clothes, or like the right music or something like that?
T:	No, just be myself, man. Can't take me for what I am, then don't take me at all. I think there's a bit of pressure with clothes and trainers and all that you know ... This is my own opinion but when you watch TV, right, and you see the American people and they've got the trainers and the bubble coats and all that. Well, we've got it now, and those people who can't afford like £60, £70 to pay for bubble coats right, and they come in with say a cheaper bubble coat and it's a bit flat - everyone shuns them because they haven't got the same as what everybody else got. And it's wrong, and I think mainly it's caused because of TV, because like it advertises it all and it's just a big pressure for those people who've got single, those mums who are on their own like.
Interviewer:	Do you think you sort of put the pressure on other people as well?
N:	I admit I do, because I do laugh, I do laugh, when you see a flat coat you have to laugh sometimes.
C:	It's what everybody does, though.
T:	It's wrong but you do do it, especially when you see your friends are killing themself laughing too. You just can't help laughing, and normally it's me to start laughing first, but after I've done it I feel bad, I feel guilty that I've just

done that.

(Class of working-class girls, aged 13-14)

Physical or personality characteristics come further down the list of what makes one popular, as does having material possessions. Around a third feel *being helpful/ kind* (35%) and *being good at sport* (32%) makes you popular. A quarter (25%) opt for *having the latest things* and *being good-looking* as one of the three top qualities. Only one in five (19%) feel *doing well at school*, or *having money to spend* are important.

There are some interesting gender- and age-related differences. Boys are more than twice as likely to say *being good at sport* makes you popular, while girls are more likely to think *being yourself/ natural*, *wearing the right clothes* and being *good looking* are important. The trend as they get older is to lay more stress on *having a good sense of humour*, *being yourself/ natural* and *being good looking*, while the benefits of *being helpful kind* diminish with age, as does *doing well at school* and *being good at sport*.

Social grade differences are not so striking, although there is a small but significant tendency for middle-class children to value *having a good sense of humour* and *having the latest things* more highly, while working-class children attach more value to *doing well at school*.

The top three choices for boys and girls within each age group (Table 3.4b) show that while up to the early teens, boys and girls' peer values are different, by 15-17 they have converged.

INSERT TABLE 3.4b HERE

Before that point, however, peer pressures dictate very different expectations for girls and boys, as was evident within the group interviews especially. Children who showed an interest in a counter-stereotypical activity came in for group teasing:

H: I play netball.
Interviewer: You play netball <H>. Where do you play that? At home?
P: That's for girls. (Giggles)

(Class of 6-7 year-old boys)

Here a girl with a taste for computer games is shamed into denying her own preferences:

Interviewer: What's a really boring day at home, what would you do?
K: I would play with the computer if I had to, play *Chips Challenge* and *Peter Pan*.
Interviewer: And things like that. Do you like playing *Chips Challenge* and *Peter Pan*?
G: She likes boys' stuff.
K: (Indignantly) No I don't.
G: You used to.
K: I would normally play with my Barbies, more likely.

(Class of middle-class girls, aged 6-7)

But as they enter adolescence, young people become anxious to counter gender stereotypes, and are critical of what they see as gender stereotyping pressures in the media market:

C: There is magazines for boys like the computer ones.
S: Computers are also for girls.
D: No but the boys' ones, the magazines for boys are all on a specific thing like football or cars.
S: No, that's a bit sexist because girls play computers and all.

(Class of mixed social grade boys, aged 12-13)

More generally, as they get older young people seem to alter the balance between fitting in and standing out, often coming to define their identity through a kind of self-conscious individualism. This boy and his sister see themselves as trend setters, their talk contrasting with that of the girls above for whom having the same clothes as everyone else was so important:

Boy:	If people - like one person likes something then they'll see it and another person buys it and it spreads. If one person likes one make and another person keeps on buying it - like this make that I've got on is called Kappa, and I've liked it for ages. And now recently loads of people of my school have started buying the same stuff as me...
Girl:	It's as if they want it - they want to know where they could get it... Sometimes I get angry 'cos like why can't they think of their own things to do? 'Cos like I've got a friend who's always copying what I do and it gets on my nerves.
Interviewer:	And how do you feel then? You know, you're wearing the Kappa shirt and then suddenly everyone else is - do you like that?
Boy:	Hate it.
Girl:	Yeah.
Boy:	Yeah, people like all the time at school coming up to me and asking me where did you get this from where did you get that from and how much was this, how much was that.
Girl:	It's like 'cos it's your own look and you don't exactly want someone else to look exactly like you.

(Working class girl, aged 13 and her brother aged 15)

As young people grow older, they appear increasingly to imbued with a strong sense of individuality: although they also talk of pressure to fit in, they continually emphasise how people are different, of how different music preferences are acceptable (and are even a useful way to define individuality) and of how different programme preferences are acceptable. This tendency to claim allegiance to different kinds of styles seems to be a part of a more general desire to express personal distance from any *one* source of influence and hence to assert independence of mind/uniqueness. If conformity to the peer group is often obvious, from adult perspective, from the young person's point of view the search is for a unique identity, albeit one that is ultimately acceptable, and possibly aspirational, for their friends.

3.4.2 Children and young people's future values

Having shown that opinions regarding peer values are heavily structured by age and gender, we asked all children in the sample to tell us what they thought would be most important to them when they were grown up in order to gain some understanding of what children and young people feel matters in adult life (see Table 3.4c).

The largest single percentage (30%) identify a *happy family life*, with a *good education* and an *interesting job* coming next at 22% and 20% respectively. *Lots of money* is named by only 15% and surprisingly *lots of friends* by only 8%. Good looks is bottom of the list: only 3% of children think this would be important when they were adults.

Girls place rather more stress on a happy family life and boys on having lots of money, reflecting traditional gender roles. Friends and money seem more important to younger children, education is valued by those in the middle age groups but interestingly not by the oldest age group for whom having an interesting job takes precedence. And as has been the case throughout this chapter, there are few or no significant differences by social grade.

INSERT TABLE 3.4c HERE

Broadly, it seems that children and young people distinguish sharply between what is important in their lives now (image, humour, friends) and what will be important later (family, education, work).

3.4.3 Parents' values

We were interested in how children's values might relate to those of their parents. In the survey we gave parents a list of seven possible changes in societal values and asked them to choose the three they would most like to see (see Table 3.4d).

INSERT TABLE 3.4d HERE

Children's values are clearly related parents' values, for their top three values for the future (family, education and work) echo those of their parents. Thus as for children, family life comes top of the list for parents: almost two thirds (63%) of parents would like to see more emphasis on this. Similarly, their next most important values are those of education (58%) and work (with only 18% wishing for less emphasis on this). Around half (48%) are interested in a greater respect for authority and over a third (37%) list a simpler and more natural lifestyle as one of the changes they would like to see. Interestingly, only 10% would include more emphasis on the development of technology.

The associations between children's values and those of their own parents are suggestive. For example, children who highly value an interesting job are more likely to have a parent who wishes for greater emphasis on education and less likely to have a parent who stresses family life.[20] On the other hand, children who think the family will be the most important when they are an adult are significantly *less* likely to have a parent who emphasises education.[21] Children whose parents want to see less emphasis on money are themselves less likely to value doing well at school and children whose parents want greater emphasis on education are more likely to do so.[22] We may conclude that an implicit trade-off between family life and education/work values as perceived by parents is being passed onto their children.

3.4.4 Relating values to media preferences

We end this chapter by attempting to draw some links between children and young people's media interests and preferences and their expressed values. Do values matter for media use?

We first looked to see whether children and young people's thematic interests, identified earlier in this chapter (Table 3.2a) are connected in any way with the attributes which are seen to make someone their age popular (see Table 3.4e).

INSERT TABLE 3.4e HERE

There are some obvious associations, demonstrating a considerable degree of coherence between interests and values:

- those particularly interested in humour/comedy are most likely to identify *having a good sense of humour* as something which makes someone their age popular;
- those interested in sport attach most importance to *being good at sport*;
- those interested in music or pop stars are most likely to attach importance to image (*wearing the right clothes, having the right things*);
- those who are animal lovers are most likely to think *being helpful and kind* is an important asset.

Given that values are connected with (or influence) young people's general interests, we can ask further whether values are associated with television genre preferences also (see Table 3.4f). As before, a series of associations are indeed evident:

- fans of funny programmes which make you laugh are most likely to think *having a good*

[20] 64% of children who choose 'an interesting job' have a parent who wants greater emphasis on education compared with 56% of children who do not choose this option ($p<0.05$), while 55%, compared with 64%, have a parent who would like more emphasis on family life ($p<0.05$).

[21] 52% of children who choose family life have parents who would like to see more emphasis on education compared with 60% of children whose parents do not choose emphasis on education ($p<0.05$).

[22] Parent wants less emphasis on money, 16%: parent does not choose this option, 24% ($p<0.01$). Parents who want greater emphasis on education, 22%: parents who do not choose this option, 16% ($p<0.05$).

sense of humour and *being helpful or kind* makes you popular;[23]

- fans of sports programmes are most likely to think *being good at sport* is important and least likely to think being yourself/ natural is important;

- fans of fictional narrative (who are more often girls) are least likely to think *being good at sport* makes you popular but do value *wearing the right clothes* and *being yourself/natural* more than others;

- those who fall into the "other" category and therefore have made their choice of favourite programme from the least commonly selected genres, are also different with respect to the things they value, being much more likely to value *doing well at school* and almost as likely to name being good at sport as those who are sports fans.

INSERT TABLE 3.4f HERE

3.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter we look at four broad aspects of media use to understand the ways in which children and young people make choices in a multi-media environment - gratifications, content preferences, modes of engagement with media, and questions of identity and values.

The most striking finding is that, despite the increasing variety of media available to them, television continues to dominate. No other medium attracts all categories of young people, and provides them with so wide a range of satisfactions. Music is the only other medium which comes close, particularly for teenagers, for this too is used for both concentrated and background uses, for both social and individual uses, and to suit a diversity of moods.

Newer media must be fitted within this already absorbing set of offerings from television and music. They tend to provide more concentrated, but also more narrow or specific kinds of pleasures. Computer games, for example, are chosen both for excitement and to counteract boredom, particularly by boys, but they are also demanding and so tend not to be played for extended periods of time (see Chapter 5). The personal computer is increasingly preferred over books as a source of learning, for those with access.

In key ways, young people's use of the media environment is theme-driven rather than medium-centred. In this respect, age and gender are both important determinants of favoured themes or interests; we found few differences for social class. Thus a common interest in sport unites half of the boys, followed by interests in music, humour and science fiction, and these interests are pursued across a variety of media. Girls' interests are more diverse, including music, sport, nature/animals, humour, horror and stars.

Most young people find that narrative-based screen media (i.e. television, video, cinema) are best for following up their interests; indeed, narrative may provide a 'way in' to using new media as they become more widely available. In following up their particular interests, however, many young people choose print media as well as screen media. Interactive computer-based media are as yet little selected as a means of engaging with favourite themes. However, rather more boys favour computer-based media for this purpose and rather more girls favour print media.

We pursued favourite television programmes in some depth. The variety of favourite programmes named was considerable, although the diversity of titles decreases with age, in part at least because of the overwhelming popularity of *EastEnders*. Indeed, 1 in 4 children chose a soap opera as their favourite programme, followed some way behind by the popularity of cartoons and other series. Girls were particularly keen on narratives, while boys' preferences were more diverse, divided among

[23] As these two values are not usually associated (see Table 3.4a), it may be that being helpful is more often thought to be important by younger children who are very likely to choose a cartoon as their favourite programme. They are least likely to value *wearing the right clothes*, probably again because they tend to be younger.

narrative, humour and sport.

For all those older than about 8, the most popular programmes are family/adult programmes, and even among 6-8 year olds, 1 in 3 favourite programmes are not children's programmes. Around half of favourite programmes were British-made, largely because of the preference for British soaps and sport, though this point was itself of little interest to young people themselves who are only concerned that programmes are broadcast in English.

Preferences for types of computer game also centred on sport and, for boys, action and fighting games, while the girls who played computer games preferred adventure/quests. In this respect, content preferences for computer games appear to be following those already established for television programmes.

Children and young people claim to 'really concentrate' on many of the media they use, though the kinds of concentration or involvement vary. For books, such concentration is often thought of as overly demanding, while for television, such concentration is mainly claimed when talking about a favourite programme only, and for computer games concentration is demanding in a pleasurable if tiring way.

Children and young people have a strong sense of which media are symbolically associated with different ages, seeing their use as a way of marking their own maturity. When talking about themselves, and about their media use, they often wish to be rather older than they are, equating age with freedom, and wrapping up media use within this more general desire to be older and freer.

When discussing the place of media in peer group culture, young people both endorse the values of their peer group and simultaneously distance themselves from any associated pressures. Thus they wish to fit in, and yet to be seen as an individual. Very particular tastes in programmes or music are thus used as such markers of individuality, albeit within the general framework of what is acceptable to their peers. Within these group settings particularly, we could see the way in which girls, who are initially keen on computers, turn away from them in later childhood under pressure of shared expectations regarding femininity (see Chapter 7).

Lastly, we explored the values of both children and young people and their parents, seeking links with their media preferences. There are clear links between media-related interests and values regarding, for example, what makes someone popular in the peer group (e.g. an interest in sport figures highly in both, for boys). For values as for interests, there are more age and gender differences than social class ones. Parents' values are broadly in tune with those of their children regarding, for example, the importance of education or family life. And there are clear links between values and preferences for television genres: fans of sports programmes value being good at sport, fans of comedy programmes value having a good sense of humour, and so forth.

TABLE 3.1a

Percentages choosing media for each of 5 gratifications (Base: all children N=1303)

	USES AND GRATIFICATIONS				
	Excitement %	Relaxation %	When bored %	To learn %	Not to feel left out %
WATCHING . . .					
Television	**20**	**23**	**25**	12	**22**
Video	19	7	7	1	6
PLAYING . . .					
Computer game	**24**	3	**23**	2	12
READING . . .					
Book	3	14	7	**35**	4
Magazine	3	5	6	4	5
Comic	2	2	2	1	1
Newspaper	-	1	1	11	1
LISTENING TO					
Music	11	**30**	12	1	12
Radio	3	13	4	1	4
USING PC	3	-	3	**30**	3
PHONING	6	1	6	1	**20**
NONE/DK	6	2	4	2	11

Note: magazines and comics asked of those aged 9+ only.

TABLE 3.1b

Demographic differences in gratifications associated with different media

	USES AND GRATIFICATIONS				
	Excitement	Relaxation	When bored	To learn	Not to feel left out
WATCHING					
television	More ABC1*	More 6-8**	More ABC1***		
videos	Older***	More boys* Younger*			Younger*
PLAYING					
comp. games	More boys*** More 9-14 **	More boys***	More boys*** More 9-14***	Younger***	More boys*** Younger*** More C2DE*
READING					
book (not for school)	More girls** More 9-11***	Younger*** More ABC1*	More girls***	Younger***	More girls** Younger***
magazine	More girls*** More 12-14*** Younger***	More 9-14s** More boys***	More girls** Older*** More C2DE**	More C2DE*	More girls*** More 12-14***
comic		Younger***	Younger***		Younger **
newspaper				Older ***	More boys*
LISTENING					
music	More girls***	More girls* Older***	More girls*** Older*		More girls** Older*
radio	More girls*** More 6-8s** More C2DE**	Fewer 6-8s*			
USING PC				More 9-14*** More ABC1**	More ABC1**
PHONING	More girls*** Older***		More girls*** Older***		More girls*** Older***

Note: *** p<0.001; **p<0.01; * p<0.05

TABLE 3.1c

Percentage naming as top three reasons for watching television (N=690)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE			
		Boy	Girl	7-8	9-11	12-14	15-16
Entertainment	65	67	63	69	64	61	70
Something to do	53	52	54	38	48	63	64
Boredom	34	35	33	22	28	**47**	36
Something to do	22	20	23	17	23	21	30
Specific programme	49	45	52	40	50	55	40
Children's programme	13	14	13	25	19	6	3
Soap	31	20	**41**	12	28	44	31
Other genre	17	21	13	17	16	19	12
Education/ information	43	44	42	41	42	42	55
Education	29	31	27	34	31	26	25
Information	19	19	18	13	13	23	34
Social reasons	18	16	21	13	16	23	17
Talk with friends	15	14	17	9	13	20	17
Other reasons	8	5	11	13	9	4	10

TABLE 3.2a

Which topic are you particularly interested in? (Percentages, based on all aged 9+, N=973)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE			SOCIAL GRADE			
		Boy	Girl	9-11	12-14	15-17	AB	C1	C2	DE
Sport	34	52	15	30	40	32	33	34	35	34
Music	15	8	23	10	12	24	16	15	14	17
Humour/comedy	9	8	10	6	10	11	11	9	10	7
Nature/animals	9	3	14	17	7	3	8	7	11	8
Horror	6	4	8	8	7	3	5	4	8	8
Stars/personalities	6	1	10	7	7	3	4	7	5	7
Art/theatre	5	4	7	7	5	4	5	6	5	5
Sci-fi	4	7	1	4	5	3	4	5	4	3
Adventure/action	3	5	1	3	3	3	3	2	2	5
Travel	3	2	4	2	1	5	2	3	3	2
War	2	4	1	3	2	2	4	4	1	1
Crime	2	1	3	2	2	4	4	3	2	1
Romance	1	0	2	0	1	2	1	1	1	2
News	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
None of these	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

TABLE 3.2b

Media found best for following interest in... (N=967)

	ALL %	TOP SIX INTERESTS Sport %	Music %	Humour %	Nature %	Horror %	Stars %
SCREEN NARRATIVE	**70**	**74**	65	**92**	57	**74**	55
Television	57	**70**	**54**	**62**	**49**	33	45
Videos	18	12	14	40	16	**43**	13
Cinema	10	2	7	31	4	18	11
PRINT	**54**	54	59	34	60	39	**84**
Newspapers	17	33	14	-	5	2	14
Magazines	29	30	**53**	17	18	5	**73**
Books	21	11	6	19	**50**	33	9
Comics	3	2	1	8	2	3	2
INTERACTIVE	**13**	13	12	5	**23**	10	2
Computer games	7	9	3	2	5	7	2
CD-Rom	5	3	7	2	**14**	3	0
Internet	3	3	2	1	4	0	0

TABLE 3.2c

Combinations of media found best for following interest in ... (N=967)

	ALL %	TOP SIX INTERESTS Sport %	Music %	Humour %	Nature %	Horror %	Stars %
SINGLE Screen narrative	**38**	**39**	**32**	**65**	**27**	**53**	14
Print	24	20	**28**	8	**30**	21	**43**
Interactive	5	5	4	0	10	3	2
COMBINED Screen narr +print	24	27	25	22	20	16	**41**
Screen narr.+interactive	2	2	2	1	4	5	0
Print+interactive	1	1	0	0	4	2	0
Screen narr.+print+int.	5	6	5	4	6	0	0

TABLE 3.2d

Favourite type of computer game by demographics (All games players, N=623)

	ALL	GENDER***		AGE***			SOCIAL GRADE**			
	%	Boy %	Girl %	9-11 %	12-14 %	15-17 %	AB %	C1 %	C2 %	DE %
Sports	26	**35**	12	21	26	**33**	22	24	30	26
Adventure /Quests	25	19	**35**	**30**	24	19	**33**	28	22	20
Fighting	18	**23**	9	17	**21**	14	13	16	18	**22**
Cars and aircraft	8	**10**	4	6	7	**12**	7	7	11	6
Where plan things	6	**8**	4	3	7	9	6	8	7	4
Card/board/puzzle	5	2	**11**	6	5	5	5	5	2	8
Drawing/painting	5	1	**11**	**8**	4	3	8	5	4	5
Games wh. teach you things	4	1	**9**	**7**	2	2	5	5	4	3
Fashion/design	2	0	**5**	1	2	3	1	1	1	5
None of above/DK	1	1	1	1	2	1	0	0	1	0

Note: *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01

TABLE 3.2e

Top five favourite programmes by gender within age (N=1188)

AGE							
6-8		9-11		12-14		15-17	
Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
The Simpsons (N=9)	EastEnders (N=14)	Match of the Day (N=15)	EastEnders (N=35)	Match of the Day (N=21)	EastEnders (N=54)	Match of the Day (N=23)	EastEnders (N=60)
Power Rangers (N=8)	Rugrats (N=8)	The Simpsons (N=8)	Sister, sister (N=10)	EastEnders (N=17)	Neighbours (N=13)	X-Files (N=12)	Friends (N=11)
Tom and Jerry (N=8)	Blue Peter (N=7)	EastEnders (N=7)	Neighbours (N=9)	X Files (N=12)	Friends (N=11)	EastEnders (N=12)	Home and Away (N=10)
"Football" (N=7)	Tom and Jerry (N=6)	Star Trek (N=5)	Animal Hospital (N=8)	"Football" (N=9)	Home and Away (N=8)	The Simpsons (N=10)	X Files (N=8)
Art Attack (N=6)	Home and Away (N=6)	They Think It's All Over (N=5)	The Simpsons (N=5)	The Simpsons / Star Trek/ Red Dwarf (N=8)	Sister, Sister/ Heartbreak High (N=4)	Star Trek (N=7)	E.R. (N=7)

TABLE 3.2f

Genre of favourite programme by gender, age and social grade (Percentages, N=1188)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE			
		Boy	Girl	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	AB	C1	C2	DE
Soap	26	11	**41**	11	24	33	33	26	25	25	27
Cartoon	15	**20**	10	**36**	16	6	5	13	11	16	19
Sport	14	**27**	2	5	14	17	21	15	16	15	12
Other series/ serial	13	8	**18**	12	16	13	11	12	15	13	11
Comedy	7	6	8	2	5	11	10	9	7	9	5
Sci-fi	6	**9**	2	1	4	8	10	4	7	4	7
Mag. Prog	5	5	5	14	4	2	1	6	6	5	4
Quiz/family show	4	5	2	3	5	3	4	4	5	3	3
Wildlife/ animals	2	1	4	3	5	2	-	2	3	2	2
News/doc.	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	1
Film	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	2
Music prog.	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1
Chat show	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-
Other	4	4	3	9	4	1	1	4	2	3	5

TABLE 3.2g

Top three favourite genres, age by gender

	AGE			
	6-8yrs	9-1lyrs	12-l4yrs	l5-l7yrs
Boys	cartoons 48% magazine 13% sport 10%	sport 29% soaps 15% sci fi 12%	sport 29% soaps 15% sci fi 12%	sport 37% soaps 15% sci fi 15%
Girls	cartoons 25% soaps 18% series 18%	soaps 41% series 20% cartoons 11%	soaps 53% series 18% comedy 11%	soaps 52% series 15% comedy 12%

TABLE 3.2h

How many out of three favourite programmes belong to same type of genre?

	TYPE OF GENRE			
	Narrative %	**Funny** %	**Sport** %	**Other** %
One	31	73	75	75
Two	36	23	20	20
Three	33	4	5	5

TABLE 3.2i

Target audience of favourite programme by gender, age and social grade (%, N=1188)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE***				SOCIAL GRADE			
		Boy	Girl	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	AB	C1	C2	DE
Family/adult	73	74	72	35	71	88	95	77	76	72	70
Child	24	22	26	58	27	10	4	20	23	25	27
Not classif.	3	4	2	7	2	2	1	3	2	4	3

Note: *** $p<0.001$

TABLE 3.2j

Opinions about favourite programme by gender, age and social grade (%, N=1188)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE			
		Boy	Girl	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	AB	C1	C2	DE
Older people like it	87	86	89	74	87	92	**95*****	88	87	91	*84**
Younger people like it	74	73	74	78	68	73	76	74	69	75	76
Talk to friends about it	74	71	76	52	70	**8 5**	**86*****	69	75	75	73
Parents keen for child to watch it	70	71	68	68	69	72	70	66	70	73	70

Note: *** p<0.001

TABLE 3.2k

Origin of favourite programme by gender, age and social grade (Percentages, N=1188)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE***				SOCIAL GRADE			
		Boy	Girl	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	AB	C1	C2	DE
National	55	55	56	45	56	**59**	**60**	56	60	54	52
Internat.	41	40	42	**47**	41	38	38	39	38	42	43
Not classif.	4	5	3	8	3	3	3	5	2	4	5

Note: *** p<0.001

TABLE 3.3a

Which media do children concentrate on? (Percentages, based on users of each medium)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE			
		Boy	Girl	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	AB	C1	C2	DE
PRINT											
Book (not school)	46	42	**49***	45	50	48	41	**55**	48	43	39*
Magazine (9+)	26	19	**30*****	0	24	**32**	21*	27	25	24	28
Comic	14	**17**	9*	**19**	14	9	3*	16	16	13	11
Newspaper (9+)	23	22	25	0	12	14	**32*****	15	17	24	**31***
INTERACTIVE											
PC (not games)	43	**47**	37*	27	27	**46**	**45****	44	44	36	48
Computer games	40	51	**22*****	39	**50**	37	31*****	40	42	41	36
SCREEN											
Television	43	43	43	42	43	46	41	42	43	47	40
Video	18	20	16	16	19	17	19	14	15	21	21
AUDIO											
Radio	12	10	15	13	14	11	12	13	13	9	14
Music tapes	28	24	30*	19	24	24	40*****	24	26	26	32
PHONE	15	12	**18****	13	10	12	**21****	**20**	**18**	11	12*

Note: *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

TABLE 3.3b

How often children flick over channels and read TV guide by those with and without cable/satellite (N=c.1230)

	Flick over during programme			**Flick over when ads come on**			**Read TV guide to decide what to watch**		
	ALL	Cable/satellite		ALL	Cable/satellite		ALL	Cable/ satellite	
	%	Yes %	No %	%	Yes %	No %	%	Yes %	No %
Never	10	10	10	21	21	20	27	31	25
Hardly ever	11	10	12	13	12	15	20	17	21
Sometimes	52	49	53	45	42	45	36	35	37
Usually	27	31	25	21	25	20	18	18	17

TABLE 3.4a

Three things which are most likely to make you popular by gender, age and social grade (N=969)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE			SOCIAL GRADE	
	%	Boy %	Girl %	9-11 %	12-14 %	15-17 %	ABC1 %	C2DE %
A good sense of humour	55	57	52	40	56	**67*****	59	51*
Wearing the right clothes	42	38	**45****	32	**49**	44***	39	44
Being yourself/natural	40	32	**48*****	35	34	**50*****	40	39
Being helpful/kind	35	33	38	44	28	35***	36	35
Being good at sport	32	46	19***	**35**	16	8***	32	33
Having the latest things	25	24	27	21	**30**	24*	**29**	23*
Being good-looking	25	21	**28****	18	26	**30*****	25	25
Doing well at school	19	19	20	35	16	8***	16	**22****
Having money to spend	19	21	17	20	19	18	17	20

Note: *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

TABLE 3.4b

Top three choices for what makes you popular, gender within age

9-11		12-14		15-17	
Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl
Good at sport 53%	Kind/ helpful 45%	Sense of humour 59%	Right clothes 55%	Sense of humour 74%	Sense of humour 61%
Kind/ helpful 44%	Sense of humour 42%	Good at sport 52%	Sense of humour 53%	Being natural 42%	Being natural 58%
Sense of humour 39%	Being natural 42%	Right clothes 43%	Being natural 42%	Right clothes 39%	Right clothes 49%

TABLE 3.4c

What will be most important when you are an adult, by gender, age, social grade (N=1299)

	ALL	GENDER***		AGE***				SOCIAL GRADE	
	%	Boy %	Girl %	6-8 %	9-11 %	12-14 %	15-17 %	ABC1 %	C2DE %
Happy family life	30	26	**3 3**	31	31	26	32	31	29
Good education	22	24	21	7	**3 4**	**3 3**	15	22	22
Interesting job	21	20	23	15	14	23	**3 2**	23	20
Lots of money	15	**1 9**	11	**2 7**	11	10	12	13	16
Lots of friends	8	8	8	14	6	4	8	9	7
Good looks	3	2	3	4	4	3	1	2	4
Don't know	1	2	1	3	1	-	1	1	2

Note: *** p<0.001

TABLE 3.4d

Percentage of parents identifying as one of three changes they would most like to see (N=972)

	ALL	GENDER		SOCIAL GRADE			
	%	Father %	Mother%	AB %	C1 %	C2 %	DE %
More emphasis on family life	63	61	63	**69**	**63**	**65**	54**
Less emphasis on money	58	50	**60****	57	62	62	52
Greater emphasis on education	58	57	58	52	56	59	63
Greater respect for authority	48	46	49	45	52	48	46
A simpler, more natural lifestyle	37	34	37	4	34	39	40
Decrease in importance of work	18	**24**	16**	**27**	19	15	13***
More emphasis on the development of technology	10	**23**	6***	9	11	8	11

Note: *** p<0.001

TABLE 3.4e

What young people think would be important when grown up, by main interest

	Sport %	**Music** %	**Humour** %	**Nature** %	**Horror** %	**Stars** %
Having a good sense of humour	53	56	**69**	52	*48*	50
Wearing the right clothes	44	**53**	33	*26*	43	**50**
Being yourself/natural	*32*	47	37	49	41	45
Being helpful/kind	33	33	*27*	**50**	*26*	41
Being good at sport	**50**	*19*	28	27	*16*	25
Having the latest things	27	26	24	*12*	21	**36**
Being good-looking	23	28	21	20	28	30
Doing well at school	18	17	*13*	**27**	*15*	**27**
Having money to spend	19	21	20	*11*	16	16

TABLE 3.4f

What makes someone popular, by genre of favourite TV programme (%)

	Narrative	Funny	Sport	Other
Having a good sense of humour	53	**65*****	55	49
Wearing the right clothes	48**	*34***	43	35
Being yourself/natural	**43****	42	*29****	30
Being helpful/kind	33	**43***	32	34
Being good at sport	*26****	31	**52*****	**47****
Having the latest things	25	27	28	28
Being good-looking	27	24	24	23
Doing well at school	18	17	13	**31*****
Having money to spend	19	16	24	21

Note: *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01

CHAPTER 4

MEDIA IN THE HOME

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter asks two connected questions. Which media do children and young people have access to at home? Where are these media located within the home? The location of a medium within the home is itself indicative of access, and further reveals the meanings and practices which accompany its use. However, a simple relation between ownership, access and use should not be assumed: having a computer at home does not mean the child is necessarily allowed to use it, or wants to use it.

Obtaining a clear picture of the relation between ownership, access and use is particularly important for children and young people. While it may be fairly assumed that goods in the home are available to the adults who live there, so that household-based surveys of media goods provide a reasonable indication of access and use, children and young people lack power in determining both household purchases and use practices. Thus care must be taken in drawing inferences regarding children from surveys of media possessions in 'the household' or 'the family'. Particularly for newer media, households may possess goods which the children are not able or not allowed to use. In this chapter, we pursue the question of access; in the next chapter we integrate questions of access with those of use.

A key feature of the new media environment is the multiplication of personally owned goods, so that children increasingly have their own television, video, computer, radio, and so forth. To distinguish between household access and personal ownership of media, we asked children and young people (and their parents) in our national survey to tell us both which goods they have in the home, and which they have in their bedroom.

Of course, media goods move around the home - sometimes to a new but permanent location, and sometimes on a more frequent and variable basis. However, mapping the relation between media in the home and media in the child's bedroom is suggestive of the ways in which parents and children view the role of media within the home, and in particular, the balance between locating goods in communal or personal spaces is indicative of the expected patterns of use (placing a computer in the living room suggests, and facilitates, shared family uses more than does the computer in the child's bedroom).

There have been several studies of children and young people's use of media within the home (e.g. Goodman, 1983; Lull, 1990; Palmer, 1986). Most have used qualitative methods to explore family dynamics surrounding media, rather than combining qualitative and quantitative methods to trace the relation between meanings of media for family members, through to a mapping of media goods within the home, and then to the patterns of time spent with media in the home in the context of the dynamics of family life.[1] Moreover, most of these studies have been conducted at a time when the family was seen to cluster around - or argue about - the television and video in the living room. Likened to the family hearth of former times, 'family television' was the site of a domestic power struggle to determine media use between genders and generations. Today, the vast majority of children live in multi-set homes, and videos, computers etc are also multiplying within as well as across households. This raises new questions. It is now not a case of competition for the use of scarce

[1] Silverstone and Hirsch (1992; see also Livingstone, 1992) traced the 'biographies' of media goods within the home for 18 families, demonstrating the importance of spatial location in the home. They showed how the public meanings of media goods are transformed when they enter the 'moral economy' of the household according to the operation of four linked processes: appropriation, objectification, incorporation and conversion. 'Objectification' is particularly relevant here as it is revealed in the aesthetic display of objects within the home, revealing the 'classificatory principles that inform a household's sense of itself and its place in the world' (Silverstone & Hirsh, 1992, p. 22).

media, but of choices between media and, moreover, choices to use media alone or with others (see also Chapter 10).

What are the emerging boundaries both within and outside the home between public and private spaces, and between communal and personalised or individualised spaces? How do children and young people perceive the public and private spaces in which their leisure time is spent? We begin by contextualising media use in relation to the competing leisure alternatives, focussing on the boundary between the home and outside. Next, we explore the boundary between the living room and the bedroom, the central issue being the balance struck between the personal, private life of the child and family life.

4.2 LEISURE INSIDE/OUTSIDE THE HOME

4.2.1 Children's leisure preferences

The media were most often spontaneously mentioned only as a second-best substitute for being outdoors or in the company of friends:

> Interviewer: What's a really boring day at home? What would you do?
> C: I would play with the computer if I had to - *Chips Challenge* and *Peter Pan*.
> (7 year-old girl living in rural area)
>
> Mum gets us a video or a computer game if we have to stay in because of the fighting.
> (13 year-old boy living in an area with a high level of unemployment and violence)

In our pilot survey[2] we asked children which three things they would do on a really boring day and which three on a really good day (see Table 4.2a). Answers were illuminating, and put paid to any idea for example that children are natural couch potatoes. On a really good day, only one in seven (14%) would turn to television. Instead, 'a good day' is a day when you go out. The rare treat[3] of 'going to the cinema' (nominated by 41%) comes top of the list, and the relatively common, social and outdoor activities of 'seeing friends outside school time' and 'playing sport' are named by almost as many (39% and 35% respectively).

INSERT TABLE 4.2a HERE

It is also noteworthy, however, that 26% of boys and 19% of girls name 'spending time with a computer (PC) doing homework, surfing the Internet etc' as something they would do on a really good day, indicating the glamour of IT among young people (see Chapter 7).

There are some interesting gender differences. Boys and girls both include seeing friends and going to the cinema amongst their top three choices, but sport and home entertainment media (playing computer games, watching television) figure more highly for boys, while social activities (going out to a club, phoning a friend) are more important for girls.

By way of contrast, when children were asked to imagine what they would be likely to end up doing on a really boring day, watching television was by far the most common response (see Table 4.2a).4 In general, the media top the list of things you do on a boring day and activities outside the home are the least often named. Of course this does *not* mean that television is perceived by children as boring

[2]We surveyed 700 10-16 year-olds on the broadcasting industry's YoungView panel. They were asked to choose from a list of 19 activities.

[3]Children most commonly reported going to the cinema less than once a month, while seeing friends and playing sport were reported as happening almost every day.

4 This was confirmed by the main survey. When we presented children with a list of 11 media and asked which ONE they would choose if they wanted to 'stop being bored', television was most often identified, except by boys under the age of 15, who preferred computer or video games.

in itself, but rather it is the most readily available resource to combat boredom (see Chapter 5).

Children and young people constantly talk of 'being bored' and we paid particular attention to their explanations of what this experience means to them (see also Chapter 5). It is most often linked to being lonely or without the company of friends. The following extract is taken from an interview with a middle-class mother of three boys aged 10, 13 and 14. The family live in an unspoilt rural area two miles from a tiny village. The family house is large and comfortably appointed.

Interviewer:	So what do the boys do around here?
Mother:	Well we have done the usual things, like they have been in air cadets and they have been to scouts... I think we are quite fortunate here that we have a cinema up in <L> and one in <A>. We belong to a country club at <M> where we play golf and do clay pigeon shooting in the back meadow. Well they have all got bikes so they meet their friends and perhaps go and get something to eat at <A>.
Interviewer	So it's a safe area?
Mother:	Quite safe yes, I think it is still quite unspoilt. We have a boating lake nearby so the facilities around here are quite good. But in the winter we have to take them to the cinema because there are no buses. We give them the mobile phone and then when the film is finished we come and fetch them home.

(Middle-class mother of a 13 year-old boy)

This next extract is part of an interview with an Asian mother, living in a working-class area where unemployment, racial tension and crime-rates are high. The family live in a shabby small semi-detached flat above the corner shop where both father and mother work for long hours. There are two children, a boy of seven and a girl of five.

Interviewer:	Is there much for <H> and his sister to do around here?
Mother:	Not really, no. Unfortunately there's not, no. There's a leisure centre, there's a YMCA as well. They feel kind of outcast though because there's not many Asian children around here. So really what I have to do is to do things with them in the household and in the back yard, or take them down to the Metro Centre because they've got a good leisure centre there as well, so that's quite good for them.
Interviewer:	What about parks, are there any nearby?
Mother:	There is, there's a new water park, but er I'm very reluctant to take them there.
Interviewer:	Why?
Mother:	It's mainly with older children on their bikes and they are, er, hanging around and you don't get many other children there. And really the parks are not up to standard because there's loads of rubbish... It's quite frightening as well sometimes when I take them to the park. I've had one bad experience taking the children there.
Interviewer:	Right. Does <H> have much opportunity to go out without adults around him or would you say you are generally with him?
Mother:	I'm with him all the time. I wouldn't feel safe to let him go out on his own.

(Working-class mother of a 7 year-old boy)

In the eyes of their parents, the leisure opportunities available to the children in these two families are clearly very different. The attractions of the external environment and its perceived safety could not be more contrasted. Yet from the children's point of view, things seem very different.

The three boys, for all the beauty of their rural surroundings and the wealth of structured leisure opportunities which surround them, feel isolated:

Interviewer:	It didn't look like it was possible to walk to places from here.
S:	No it is three miles to <L> and probably two miles to <M>.
Interviewer:	Right and if you want to go out and buy some chocolate?
M:	You'd have to go two miles.

Interviewer: Right. So it is a big deal.
M: Yes
Interviewer: And do you cycle around?
M: Yes
A: I'm not allowed on the road on my bike so I am usually stuck at home watching TV or something or reading a book...When we want to get out we try and get out but sometimes we have done everything and that's all that there is to do and it is just so boring. There is really nothing to do around here.

(Teenage boys living in a middle-class family)

As in this account, the media, and especially television, were introduced by the children into the conversation in terms of a second-best activity - something they did when not able to be outdoors and with their friends. By contrast, despite the difficult surroundings and their parents' fears, <H> and his sister <R> have readier access to their friends and a more positive attitude towards their leisure time:

Interviewer: When you are not at school, what sort of things you do?
R: Play out.
H: I play out. Play with my toys when I'm grounded and do my homework before I go to bed.
R: No you don't!
H: Yes I do and sometimes I do in the morning.
Interviewer: And when you are outside, what are you doing?
H: I ride my bike. Sometimes I go round the block with my friends... I go up this road and if I am allowed I cross the road all the way up there. But the Nursery is at the top, so I stop and come back. I am allowed to do that if I ask my Dad or my Mam.
Interviewer: So do you play out with friends or do you play out on your own?
H: With friends. If my friends had to go in and I'm allowed out then I would just play by myself.
Interviewer: And what's it like living round here?
H: Good. But I'm waiting to have my room fixed and it is a lot of hard work tidying up, but it is good here. It is good here.

(Boy, 7, and girl, 5, living in a working-class family)

This preference for being outdoors was almost universal amongst the children and young people we talked to and, irrespective of age, it was the social aspect - *the opportunity to be with friends* - which was the primary attraction. We encountered a number of examples where children living in apparently idyllic rural environments had by their own accounts "nothing to do" - without the companionship of other children their surroundings seem meaningless. In the extract below, the mother of a six-year old daughter describes her previous life in an isolated cottage.

She did watch a lot of TV then. She would watch everything that was for children...I had a young and very demanding asthmatic baby so there wasn't the time for her. She would watch other children playing on *Sesame Street* and just almost interact with the children on the television because there was no one up there. You see I didn't have the energy to get out all the time, or to have people around all the time... It was useful... She just used to have a wee chair in that corner and sit there glued.

(Middle-class mother of a 6 year-old girl)

The family have now moved to a housing estate in a small village where the children play regularly in the street outside. The children's social life, and therefore the place of the media in it, has been transformed.

Interviewer: Imagine you've just got back from school. What would you do?
B: I like playing out the front or something.
Interviewer: Who would you play with?
B: I like playing with <A> who's 9 and <C> who's 8 who's <A>'s sister, or <M> or my friend next door, <L>.

Interviewer:	What would you do?
B:	We would play on our bikes or something. Or I would play with <L> next door on our bikes. We like playing follow my leader on our bikes. (Laughs)
Interviewer:	And what's best - being outside or in the house?
B:	Outside.

(6 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

These interviews were typical of many, clearly demonstrating that "outdoors" above all was a social space where the children and young people we talked to could be together with friends. It represented excitement, freedom from adult supervision and freedom to explore.

4.2.2 Parental fears of "outdoors"

There are signs that for many children and young people the opportunities to be outdoors and free from adult supervision are being steadily eroded and as a consequence the meaning of social space outside the home is being redefined.

Parents, remembering their own childhood, feel that their children are losing out because they cannot safely be allowed to be outdoors unsupervised. Interview after interview produced similar accounts. The following extract is from a working-class family in a Northern city. While clearly not well-off, they owned a fair number of consumer durables. The father is unemployed and the mother rents out baby equipment. They have three children - a daughter aged 9 and a younger brother and sister.

Interviewer:	Does <S> generally spend a lot of time outside or is she mostly indoors?
Mother:	Not much outside during the week, because with the garage being outdoors and it doesn't shut until 6 and there's traffic that's constantly coming and going. But on the weekend given the chance she'll be outdoors a lot.
Father:	Oh yes.
Interviewer:	And how does that compare with the amount of time you were outdoors when you were her age?
Mother:	I was never in!
Father:	Neither was I!
Mother:	From 5 o'clock until 8.30 I was off.
Father:	Yes and me. As soon as I woke up in the morning I was off.
Interviewer:	Why do you think things have changed?
Mother:	I think it has a lot to do with society. In our day it used to be 'Watch for the bad man' but now it's "Watch for the bad man and the bad woman and the bad policeman and the little boys and girls". You cannot trust anybody. It's a horrible thing to say, but you cannot trust anybody.
Father:	No, you can't.
Mother:	I'm not paranoid. I'm just extra protective when they're outside and most of the time I'm in here and I'm thinking "Alright, what's happening to them?"

(Working-class parents of a 9 year-old girl)

These kinds of fears were not restricted to families living in urban areas. Parents and children in the most sheltered rural environments were affected by such concerns and the media - news reports on television and in the newspapers - often figured in parents' accounts. The following extract comes from an interview with a family living in rural Scotland. Their son is 10. He has two younger sisters.

Interviewer:	Is there anything that you value about television - that's a positive thing about it for him?
Father:	Yes, factual things. And I like, I really do like them watching things that could hurt them, you know. And then if it's on like and I say to them "Now see, that's why mummy tells you no. And you think mummy's being bad. There - yes - it's telling you" /
Interviewer:	/it could happen/
Father:	/them kind of things.
Mother:	Yes and the national news. I feel it's good for them to watch the national news

as well because I mean they do get asked things about the news throughout the world at school. And I mean they do - they get a talk time and that at school, so I feel it's important for them to know what's going on.

Interviewer: So do they watch the news regularly with you, or does <D> watch the news?

Father: <D> would, aye.

Mother <D> watches it.

Father: But I don't like them to watch too much. The newspaper, you know, how <D> always grabs the newspaper, and you know how every day there's somebody abducted and somebody killed in that. And that gets to me. So I've got to watch, I've got to be careful of what is on the news and that. But then in another sense it is letting them see what is going on out there and they can't just go out and roam about, do you know what I mean. You've got to look at it both ways. Alright it's not nice for the kids to think that there's a kid their age being murdered or that, but then I think well it is let them see.

Mother: Well it's getting the message home.

(Working-class parents of a 10 year-old boy)

Three out of ten parents (31%) in our survey confirm that their children "are often upset by violence on television news reports" (compared with only 21% who say this about things their child has seen on fictional programmes).

We also asked parents how safe the environment was for their children to play in, compared with the environment in which they had grown up (see Table 4.2b).

INSERT TABLE 4.2b HERE

The contrasts are stark. Only a tiny proportion of parents (5%) feel that the streets where *they* lived at their child's age were "not very" or "not at all safe", compared with almost a third (31%) who feel this is the case nowadays for their child. The situation is deemed particularly unsafe by the parents of 6-8 year-olds, 42% of whom think the streets where they live are either "not very" or "not at all safe".

Unsurprisingly therefore, 31% of parents say that their child spends "very little" or "none" of their time outside the family home or garden without adults around. Only 12% indicated that this had been the case for themselves at their child's age (Table 4.2c).

INSERT TABLE 4.2c HERE

As Table 4.2d shows, working-class children, and older children, have greater access to being outside unsupervised by adults.

INSERT TABLE 4.2d HERE

In sum, it seems that great changes in public perceptions of the dangers of the streets for children have taken place in recent decades. Hillman et al (1990) found that while in 1971 80% of seven and eight year-old children walked to school on their own, by 1990 this figure had dropped to 9% - a change ascribed mainly to increased car ownership and worry about safety on the roads, although about a quarter of parents were worried about abduction. Ennew (1994) argues that much of British children's lives is ruled by "the idea of danger", which she sees as having taken a new twist at the beginning of the 1990s.

4.2.3 Availability of leisure activities outdoors

There's nothing to do really... 'cos they've just gone and closed down the <club>.
Can't go down there no more.
<The Club> was a disco.
For our age.

But there's nothing here now.
(15 year old girls living in rural area)

While parents bemoan their children's loss of freedom, young people talk instead in terms of a lack of facilities. Despite parents' fears and reluctance to allow their children the same freedom which they themselves enjoyed, it is not so much parentally-imposed restrictions that irk young people in the United Kingdom most, but the lack, as they perceive it, of social provision for leisure activities.

We asked children and young people aged 9-17 how they see their access to the outside world. Interestingly, the majority (79%) think that they have enough freedom to go out when they want to - their discontent is expressed in other terms. Around two thirds (65%) complain that there is not enough for them to do in the area where they live (see Table 4.2e).

Older children are most discontented - three-quarters of teenagers make this complaint. Girls and children from DE families are also likely to say there is not enough to do. Only 7% of DE girls aged 15-17 and 15% of DE boys said they have enough to do in the area where they live.[5] (We will consider which organised activities young people participate in outside the home in Chapter 5.)

INSERT TABLE 4.2e HERE

In practice, restrictions on going out arise both from the combination of parental anxieties and the availability of leisure activities outside the home. Social grade makes a difference, for financial constraints make it more difficult for working-class parents to structure their children's leisure in the same way as their middle-class counterparts (see Chapter 5). When we asked parents what regularly leads to arguments with their child, working-class parents are much more likely to name "going out", "how much money they can have" and media with open-ended costs attached - "using the phone".

To some extent, the distinction we have drawn between media at home and non-media leisure outdoors is too simple. For example, almost two thirds (62%) of children aged 9+ say they sometimes go to the cinema, although almost all of these (90%) claim to go once a month or less. Similarly, cybercafés currently attract some, albeit a tiny proportion of the population under 18 (fewer than 1% of our sample; see Chapter 9).

A larger proportion of children and young people (68%) use personalised media such as the walkman, allowing them to create a private (soundproofed against encroachment from the outside world) and individualised (through personal choice of tapes) environment around themselves even while in public places.

Similarly the mobile phone has extended the use of the telephone: nearly one third of families own one (Table 4.3a). As costs come down, parents' own fears for their children outside the home, together with pressures from young people themselves, seem likely to make this a growth area. The mobile phone's negative image amongst young people - "it's for sad people" "for posers" - seems to be on the wane. Indications are that young people are eager to own one. In our survey a mobile phone figured next to the multi-media computer in children's wish list for a media-related birthday gift and was the technology wanted by the largest single proportion of 15-17 year-olds (see Chapter 2).

There is one other leisure activity outside the home where the media play a considerable role - going to a friend's house. Tellingly, this takes place indoors in a domestic space. As we see in Chapter 10, sizeable proportions of young people are motivated to visit friends to use media that they do not have access to at home. Around two thirds of boys aged 9+ go round to a friend's house to play computer or video games and half of 15-16 year-olds of either gender do the same to watch a video. Around a quarter sometimes go to use a PC (not for games) or watch satellite or cable television. Such social use of media gives the lie to suggestions that the media are necessarily isolating or lead to the increased privatisation of children's lives.

[5] Matthews (1998) confirms that only 33% of children and young people say they find plenty of things to do locally, while 65% claim to be bored in their spare time; in addition 82% claim they prefer being out and about to being inside, but the streets are perceived by half as fearful places.

The parents and children we talked to often explicitly link restrictions on the child's access to the world outside to increased media use within the home. Here is a middle-class mother living in a rural environment talking about her 10 year-old son:

Interviewer:	You see television as playing a different role in <L>'s life than it did in yours?
Mother:	Oh yes definitely. Um, I can remember playing outside in the street for hours on end and having a lot more freedom to play out. They haven't got that as children now ... he's in more than we ever were as children. Yeah we used to play out a lot, lot more.

(Middle-class mother of a 10 year-old boy)

The parallel interview with <L> confirmed the importance of the media in his life. He has a television set, a hi-fi and a games machine in his bedroom and calculates (no doubt an exaggeration) that he spends about six hours a day watching television and three or four playing computer games. He would like to go out more often, but says the garden is too small and he is not allowed to play football.

Interviewer:	So what would you do before 9 O'clock on a school day?
L:	Play on my computer and watch TV.
Interviewer;	And what sort of things do you watch in the evening then?
L:	On a school day I would watch *The Bill* and a few - other stuff. And then at the weekends I would watch anything and everything until 10 O'clock.
Interviewer:	What sort of things would you do in the mornings on a Saturday?
L:	Just get up and watch TV until about 12 O'clock. Get dressed and have dinner and watch TV again.
Interviewer:	Have you got a TV in your room?
L:	Yeah. I spend most of my time in there.
Interviewer:	Why is that?
L:	I prefer it. I like being on my own sometimes. Watch what I want to watch instead of watching what my sister wants to watch or what my mum wants to watch.
Interviewer:	And in your bedroom do you ever have your friends round?
L:	Yeah. They used to come and we'd play on the computer.

Television in particular is often ruefully acknowledged as an easy way of keeping the family entertained. Parents work hard and often do not have the time or energy to do more active things with their children (see Chapter 5).Unsurprisingly therefore, for most families the media are now central: households with children lead the way in personalised, multiple ownership of media goods. The family of the three boys who live in the country is a case in point:

Mother:	We have the CD-Rom, and television - all the boys have got them so we have five upstairs and there are (counts), five downstairs.
Interviewer:	Is that because of the multiplicity of channels?
Mother:	It's the multiplicity of children! (laughs)
Interviewer:	Do you have different tastes?
Mother:	Yes, I think that we do really, everybody is very individual, erm and it also allows everybody to relax in their own way and in their own time.

The boys confirm that television sets have colonised almost every room in the house, including one each in their bedrooms:

Interviewer:	Right, so how many televisions have you got in this house?
S:	Millions!
Interviewer:	Millions? (laughs) Is that one over there, hiding in that cupboard?
S:	Yes. One, two, three (pause) We have got about eleven or twelve.
M:	It's about nine isn't it?...Well, most of them are quite old ones but we have got a new one in there and that is a new one as well.

4.3 AVAILABILITY OF MEDIA IN THE HOME

4.3.1 Media at home

INSERT TABLE 4.3a HERE

Which children and young people have which media at home? Table 4.3a shows the distribution of media across households with children, according to the gender and age of the child and the social grade of the family. Screen and music media are the most common, indeed, they are almost ubiquitous. One in fourteen has no telephone, and one in eight has few or no books (defined to exclude school books). While these may be considered information-poor, in terms of traditional media access, two-thirds have a TV-linked games machine, over half have a personal computer at home, four in ten have multiple television channels, and a growing, but still small, minority have a modem/Internet access.

Type of media access in the home environment differs greatly according to the social background of the child. Only for the most commonly owned pieces of media hardware - television, including cable and satellite television, and the hi-fi - are there no differences between the social grades. Children and young people from working-class families are significantly less likely to have access to books or personal computers. Three-quarters of DE families, compared with almost all AB families, have a shelf of books: only one in seven children from DE families have access to a multimedia computer at home compared with half of children from AB families. The one exception to the rule is the TV-linked games machine: significantly more working-class families than middle-class families own one.

There are also some significant age-related trends. Thus families where there is a child in the middle age-range (9-14) are more likely to have a gameboy and/or a TV-linked games machine in the home. Families with an older child are more likely to have hi-fis or personal stereos or a PC. The youngest children's families are more likely to have a camcorder and books.

The PC and the TV-linked games machine are the only pieces of media hardware which show a significant gender skew in distribution: in particular, almost three-quarters of boys compared with around half of girls have a games machine somewhere in the home.

4.3.2 Media in the bedroom

However, if we consider instead the media hardware which children have personally *in their own rooms* (see Table 4.3b), a rather different picture emerges. Music, books and television are all present in two in three bedrooms. Other media follow some way behind: games machines and gameboys are owned by around one third, and one in five have their own video recorder. Much less common, 12% have a PC in their room, 5% have multichannel television or a telephone, and almost none (1%) have the Internet.

For children's bedrooms, age trends are more in evidence: older children are more likely to own everything with one exception - books. Following the pattern found in the home generally, fewer working-class children and young people have books in their own rooms and more have TV-linked games machines. However, in contrast to the situation in the home, more working-class children have their own television set and video recorder.

Most interestingly, there are no social grade differences in the numbers of children having a PC *in their own room*, although, as we saw, middle-class households are much more likely to have a PC *somewhere* in the home. PCs in British homes, unlike television sets, are not so common as to have regularly become a personal possession of children even in middle-class homes.

INSERT TABLE 4.3b HERE

Looking at those parents who have made the decision to buy a PC, we see that class differences emerge regarding the decision about *where to locate* the PC in the home.

INSERT TABLE 4.3c HERE

Working-class parents, if they do invest in a PC, are twice as likely as middle-class parents to place it in the child's bedroom, or to have a second machine in the child's bedroom (see Table 4.3c).

Significant gender effects also appear for children's personal ownership of media items. Once again some of the most telling differences involve computers. We noted earlier (Table 4.3b) that boys are twice as likely as girls to own their own PC. We now find that boys are more than twice as likely to have the family's only computer located in their room, or to have an additional PC of their own (see Table 4.3d). Middle-class families are less likely than working-class families to invest in a second computer for their daughters, but in other respects the gender bias is just as marked in working-class families where 33% of boys have the only PC in the home in their rooms compared with only 13% of girls.

INSERT TABLE 4.3d HERE

The following extract, from an interview with working-class parents of a 15 year-old daughter, <J>, and an 8 year-old son, <M>, reflects the kind of parental attitudes which can underpin such findings.

Father:	We've got a computer in <M>'s room.
Mother:	He's been doing a little at school sort of since 5-ish. But it isn't really a fantastic one. It's mainly just one for writing so that he can do stories and he also likes painting on it.
Father:	If we've got enough money we'd get him a CD-Rom.
Mother:	That's what we'd need for him because of his hearing you see. He has got a special needs problem and so he needs help. So we wanted a CD-Rom so that it would help him but we haven't been able to get round to that.
Interviewer:	Is <J> into computers and that sort of thing?
Mother:	No, not really. She has never really said much about it.
Father:	She uses it.
Mother:	Yes she uses it, but she has never really got that much into it though really has she? She will use this one but I mean we haven't really got a printer or anything so it is not that much help to her.
Father:	We did have a printer but it packed up and so we didn't bother to get a new one. She does like the computer.
Mother:	Yes, but she's never really said that she's done that much with it though has she?

(Working-class parents of a girl, 15, and boy, 8)

However, as we shall see in the next chapter, figures reflecting ownership should not be considered the equivalent of use. For several reasons, children may be provided with things which they never or rarely use. In our household interviews we commonly found broken, unreliable or out-of-date PCs, or computers without the necessary software or printers, which could still find themselves listed as possessions.

The discrepancy between ownership and use may be greater for working-class children. Their parents do not as often use computers themselves and consequently may lack the ability to help their children: 68% of middle-class (ABC1) parents said they used a PC either at home or at work, but only 38% of working-class (C2DE) parents do so. Further, amongst these users 26% of middle-class parents classed themselves as "very comfortable" with the technology, compared with only 16% of working-class parents.

One boy, for example, has an old Amstrad, bought second-hand for him by his parents because they "couldn't afford a new one". Asked if she encouraged her son to use it, his mother replied:

> Not really. I'm frightened about his eyes because they are on in a long time. I think it does strain his eyes... I'm still a bit wary because basically I don't understand what's going on with computers. The more understandingthat I have

then the more confidence I will have.
(Working class mother of 6 year-old boy)

Her son himself likes to use the Amstrad for games, but finds it a frustrating experience as the following extract shows:

Interviewer:	I would like you to show me your favourite game, play it and tell me what's good about it.
H:	I need a chair.
Interviewer;	Do you normally have a chair when you play it?
H:	Yes I have to concentrate... It's not working!
Interviewer;	Right. So now you're showing me how you play *Scooby Doo*.
H:	It's rewinding... Oh what am I doing? The tape has finished - it's not going round.
Interviewer:	Is this meant to go somewhere?
H:	Oh yes. There.
Interviewer:	Here we go, is that right now?
H:	Now it should work. (Pause. Takes out *Scooby Doo*) I'll just put a different one on because this one isn't working.
Interviewer:	Oh you're not going to play me *Scooby Doo*?
H:	No because it isn't working or something.
Interviewer:	Is it always so difficult to get it started?
H:	Yes.
Interviewer:	Oh it is? So you really struggle to get it started, don't you?
H:	Yes. It isn't working for some reason.

(Working class boy, aged 6)

4.3.3 Who acquires which media?

We have seen that personal provision of particular media depends on both the age and gender of the child and the social grade of the household. In most of this report we measure social class according to the market research segmentation from A to E. However, for acquisition of domestic media, the story is more complex than can be captured by a simple 'trickle down' theory (which supposes that highest group acquire, say, a PC and last of all, if ever, the lowest group 'catch up').

Underlying our measure of social grade are measures of both economic and cultural capital, to use Bourdieu's terms (1982). In other words, social grade is related most strongly to the income of the chief wage earner, but also takes into account his or her educational qualifications. In a two-parent household, the household income varies according to the earnings of both parents, and the 'cultural capital' of the household may vary with the level of both mother and father's education.

Is the acquisition of media goods primarily a matter of available financial resources, or do the educational and cultural resources of parents matter? In this section, we tease apart the effects of household income and parental education, separating these also from the effects of the child's age or gender. What is the relative importance of these very different factors in determining which children have access to which media?

An interesting picture is revealed by a regression analysis, run for both household and personal ownership of each medium (Table 4.3e). This shows, for example, that having a television in the child's bedroom is predicted most strongly by age and gender (more older children, more boys) but that education and income both have a part to play; those with less educated parents and, independently adding to the explanation, those in lower income households, are also more likely to have a television in their bedroom. As nearly everyone has a television elsewhere in their house, however, none of these factors is a significant predictor (or, to put it another way, a more idiosyncratic explanation must be sought for those few households without a television in the living room).

While predictors of different media vary, several points emerge from the overall findings. First, across the board household income is a consistently important factor in predicting who has media *at home* (not in the bedroom): this is as true for the possession of books or music media as it is for the PC or teletext.

Interestingly, income levels often work in the opposite direction to parental education: for the screen entertainment media in particular, acquisition is associated with higher income but lower parental education: in Bourdieu's terms, these are households with economic but not cultural capital. By contrast, possession of books and the Internet are associated with both higher income and higher educational levels for parents. And the observation that for the PC income matters but not education suggests that parents of varying degrees of education are now purchasing computers, provided they have the financial resources.

The age and gender of the child make rather less difference to the media acquired for the home, apart from the indication that computers are bought in households where the children are older.

The picture is almost wholly reversed, however, when we try to explain media possessions *in the child's own room* (Table 4.3e). In the main, what determines which media children have in their bedroom is their age: older children have more goods, in general, and this applies particularly to screen entertainment media (television, cable, teletext, video), and age is the main or only factor affecting possession of music media and the telephone.

In provisioning children's rooms, household income makes relatively little difference - it is certainly not simply the more affluent who have more. Indeed, to the extent that income is involved, it works in the opposite direction: for screen entertainment media, children in poorer homes are *more* likely to have both television and games computers. Parental education is rather more important: children of more educated parents are *less* likely to have their own television and video, but are more likely to have their own books.

INSERT TABLE 4.3e HERE

As we shall also see later in the findings for media use (Chapter 6), there is a clear indication here that television and books represent very different media cultures - the determinants of both access and use for television being in key respects the opposite of those for books. The interesting question, then, which this report tries to unravel, is where the PC is - or will be - positioned, being potentially both a screen entertainment medium and a new source of cultural capital, largely represented still by print and educational media.

As we have seen earlier, gender is the crucial factor determining personal ownership of the PC and of the computer games machines and gameboys (boys are more likely to own all of these).[14] Thus, when we consider the child's personal ownership of PCs, the family would appear to reinforce gender discrimination. As we saw earlier, even working-class families, who appear to be making extra efforts to provide their children with a PC of their own, particularly favour their sons.

4.4 TYPES OF HOME BY DOMESTIC MEDIA PROVISION

How do households combine different media? The analysis so far has focussed on ownership and location of particular media. Here we focus on the *patterning* of media in the home - how ownership of specific media relates to ownership of others. For this, we needed to generate some analytic categories to identify different patterns, for homes differ considerably and these differences are far from random. Given our interest in provision in shared and personal spaces for media use, we analysed provision within the child's bedroom and provision elsewhere in the home separately, in order subsequently to examine the relations between the two resulting typologies.[15]

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[14]Table 4.3b confirms that girls are less likely to own personally *any* form of screen-related technology - including a TV and video-recorder, not simply the expected PC and games machine. On the other hand girls are *more* likely to have their own personal stereo.

[15]In view of the importance of age for media provision, we conducted a series of separate cluster analyses (using Ward's method) for each of the four age groups, both for media in the bedroom and elsewhere in the house. (A second cluster analysis was also run, combining media in the bedroom and media elsewhere in the home, with very similar results.) In identifying and labelling each type, attention was paid to comparisons within rather than across age bands.

4.4.1 Types of home

Looking at the combinations of media located "elsewhere" in the home (i.e. not in the child's bedroom), we identified three broad types, as follows (see Table 4.4a).

'Media-rich' homes (45% of sample)

The great majority in these groups have most common media, and all the media we asked about are more common in these homes than in the average home. This is particularly true of books (89% have books compared with the average of 65%) and IT equipment (66% have PCs compared with 40% in the sample as a whole and 14% have modem/Internet compared with 7%). The 'screen' in these homes therefore refers to both television-related and computer-related activities. In all, these homes are rich in both old and new media, providing the children who live there with a wide variety of media choices. On average, these households have 10 of the 15 media listed.

'Traditional' homes (26% of sample)

Provision in these homes is around average for all items with the exception of the most modern. We have labelled them 'traditional' because they combine television, music and books, but they have not as yet opted for the newer computer media: few have a PC (18%) or a modem/Internet link (less than 1%), and they are lower than average on ownership of TV-linked games machines (29% compared with the average of 37%), Walkmans (39% compared with 65%), camcorders (15% compared with 24%), mobile phones (24% compared with 31%) and gameboys (13% compared with 19%). On average there are 7 of the items we asked about in one of these households.

INSERT TABLE 4.4a HERE

'Media-poor' homes (29% of sample)

In these homes, every medium on our list is less common than in the average home in the sample. The deficit is particularly marked in the case of some of the commoner items such as books (33% of homes compared with 65%), radios (45% compared with 74%) and telephones (68% compared with 87%) as well as for the more expensive and less common ones such as PCs (19% compared with 40%), TV-linked games machines (18% compared with 37%), hi-fis (64% compared with 82%) and mobile phones (15% compared with 31%). Differences were proportionately least for television (92% compared with 97%) and video recorders (77% compared with 89%). On average there are 6 of the items we asked about in these households.

Who lives in these very differently provisioned homes? The majority (63%) of the youngest children live in 'traditional' homes (see Table 4.4b).

INSERT TABLE 4.4b HERE

There, as we have seen, screen entertainment and audio media are the most common. This type of home is less frequent among teenagers and for the 15-17 year olds, only 11% of children live in a 'traditional' media environment, while 57% live in a 'media-rich' home.

Predictably, as Table 4.4c shows, 'media-rich' homes are more likely to be middle-class (37% ABC1), while the 'media-poor' families are predominantly working-class (74% C2DE). The 'traditional' group lie in between, combining both lower and higher social grades, though they are slightly better off than, and rather more educated than, the 'media-poor'. Generally, therefore, income levels and the educational level of the parents in the family range from the relatively high levels of the 'media-rich' to the relatively low levels of the 'media-poor'.[17]

[17]This is confirmed by the findings of a logistic regression predicting household membership, which shows that 'media-poor' homes are associated with better off homes and more educated fathers while media-poor homes are associated with worse off homes and less educated fathers. Interestingly ''traditional' homes' are associated with younger but more educated parents, particularly mothers.

INSERT TABLE 4.4c HERE

These different kinds of household differ in more than their patterns of media ownership: indeed, their attitudes and practices differ in systematic ways (Table 4.4d).

Parents in 'media-rich' households are the most likely to say they are comfortable using a computer and most often disagree that they stop people thinking for themselves. Their children spend the most time using PCs at home - no surprise considering how many more children have access to them at home.

Perhaps surprisingly, parents in 'traditional' homes are the least comfortable with or positive about computers. However, many of these parents have not yet faced the expectations and demands for a 'media-rich' lifestyle which characterises the home with older children: half (50%) of the children in these homes are aged 6-8. This explains not only their lower use of media but also why their parents feel it more appropriate to control their children's television use and why they are more unsure that their children understand the difference between television characters and real life.

Parents in 'media-poor' homes make the most use of television, and have the most positive attitudes towards it, perhaps reflecting the relative absence of alternative leisure activities. These parents are much less likely to think it is "mainly a bad thing" for a child to have a television in their bedroom and the television is more likely to be already on when their child comes home from school. Both parents and children in 'media-poor' homes spend more time watching television. Nonetheless, parents in 'media-poor' homes are particularly keen for their children to know about computers.

INSERT TABLE 4.4d HERE

4.4.2 Types of bedroom

While the type of home children and young people live in is crucial to the media options activities available to them, an understanding of how media are combined in their own personal spaces, their bedrooms, is highly revealing of the preferences and values of both children and their parents.

The analysis of types of bedrooms, again based on cluster analysis of the media in children's bedrooms, revealed five main types of bedroom provision (see Table 4.4e).

'Media-rich' bedrooms (24% of the sample)

Here, as in the case of the 'media-rich' home, all media - both old and new - are more commonly found. Of those media goods we listed, there are 6 on average in each bedroom.

'Books and PC-oriented' bedrooms (13% of the sample)

In this group more than average numbers have books, PCs, radios and walkmans and fewer have any of the screen entertainment media. On average there are 4 of the types of media we asked about.

'Books and music-oriented' bedrooms (20% of the sample)

Relatively few in this group have any of the screen-related media or PCs, but more than average numbers have books and hi-fis. They are also more likely to have gameboys. On average there are 4 of the types of media we asked about.

INSERT TABLE 4.4.e HERE

'Screen entertainment' bedrooms (19% of the sample)

The higher than average incidence of screen-related equipment (television sets, video recorders, and TV-linked games machines and the lower than average numbers with books distinguishes these bedrooms (even when compared with others in the same age-range). In these bedrooms there are on average 5 of the types of media we asked about.

'Media-poor' bedrooms (24% of the sample)

In this group, children are less likely to have any of the media asked about. On average there are 3 of the types of media in each bedroom.

Which children and young people have which kind of bedroom? Table 4.4f shows some clear age differences.

INSERT TABLE 4.4f HERE

The combination of 'books/PC' is characteristic of both young children and 15-17 year olds. The 'book/music' bedroom drops off by 15-17, not because this age group cease to be interested in this combination but rather because they are likely to have acquired screen media also by this stage, making them 'media-rich'. 'Screen entertainment' bedrooms are most common between 12-14. Both 'media-rich' and 'media-poor' bedrooms are spread across the age groups, though both are slightly more common amongst those aged 15-17.

Social grade and gender differences are perhaps more interesting. 'Screen-entertainment' bedrooms are much more common amongst boys and bedrooms with books and hi-fis are more common amongst girls. Boys are rather more likely to have 'media-rich' bedrooms and girls to have 'media-poor' bedrooms.

Contrary to what we might have expected, more 'media-rich' bedrooms are found in working-class homes. As many as 30% are to be found in homes where the gross income is less than £10,000. They are also associated with homes where the parents are less well educated (52% had left school by the age of 16, compared with 43% in the sample as a whole). 'Screen entertainment' bedrooms are also more common amongst working-class families, while bookish bedrooms in general are particularly associated with more highly-educated parents. The distribution of 'media-poor' bedrooms is roughly in proportion to population characteristics, and thus is not confined to those with low incomes.

4.4.3 What influences media provision in children's bedrooms?

Two questions arise here: first, how shall we account for the overall level of provision; second, what factors account for variability across households in bedroom provision?

The overall level of provision in children's bedrooms is relatively high, compared with other European countries. Indeed, when we compare children's leisure across Europe (Livingstone et al, in press), Britain stands out in two respects. British children are the most likely to have televisions and video recorders in their bedrooms (although importantly this is not the case for the PC). They are also the least likely to consider that there is enough for them to do in the area. We have also seen that many parents are fearful of allowing their children outside the home.[18] Comparatively speaking, then, it seems that British children have relatively less access to leisure outside and relatively more media provision inside the home, suggesting that British parents may be compensating their children for restricted access to outside spaces by making media available in the bedroom.

The same explanation does not account for variation across UK households, however. Although in interviews, over and again parents expressed their concerns about their children's safety outside, we found no direct association between level of fears for the child's safety in public and level of provision of media in private.[19] Rather, as we have shown earlier, both economic and cultural

[18]Surveys conducted on both European crime rates and fear of crime confirm that while in Britain crime rates are relatively high, fear of crime is highest amongst British adults.

[19]We compared those who were relatively more or less fearful for their children outside for their levels of media provision in the child's bedroom (looking at both total amount of media equipment and at television in the bedroom specifically). Logistic regressions run on the different types of bedroom, entering first and age and gender of the child, then household income and parents' education, and third, whether there is perceived to be enough to do in the area and parent's fears of the outdoors scale (drugs, traffic, child being victim of crime), and parent's perceptions of safety of area showed no effects for this third set of factors. Only in the case of books/PC-oriented bedrooms, which were more common amongst the richer families, was the greater, not lesser, safety of the area a significant predictor.

characteristics of the home as well as the age and gender of the child are associated with the level of media provision a child owns personally. Interestingly (see Table 4.4g),while the three bookish or screen bedrooms were clearly associated with demographic factors, the level of media provision in the child's bedroom at each extreme - 'media-rich' and 'media-poor' - could not be thus explained. Both high and low levels of bedroom media provision across the board thus require a more subtle analysis, concerning lifestyle factors rather than simple demographics.

INSERT TABLE 4.4g HERE

4.4.4 Linking types of home and bedroom

The relationship between type of home environment and media provision in the children's bedrooms is far from predictable (see Table 4.4h).

INSERT TABLE 4.4h HERE

It is immediately obvious that whereas the 'media-rich' home is the most common (45% of the sample), the 'media-rich' bedroom is rarer (24% of the sample). While the proportion of 'media-poor' bedrooms, on the other hand, mirrors that of 'media-poor' homes (both 29%), this does not imply a simple mapping of 'media-poor' bedrooms onto 'media-poor' homes.

Rather, the 'media-poor' bedroom is almost as common among 'media-rich' homes as they are in 'media-poor' ones (22% compared with 27%). Also interesting is the observation that half the children in 'media-poor' home environments have either a 'media-rich' or a 'screen entertainment' bedroom. Notably too, children in 'traditional' homes are the least likely to have 'media-rich' bedrooms.

The emerging pattern suggests that there are two categories of parents who provide a 'media-rich' home: those who equip their children's bedrooms as part of a general strategy of high levels of provision in the home, and those who equip the home for common use but provide less for individual use in the bedroom. A parallel pattern may be observed in 'media-poor' homes: while some of these families provide relatively little media for their children's bedrooms, a comparable proportion provide high levels of media in the bedroom for individual use. By contrast, the traditionally-equipped home is more clearly identified with either books/music or media-poor bedrooms.

The PC shows up these differences rather clearly: children in 'media-poor' households are more likely to have a computer in the bedroom (12%) than children in 'traditional' homes, where parents' attitudes to PCs are more negative (9%). In fact they are almost as likely to have one as children in 'media-rich' households (15%).

4.5 BEDROOM CULTURE

4.5.1 The rise of bedroom culture

What is the significance of such relatively high levels of media provision in children and young people's bedrooms? If we compare with either other European countries, or with past decades, it seems that 'media-rich' bedrooms indicate the coming trend. Our interviews with children confirm that their bedrooms represent not just a convenient location in which to watch television but a private and individualised space vital for the construction of identities and social relations. If leisure time spent in the bedroom is increasingly also spent with media, this suggests an increasing role for the media within these social psychological processes.

McRobbie and Garber (1976), discussing the 'invisible' sub-cultures of teenage girls in the 1950s, drew attention to the importance of 'bedroom culture'. This they related to the greater attachment of girls to their family and to either a best friend or a small group of close friends, a circle which can be accommodated adequately in the bedroom. Boys' peer groups, on the other hand, were typically larger and their culture represented an escape from the home and family into the town. Some twenty years on, our survey confirms that teenage girls are still more likely to spend their free time with

family or one close friend and teenage boys are more likely to spend it with a group of friends.[20]

However, while bedroom culture was once particularly associated with girls, this may be changing as boys' bedrooms are increasingly well provisioned - typically more so than girls'. What are the consequences of bedroom culture for leisure time and media? Noting first that the majority (72%) of the children and young people in our survey had their own bedroom while the other 28% share with a sibling(s), we asked them what proportion of the time they spend at home is spent in their bedrooms, not counting the time when they are asleep (see Table 4.5a).

Perhaps reassuringly, rather few claim to spend most or all of their time in their bedroom. The trend is for both boys and girls to spend more time in the bedroom as they get older and for girls at all ages to spend more time in their bedrooms than boys.[21]

INSERT TABLE 4.5a HERE

The attractions of the bedroom are very different for the different age groups, as revealed in our interviews. The youngest age group prefer the family spaces, especially when parents are present. As a result, 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. In middle childhood, children - particularly girls - become more interested in their bedroom, and start to want personal ownership of media, still largely for pragmatic reasons (being able to choose and watch their own programmes uninterrupted, for example).

After about eleven years old, the bedroom becomes important for social psychological reasons: young people express their identities in the way in which their bedrooms are furnished and, amongst other things, through personal ownership of media. The bedroom is valued because it grants privacy and a measure of independence from the family. Yet it can also be used as a social space in which to entertain friends - listening to music, reading magazines, playing a new computer game or watching a video together.

The following extract illustrates these points clearly. It comes from an interview with a 16 year-old girl, <R>, and her 11 year-old brother, <S>, who are being brought up by a single mother in a large council estate in the outer suburbs of a large town. <S> has recently moved into the biggest bedroom because of his snooker table. In this room he has posters, medals and certificates for football and cricket, books and board games in a cupboard. In terms of media, he has a television, a hi-fi with a tape recorder and radio, a gameboy and a TV-linked games machine, as well as a broken Commodore computer and a PC which cannot be used because it lacks the necessary software. Despite this array of equipment, <S> still prefers to be outdoors. <R>'s bedroom is smaller and less impressively equipped, although she does have her own television set and hi-fi. However her bedroom is more important to her than <S>'s is to him. As <S> says "Football is my life, like <R>'s bedroom is her life."

Interviewer:	So why do you spend your life in your bedroom and <S> doesn't?
S:	Boys I know don't like to spend their life in their bedroom. And I don't even know a boy that does. See, I know of a boy that kind of does, 'cos he likes, whenever he's not doing anything, he likes to just go to his room listen to loads of music and play on his laptop computer, and that's it. He doesn't spend his life in there, as much as her.
Interviewer:	So what do you like about your bedroom <R>?
R:	Well I've made it my own. It's got all my - I'm very into musicals, like West

[20] At 15-17, 63% of boys, but 45% of girls, claim to spend most of their free time with a group of friends. By contrast, 32% of girls (but only 21% of boys) claim to spend it with one best friend. These teenage girls are also twice as likely (19% vs 10%) to claim to spend most of this time with their family (see also Chapter 10).

[21] This measure has some drawbacks in that it tells us about *the proportion* of time at home spent in the bedroom, not the number of hours. According to parents, there is no significant difference in the number of clubs attended by boys and girls, but girls are less likely to spend time outdoors unsupervised by adults (37% of girls compared with 26% of boys spend very little or none of their time in this way). This difference is particularly marked amongst the oldest age group: 33% of 15-17 year old girls spend little or no time outdoors without adults around, compared with only 13% of boys of that age.

End things and er I've got all the posters and leaflets all over my wall. You can hardly see the wallpaper. And my CD player. I've always got music on. That's what I usually do - I just sit in there and listen to music. Or I sometimes watch telly if Mum's watching something I don't want to watch... whenever my friends come over we just usually go round and listen to music and talk and watch television.

Interviewer: Why are you in there rather than in the livingroom watching television?

R: Well usually because my Mum's down there. Don't want her listening to what I'm talking about... Um well I suppose boys.

Interviewer: So your bedroom's quite a private place in fact?

R: Yes. My personality's expressed.

S: I don't know why, but I just, I don't really like being in my room. I do like it sometimes. Like if there's matches on. But my room, really I only think of it for going to bed in.

Interviewer: Even though you've got all these things in your room

S: Yeah. 'Cos half of them I don't do any more. Like I got thousands of books but they're old books so I don't read them.

R: Well <S> plays a lot outside, and when I was his age I used to play a lot outside... I don't do that any more. I spend most of my time in my bedroom or going out. Not in <L>. There's nothing to do in <L>.

Interviewer: So you go further afield?

R: Yes into London or somewhere.

(Girl 16, and boy 11, living in a working-class family)

Or again here is <J>, aged 15, talking about her room:

J: I'm usually in my bedroom. If <my parents> want me then they will usually find me in there. Or if something's missing - "It will probably be in <J>'s room", because everything gets tidied from here to there.

Interviewer: Now are you there to be private or to be quiet?

J: I think that I like to be by myself really. I don't know. I suppose it's just because at the moment I have got all my furniture arranged like in a sitting room area, a study room area and my bedroom and it is just like really cool and I just like to go there because I know that that is my room . And I think that <my brother> will probably do it when he gets older but you know he likes to be with mum and dad and he is a proper little "I love my mummy" boy. I mean they usually are at that age. I'm not like that. I come and I go.

Interviewer: So your bedroom at the moment is ...

J: It's like a flat at the moment (laughs)

Interviewer: And is it just how you want it?

J: Yes. Just how I want it. I mean I have decorated it how I want it and it's just like a room I don't think I will ever move out.

Interviewer: So they don't expect you to go and leave home next year?

J: No. I mean if I'm in a really stressful mood or we have had an argument then I will say "I'm leaving when I'm 16". But I know that I won't because I can't take my bedroom with me.

(15 year-old girl living in a working-class family)

One may wonder where this trend towards 'media-rich' bedrooms is leading. We asked children to draw us pictures of their ideal bedroom 'in the year 2000' (taken by our interviewees to refer to a rather distant future). The importance of conspicuous consumption to adolescents' fantasies about their ideal bedroom was remarkable.

Significantly, the fantasies of boys and girls differed. Although television sets and sound systems figure in the girls' accounts, they foreground the aesthetics of interior design:

M: It would be a big spacious room with loads of space and pine furniture with big wardrobes and drawers and everything and there'd be a big TV with all the channels and everything and a big stereo with big massive speakers and there'd be a little room going off in my own bathroom with like marble floors and a jacuzzi and everything and in the room there'd be a big king-size bed and then there'd be another little room going off with my own little gym in it and a swimming pool. It's not going to happen but .... And there'd be a big window, but it'd be in a nice area where it wouldn't get smashed.

S: In my bedroom, big speakers on the wall, TV on the wall and a hi-fi... And I'd have a pine wardrobe. And I'm going to have a bath, but circular - bath with pine all round it and blue - floor's going to be pine in blue and green.

C: A cushion there to stop me falling out of bed. I'm drawing me mum. She's stuck in a time warp in my wardrobe. Anyway my bedroom's going to be black and gold and white. I'm going to have a cyber-wardrobe, when you walk through it it puts clothes on for you. It depends on what mood you're in. And then it's going to have a shoe wardrobe that changes your shoes for you. And then I'm going to have a sand bed with sand underneath it because I think that would be wicked. You know lying on sand is dead comfortable isn't it? And then a TV like a cinema screen. And then a glass floor and a massive chest of drawers that looks more like a wardrobe but it's just got thousands of drawers, and then like a big window a massive window and my speaker boxes. I've not had time to draw my stereo in but it'll on top of my chest of drawers.

(Class of working-class girls aged 13-14)

Boys' accounts, on the other hand, focus almost exclusively on the possession of ever more complicated electronic gadgetry.

P: There's speakers all round the room in each corner. Kingsize bed, a pull up video, a pull up TV a really big stereo, a computer round all of my room and a videophone.

Interviewer: If you ever had one of these bedrooms would you ever go downstairs and talk to your parents and brothers and sisters?

F: No.

G: Yes.

H: I'd just phone them.

A: Everybody! Look what you've forgotten! An interactive mum!

B: I've got a Playstation 1 million. I've got a camcorder. I've got a fridge. I've got a slave. I've got me and my babe on my bed and I've got an emperor's bed what is king king king size!

Interviewer: What about the hovercraft?

A: The hovercraft is a hovercraft 2000. If you're laid back - you're tired - it will go into the future and it's just superb!

(Class of middle-class boys, aged 10-11)

This suggests that the increasing availability of new media (computers, games consoles as well as television sets) may mean that bedrooms are becoming more attractive places for boys also.

4.5.2 Consequences of media provision in the bedroom

Do children living in 'media-rich' environments spend more time with media than those living in the averagely equipped home? What are the likely repercussions of giving a child or young person his or her own PC or television set? Are such children likely to use it more and are they likely as a consequence to spend more time away from the family?

Such concerns were expressed by the mother of <J>, whose enthusiasm for her bedroom - "I won't <leave home> because I can't take my bedroom with me" - we have already described. Her

uneasiness is fairly typical of the parents we interviewed:

> <J> has her television on when she is sort of sitting in there <in her bedroom>. Which I didn't approve of... I feel that she is not in here with us that much then. I like us all to be together. I like that. But she has got to have her space. And she obviously likes watching some programmes that we don't, the younger programmes.
>
> (Working-class mother of a 15 year-old girl)

We asked children who had their own television set in their bedrooms to tell us how often they watched it there at different times of day (Table 4.5b). Their answers indicate that children make a great deal of use of their own set. Around three in every ten children who have their own set say they usually watch it there when they get home from school (31%), in the early evening (33%) and after 9 pm (32%). Watching in the morning before school is less common - only 15% said they usually do so.

Predictably, there are significant age-related differences. The youngest children are more likely to watch at least sometimes in the morning before school (presumably early morning cartoons) while older children are more likely to watch later in the day. Half (50%) of 15-17 year-olds with their own sets usually watch television in their bedrooms after 9 pm. Bearing in mind that the 'watershed' in scheduling for terrestrial television is at 9 pm, it is worth noting that over a quarter (28%) of 6-8 year-olds and almost half (49%) of 9-11 year-olds also claim to watch after this time at least sometimes.

Gender and social grade make less of a difference, but there is a contradiction here between patterns of access and use. Working-class children are less likely to watch in their rooms after getting home from school until 9 pm. Given that, as we have seen, they are considerably more likely to have a television in their bedroom, the finding that they do not claim to spend more time watching it there is interesting. The contrary picture obtains for girls, for they are rather less likely to have their own set and yet those that have are more likely to watch it when they get home from school, while boys with their own set watch more later in the evening.

INSERT TABLE 4.5b HERE

While it is often television which attracts public concern, the broader question here is whether having personal access to a medium affects the amount of time spent with it. If we look at children who have access to books, television, a TV-linked games machine or a PC computer elsewhere in the house but not in their room, and compare them with those who also have that same equipment in their own room, we find that those who own things personally do indeed systematically report using them more (see Table 4.5c).

The differences are significant and substantial. Children with their own television report spending on average 37 minutes more per day viewing than children who do not. Weekday viewing seems particularly affected: children with their own set watch for 40 minutes longer on an average weekday, but only for 16 minutes longer on Saturdays and 25 minutes longer on Sundays. Similarly, those with their own TV-linked games machine play 19 minutes longer per day. In the case of listening to music, those who have their own radio or hi-fi spend on average an extra 28 minutes per day listening to music. Having books in the bedroom made the least difference: those who did so reported reading for only 6 more minutes.

Significantly - given that we have already seen that boys are more likely to have their own PC and that working-class parents are more likely to put the PC in their child's bedroom - children with their own PC say they spend on average 21 minutes per day longer (resulting in almost twice as much use) compared with those with access only to a family machine or one belonging to someone else in the household.

INSERT TABLE 4.5c HERE

How is this extra time with the PC spent? Perhaps surprisingly, there are no significant differences in the proportion of time spent on games and on doing homework reported by the children who have their own PC and those who only have access to a family machine. However asked to identify what they used the computer at home for, more of those who have their own computer mention games (88% compared with 76%). However those with their own machines are also more likely to report

some ‘serious’ uses: programming (16% compared with 6%), database or spreadsheets (35% compared with 18%) and e-mail (12% compared with 4%).

We must of course beware of confusing an association with a causal explanation. We attempted statistically to control for possible hidden causes in the form of demographic variables when exploring the association between having a medium in the bedroom and time spent on that medium.[22] This showed that, in each case, having the medium in the bedroom does make a significant difference. In other words, even once demographic variables are taken into account, it seems that having personal access to a medium is still associated with spending longer with it.

Looking at the relation between media use and bedroom provision, it appears that those with ‘screen’ or ‘media-rich’ bedrooms spend more time overall with media (especially with screen media) and those with ‘book/music’ or ‘media-poor’ bedrooms spend the least time with media overall (though they spend relatively more time reading).[23] Overall, we also find that those with a ‘media-rich’ or ‘screen-entertainment’ bedroom claim to spend a higher proportion of their waking time in their bedroom: the attractions of a ‘media-rich’ bedroom appear to have consequences over and above such demographic variables as age and gender for the balance between individual and family time at home.

4.6 THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE BOUNDARY

The traditionally conceived distinction between public and private spaces represents a key boundary for both children and their parents. Each conceives of both public and private spaces in different ways and access to these spaces is often contested. This in itself is not new, though the continued importance of 'going out' for even young children confounds many public anxieties about the hypnotic attractions of the modern media.

While the boundary marked by the domestic front door is problematic for many families,[24] there is now another boundary, this time marked by the bedroom door, resulting in the creation of a ‘media-rich’ bedroom culture. Our simple question - where are media located in the home? - reveals the complex processes by which parents and children mutually construct their domestic environment as appropriate for or even personalised for particular family members. While decisions about what to put where may follow public or commercial discourses that accompanies purchase of media goods, families may also renegotiate these meanings, situating the goods so as to facilitate other kinds of

[22]Following our earlier procedure, we used regression analysis to control statistically for the influence of demographic factors, first entering the age and gender of the child, then household income and the educational level of the father and mother, and thirdly whether or not the child had the relevant equipment in the bedroom. As is often the case, these variables are correlated, making it difficult to separate out their unique contribution to prediction. We can however demonstrate whether, after demographic characteristics are taken into account, media ownership adds to the predictive power of the equation. Overall, predicting the variation in time spent with media proved difficult, and all the variables taken together only accounted for between 5 and 23% of the variation, depending on the medium. In each case, whether or not the child has the medium added between 1% and 4% to the variance explained by the regression equation. Still, we cannot infer the direction of the association.

[23]To see whether bedroom type has any predictive power, after age gender and economic and cultural capital have been taken into account, we used regression analysis, entering first the gender and age of the child, then the income of the family and the educational level of the mother and father, and finally as dummy variables, the five bedroom types. Although overall rather little of the total variance is accounted for by any of these variables (between 4 and 16% depending on the medium), in several instances bedroom type did have a significant and interpretable contribution to make over and above that of the demographic variables.

[24]This would appear to be especially so in Britain, often described as a “child-unfriendly culture” where some social codes manage the separation of children’s and adult spaces while others regulate children's participation within adult-defined “family” spaces.

practices.[25]

For example, it is not obvious where the personal computer is best located, and different households make different decisions. But certainly parents and young people are aware that locating a computer in the living room, a child's bedroom or an adult's study has implications both for the meanings of the computer in that household and for the meanings of the space in which the computer is placed (in terms of dimensions of leisure/ work, shared/ individual, masculine/ feminine, etc). Where to locate the cable or satellite receiver connection, where to place the modem connection - each new medium sets the household a new problem. And while a fairly standard location for the television emerged rather rapidly in mid twentieth century Britain[26] these subsequent decisions appear to be more diverse in their solutions.

When boundaries are placed around children, they may transgress these boundaries - as a way of testing their power and as an attempt to reconnect their world with the more powerful and valued world of those older than them. We see this in their preference for family/adult television programmes (see Chapter 3), their trespassing on parental space through subverting rules about bedtime, and their appropriation of places which are "not for children" but are not heavily regulated (see Corrigan, 1976, on "street corner culture").

Simultaneously, however, children and young people seek to identify, protect and embellish their own spaces, from the street corner to the bedroom, which are importantly separated off from adult scrutiny and intervention. This is very evident in young people's bedrooms, for these serve as adult-free zones, as well as key sites for the social construction of identity and social relations. In managing both the exclusion of parents and the inclusion of friends and childhood/youth culture, the media play a central role.[27]

4.7 SUMMARY

By asking which media children and young people have access to at home and, furthermore, which do they have in their bedrooms, we have mapped both the diffusion of new media into British households and the degree of personal ownership of media by young people.

Our working assumptions proved justified. First, access is necessarily prior to, but not wholly determining of, media use; as one mother commented, 'We've got radios all over the place. We don't listen to them much do we?'. Second, while we cannot simply infer children's access from a knowledge of household media provision, the balance struck between common and personal provision of media is indicative of family strategies in incorporating new forms of media into their domestic culture and daily routines.

Most significantly, our research leads us to stress that media provision and use at home is fundamentally determined not by any intrinsic interest in the media alone but by a mixture of parental anxieties about public spaces together with their children's complaint that there is insufficient public provision for leisure in their locality. For such reasons, it has proved valuable to contextualise media use. For example, it is easy to assume that media use is primarily motivated by interest in the media *per se*, and yet we find that a 'really good day' for children means going out with friends while it is 'a really boring day' which means staying at home and watching television. Thus, it would seem

[25] As children may subtly resist their parents' attempts to manage domestic time and space, the face-saving solution for parents was to present themselves in interviews as laissez-faire parents: whether or not the democratisation of the household is parents' intention, it appears to be occurring.

[26] This location had considerable consequences as the adult-only front room or parlour of the 1950s was transformed by television into the family sitting room, increasingly 'knocked through' into the dining or family room to make a large multi-functional space available to all (Oswell, 1995).

[27] Bachmair (1991) discusses the bedroom as text, a site in which the child weaves a collage of meanings which incorporates the sign on the door (Parents, keep out!), the pop star posters on the wall, the collection of Disney mementos and the programme on the television screen. This fluid text is highly individual, yet draws heavily on a shared peer culture - both a place for the child to entertain friends and a place for them to continue being part of that peer-group even when alone.

that both parents and children would prefer policy makers to devote more attention to the provision and regulation of leisure outside the home than inside it, the latter being a kind of second best, or a 'gap filler', especially as seen by children.

As regards inequalities in access to media *in the home*, the survey findings show that the most commonly available media - television and hi-fi - are near universal and hence equally distributed across the social classes. However, all other media are unequally distributed by social class, with personal computers, books and the telephone particularly more in evidence in middle-class than working-class homes. Only for TV-linked games machines are there more in working-class than middle-class homes. The gender or age of the child makes little difference to media provision at home, except that games machines are more likely to be present in boys' homes and music media become more widespread with age.

The picture for media *in the child's bedroom* is very different. First, two in every three children have their own television set, and a similar number have books and music equipment in their bedroom. However, here age and gender are all important. Older children are more likely to own most media except for books. Boys are more likely to own their own media than girls, and twice as likely to own their own PC. Social grade remains important also, with working-class children less likely to have their own books, but more likely to have their own screen entertainment media (television, video, games machine). Interestingly, however, they are *as* likely as middle-class children to have their own PC.

To disentangle these various influences, we conducted further statistical analysis which showed that while income is the major determinant of media in the home overall, the age and gender of the child, together with the educational level of the parents, affect provision of media in the child's bedroom. Older children and boys have more media generally, while the children of more educated parents have more books (and music) but fewer screen media.

When examining how media in the home clustered together, we uncovered three broad patterns of media provision in the home, which we labelled 'media-rich' homes, 'traditional' homes (well-provisioned but low on new media) and 'media-poor' homes. The 'media-rich' homes were more typical of older children and middle-class families (especially with higher incomes and more educated fathers). 'Traditional' homes were more common among younger children and were spread across social grades. 'Media-poor' homes were primarily associated with relatively poor, and poorly educated, parents. Predictably, but interesting nonetheless, we found that parents in 'media-rich' homes differ from those in 'traditional' homes in being more comfortable with and more positive about computers. In 'media-poor' homes parents have more favourable attitudes towards television and both parents and children in these homes watch more.

A parallel analysis clustering children's bedrooms according to the media within them identified five bedroom types: 'media-rich' (more common among older and working-class children), 'books/PC-oriented' bedrooms (especially older, middle-class children), 'books/music-oriented' (girls, with educated parents), 'screen entertainment' (boys, working- class), and 'media-poor' bedrooms (common in variety of households).

Relating this to the previous analysis, we find that 'media-rich' homes are linked to 'media-rich', or bookish bedrooms, but that a sizeable minority have 'media-poor' bedrooms (suggesting that these parents provide media in common parts of the house rather than personalised media for household members). Interestingly, 'media-poor' homes are linked as commonly to 'media-rich' bedrooms (with parents providing for their children even at their own expense) and to expensive 'screen entertainment' bedrooms as they are to 'media-poor' bedrooms. Children in these environments are more likely to possess their own screen media and, compared with 'traditional' homes at least, to own their own computer. Parents in 'traditional' homes are the least likely to provide their children with costly 'media-rich' bedrooms and more than average numbers provide bookish or 'media-poor' bedrooms.

Lastly, this chapter explored what we term 'bedroom culture', the nature of this 'media-rich', private and personalised space in which children and young people may conduct a sizeable proportion of their leisure. Teenage girls especially, but possibly increasing numbers of boys as bedrooms become more 'high-tech', talk about their bedroom as an important site of identity construction and display, of privacy and escape, and of a space to socialise with friends. Personally-owned media play an important role within this new leisure space as audiovisual backdrop, as signs of conspicuous consumption, and as focus for shared, social activity.

The consequences of media-equipped bedrooms remain to be seen. Certainly our survey shows that nearly 1 in 3 of those with their own television set usually watches in their bedroom after school, in the early evening, and after the watershed (this last includes a fair proportion of 6-8 year olds). More generally, those children with access to certain media in their own room spend more time with those media than do those who only have such access elsewhere in the home. These associations may not indicate causality, but they generally still hold after controlling for age, gender and social class of the child.

We conclude that there are two key spatial boundaries which regulate young people's leisure, that marked by the front door and that marked by their bedroom door. The place of media in children's and young people's lives is heavily structured around both these boundaries. Indeed it appears that while preferred leisure is leisure spent outside the home, given the combination of parental fears of the outside and insufficient public provision for young people's leisure, much leisure is now spent within the home but in the bedroom, as this becomes an increasingly media-filled environment for personal expression and social interaction.

TABLE 4.2a

Percentages doing "if could do anything you wanted" and "on a really boring day"

	Could do anything wanted	On a really boring day
Go to cinema	41	2
See friends	39	6
Play sport	35	7
On PC/ homework etc.	23	12
Play tapes/ CDs	19	22
Go out to club	18	4
Play computer games	15	19
Look round shops	14	14
Go to concert/ theatre	14	10
Watch TV	14	41
Phone friend	14	7
Make something/ hobby	9	14
Go to the park/ country	5	12
Practise music	5	21
Read a book	5	28
Read comic/ magazine	5	13
Watch a video	4	22
Talk with mum/ dad	4	12
Listen to radio	3	15

TABLE 4.2b

How safe parent thinks streets (for self at child's age N=969, and for child now N=971) by age of child

	FOR PARENT AT CHILD'S AGE				FOR CHILD NOWADAYS			
	6-8 %	9-11 %	12-14 %	15-17 %	6-8 %	9-11 %	12-14 %	15-17 %
Very safe	51	56	59	59	5	10	13	15
Quite safe	42	38	37	38	53	62	59	59
Not very safe	5	4	3	2	31	21	26	20
Not at all safe	2	2	1	1	11	7	3	6

TABLE 4.2c

Parent's views about amount of time spent outdoors unsupervised (by self at child's age N=942 and by child now N=965) by age of child

	FOR PARENT AT CHILD'S AGE				FOR CHILD NOWADAYS			
	6-8 %	9-11 %	12-14 %	15-17 %	6-8 %	9-11 %	12-14 %	15-17 %
All/most	27	34	37	34	8	12	11	27
More than half	37	32	25	29	17	20	23	21
About half	22	22	26	27	32	35	39	29
Very little	12	11	11	9	32	29	25	23
None of it	3	1	1	1	11	4	2	1

TABLE 4.2d

Parent's views about amount of time child spends outdoors unsupervised by social grade within age (N=959)

	ALL***		AGE							
			6-8***		9-11		12-14		15-17***	
	ABC1 %	C2DE %	ABC1 %	C2DE %	ABC1 %	C2DE %	ABC1 %	C2DE %	ABC1 %	C2DE %
All/most of it	7	**20**	4	**13**	6	**18**	6	**15**	14	**36**
More than half	20	21	10	23	23	18	22	24	27	17
About half	34	34	32	32	35	35	39	40	29	30
Very little	**34**	22	**40**	25	**33**	25	**31**	20	**30**	17
None of it	5	4	14	7	3	4	2	2	0	1

Note *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

TABLE 4.2e

Child's view of whether there is enough for someone their age to do in area where live (N=984)

	ALL %	AGE			GENDER		SOCIAL GRADE			
		9-11 %	12-14 %	15-17 %	BOY %	GIRL %	AB %	C1 %	C2 %	DE %
Yes	33	54	27	19	37	29	37	36	35	27
No	66	45	**73**	**80**	62	**71**	63	63	64	**72**
Unsure	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	1	1

TABLE 4.3a

Percentage with media in the home, by gender, age and social grade (N=1287)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boy	Girl	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
TV set	100	99	100	100	99	100	100	100	100
Hi-fi	96	95	96	93	93	**98**	**98*** **	96	96
Video recorder	96	96	96	95	96	97	95	**98**	94**
Radio	95	94	95	94	95	95	95	**97**	93***
Telephone	93	92	94	96	92	92	91	98	89***
Shelf of books (not school)	87	86	89	**92**	88	87	83*	**94**	82***
Personal stereo	83	81	84	66	80	**90**	**92*** **	**86**	80**
Teletext	71	73	69	65	71	72	75	**76**	67***
TV-linked games machine	67	**78**	56***	65	**70**	**72**	61***	61	**72*** **
PC	53	50	**56***	53	51	53	54	**68**	40***
With CD-ROM	31	29	33	35	30	31	28	**46**	19***
Gameboy	42	44	40	35	**45**	**48**	38**	**47**	39**
Cable/satellite	42	44	39	45	40	40	42	39	44
Mobile phone	30	30	30	26	31	31	33	**44**	20***
Camcorder	25	24	27	**34**	**28**	21	21***	**32**	21***
Internet link	7	8	7	7	7	8	7	**14**	2***

Note: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p< 0.05

TABLE 4.3b

Percentage with media in his/her own bedroom, by gender, social grade and age (N=1303)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boy	Girl	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
Personal stereo	68	65	**71****	44	62	**80**	**85*****	**71**	65*
Shelf of books (not school)	64	62	66	69	66	64	59	**73**	58***
TV set	63	**69**	57***	46	60	**71**	**77*****	54	**71*****
Hi-fi	61	59	62	31	50	**73**	**87*****	57	**63***
Radio	59	59	60	47	57	**66**	**66*****	**64**	56**
TV-linked games machine	34	**48**	19***	23	35	**43**	34***	27	**39*****
Gameboy	27	**31**	22***	17	**32**	**34**	23***	27	26
Video recorder	21	23	19	11	18	22	**32*****	14	**26*****
PC With CD Rom	12 4	**16** **5**	8*** 2**	9 3	11 2	14 6	16* 3	12 4	13 3
Teletext	8	9	7	3	5	8	**14*****	8	8
Cable/sat	5	5	5	4	4	5	7	4	5
Telephone	5	5	6	4	2	6	**10*****	5	6
Internet link	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mobile phone	1	2	1	0	0	1	4***	1	2
Camcorder	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	1

Note: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

TABLE 4.3c

Location of PC in the home by social grade (N=556)

	ALL	SOCIAL GRADE***	
		ABC1	C2DE
Child's room and elsewhere	12	9	**16**
Child's room only	16	11	**23**
Elsewhere only	73	**80**	62

Note *** p<0.001

TABLE 4.3d

Location of PC in the home: gender by social grade (N=556)

	GENDER ***		**GENDER BY SOCIAL GRADE**			
			Boy		Girl	
	Boy	Girl	ABC1	C2DE	ABC1	C2DE
Child's room and elsewhere	**16**	8	15	17	4	15
Child's room only	**22**	9	15	**33**	7	13
Elsewhere only	62	**83**	69	50	**90**	72

TABLE 4.3e

Which factors are associated with media ownership? (logistic regression results)

MEDIUM	IN BEDROOM	CORRECTLY CLASSIFIED	ELSEWHERE IN HOME	CORRECTLY CLASSIFIED
SCREEN Television	**age (older)*** **gender (boys)*** lower father educ. ** lower mother educ. ** lower income *	70%	*No variables are significant predictors*	94%
Cable/Satellite TV	**age (older)***	95%	**lower mother educ.**** higher income* lower father educ.*	63%
Teletext	**age (older)*****	93%	**higher income***** gender (boys)*	65%
Video	**age (older)***** lower mother educ.**	81%	**higher income****	89%
Camcorder	n/a		**age (younger)***** **higher income***** lower mother educ.*	74%
GAMES MACHINES TV-linked games machines	**gender (boys)***** age (older)* lower income*	71%	lower mother educ.** higher income*	62%
Gameboy	**gender (boys)*****	72%	**age (older)**** gender (girls)*	80%
COMPUTERS PC without CD rom	**gender (boys)***** age (older)**	89%	**age (older)***** higher income** gender (girls)*	74%
PC with CD rom	**gender (boys)****	96%	**higher income*****	75%
Modem/Internet	n/a		**higher income***** higher father educ.*	92%
COMMUNICAT. Telephone	**age (older)*****	95%	**higher income*****	90%
Mobile phone	n/a		**higher income***** gender (boys)*	73%
PRINT Books (not school)	**higher father educ.***	68%	**higher income***** higher father educ.*	71%
MUSIC Hi-Fi	**age (older)*****	71%	**lower mother educ.**** higher income*	83%
Radio	**age (older)*****	62%	**higher income****	75%
Walkman	**age (older)***** gender (girls)* higher income*	73%	**age (older)***** **higher income*****	71%

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

TABLE 4.4a

Media "elsewhere" in 'media-rich', 'traditional' and 'media-poor' households[16] (N=1250)

	MEDIA-RICH %	TRADITIONAL %	MEDIA POOR %	ALL %
PRINT				
***Books	89	60	33	**6 5**
I.T.				
***PC	66	18	19	**4 0**
***Modem/Internet	14	0	1	**7**
COMMUNICATIONS				
***Phone	96	92	68	**8 7**
SCREEN				
***TV	100	98	92	**9 7**
***VCR	95	93	77	**8 9**
***Cable	42	38	28	**3 7**
***Teletext	79	58	44	**6 3**
***TV-linked games mach.	53	29	18	**3 7**
***Camcorder	35	15	14	**2 4**
AUDIO				
***Radio	87	85	45	**7 4**
***Hi-fi	95	80	64	**8 2**
PORTABLE				
***Walkman	80	39	63	**6 5**
***Mobile phone	45	24	15	**3 1**
Gameboy	28	13	12	**2 0**
***AV. NO. OF MEDIA	10	7	6	8

Note: ***p<0.001

[16]Note that the figures in the right hand column refer to the percentages with media "elsewhere", that is somewhere in the house other than in the child's bedroom. Figures are therefore smaller than those in Table 4.4a, which include media in the child's bedroom.

TABLE 4.4b

Type of media environment "elsewhere" in home by age of child

	AGE OF CHILD***			
	6-8 %	9-11 %	12-14 %	15-17 %
Media-rich	33	**55**	33	**57**
Traditional	**63**	17	20	11
Media-poor	5	28	**47**	32

Note: *** p<0.001

TABLE 4.4c

Type of media environment "elsewhere" in home by demographics

	MEDIA ENVIRONMENT "ELSEWHERE" IN HOME			ALL
	Media-rich %	Traditional %	Media-poor %	%
Social grade of family* **	(543)	(309)	(355)	(N=1303)
AB	**25**	16	9	18
C1	32	26	17	26
C2	24	25	29	25
DE	20	**34**	**45**	31
Parental education * ** (Highest educated parent)	(426)	(217)	(222)	(N= 876)
20+	29	25	14	24
17-19	37	30	27	33
16	25	37	**46**	33
Under 16	9	8	13	10
Income* **	(394)	(229)	(222)	(N= 855)
£25,000+	**41**	23	17	30
£24,999-£14,500	32	28	26	30
£14,499-£9,500	13	19	18	16
< £9,500	14	**30**	**39**	25

Note: *** p<0.001

TABLE 4.4d

Media-related attitudes and behaviour by media environment "elsewhere" in the home

	MEDIA ENVIRONMENT "ELSEWHERE" IN HOME		
	Media-rich %	Traditional %	Media-poor %
Parents' attitudes to computers			
***Very comfortable using computers	**26**	*16*	23
***Agree computers stop people thinking for themselves	*18*	25	**30**
*Strongly agree more important for young people than for their parents	45	*35*	42
***Strongly agree keen for child to know about them	27	*23*	**34**
Parents' attitudes to TV			
***Strongly agree child knows difference between TV characters and real people	43	*27*	47
***Agree child too old to tell what they can watch	20	*7*	22
**Strongly agree child often wants to buy things seen on TV	*13*	24	20
***Think mainly a bad thing to have TV in child's bedroom	36	36	*17*
*Satisfied with what is available for child to view	*62*	**75**	70
****Child says TV usually on when get home from school**	31	36	**42**
***Average minutes/day parent views TV**	*137*	148	**154**
Average minutes/day the child . . .			
***views television	143	*128*	**163**
***listens to music	76	*42*	71
***uses PC at home	**22**	5	10
***spends on media	**319**	*249*	319

Note: *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

TABLE 4.4e

Media in children's bedrooms, by bedroom type (N=1302)

	BEDROOM TYPE					AV.
	Media-rich %	Book/PC %	Book/music %	Screen ent. %	Media-poor %	%
PRINT						
***Books	**77**	**82**	**79**	43	47	**64**
I.T.						
***PC	**28**	**19**	4	7	5	**12**
Modem/Internet	3	1	0	0	-	**1**
COMMUNICATION						
***Phone	**11**	6	4	2	4	**5**
SCREEN						
***TV	**95**	46	39	**97**	35	**63**
***VCR	**52**	10	3	**28**	5	**21**
***Cable	**9**	4	2	**8**	2	**5**
***Teletext	**19**	6	2	7	3	**8**
***TV-link g. machine	**63**	7	11	**69**	10	**34**
Camcorder	1	-	1	0	0	**1**
AUDIO						
***Radio	**81**	**80**	48	58	37	**59**
***Hi-fi	**78**	46	**85**	56	34	**61**
PORTABLE						
***Personal stereo	**81**	**78**	72	60	53	68
Mobile phone	2	2	-	0	2	1
***Gameboy	**37**	16	**35**	25	17	27
***AV. NO. MEDIA	**6**	4	4	5	3	**4**

Note: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

TABLE 4.4f

Demographics by type of media environment in bedroom (N=1302)

	MEDIA ENVIRONMENT IN BEDROOM					ALL
	Media-rich %	Book/PC %	Book/music %	Screen ent. %	Media-poor %	%
Age of child						
6-8	24	39	26	18	22	25
9-11	22	-	35	28	27	24
12-14	25	-	40	**37**	21	26
15-17	29	**61**	-	18	30	25
Gender of child* **						
Boy	56	44	40	**67**	44	50
Girl	44	57	**60**	33	56	50
Social grade* **						
AB	13	**25**	**24**	8	21	18
C1	22	**29**	**30**	27	24	26
C2	**29**	23	20	**33**	22	25
DE	**37**	23	27	33	34	31
**Parental educ. ** **						
20+	21	**35**	**30**	11	27	24
17-19	28	35	37	28	35	33
16	**39**	23	25	**49**	28	33
Under 16	12	8	9	11	10	10
Household income* **	22	**41**	34	*22*	34	30
£25,000+	32	36	29	29	24	30
£24,999-£14,500	15	12	15	**22**	15	16
£14,999-£9,500	**30**	12	22	26	27	25
< £9,500						

Note: ***p<0.001

TABLE 4.4g

Predictors of type of media environment in child's room

BEDROOM	PREDICTORS (% correctly classified by logistic regression)
Media-rich	No significant predictors (76%)
Book/PCs	**Age** (older)***, **Streets safe for child to play*** (90%)
Book/Music	**Gender** (more girls)***, **Age** (younger)*** (78%)
Screen ent.	**Gender** (more boys)***, **Age** (younger)*, **Father's educ.** (lower)* (80%)
Media-poor	No significant predictors (76%)

***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

TABLE 4.4h

Type of bedroom by type of home (N=1214)

	MEDIA ENVIRONMENT "ELSEWHERE" IN HOME			AV.
	Media-rich %	Traditional %	Media-poor %	%
Media-rich	26	*17*	25	**24**
Book/PCs	15	14	*8*	**13**
Book/music	20	24	*16*	**20**
Screen ent.	*17*	20	24	**20**
Media-poor	22	26	27	**24**

TABLE 4.5a

Proportion of waking time spent in bedroom, by gender within age (N=1303)

	ALL	AGE							
		6-8*		9-11*		12-14		15-17*	
		Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl
Most/all of time	13	8	8	11	13	8	14	14	**2 7**
About half	32	25	**3 0**	21	**3 6**	36	36	37	34
Less than half	33	24	**3 3**	**4 0**	**3 5**	36	38	34	24
Hardly any	22	**4 3**	28	**2 8**	16	20	13	15	15

Note: *p<0.05

TABLE 4.5b

Frequency of watching TV in the bedroom, by time of the day and demographics (N=820)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
	%	Boy %	Girl %	6-8 %	9-11 %	12-13 %	15-17 %	ABC1 %	C2DE %
In morning before school				**					
Usually	15	13	17	15	19	14	13	18	13
Sometimes	17	16	17	24	20	16	11	16	17
Hardly ever	13	13	13	8	12	13	16	15	11
Never	56	58	53	54	48	**57**	**60**	52	58
When get home from school		*		***				*	
Usually	31	30	32	22	**32**	**31**	**35**	33	30
Sometimes	34	30	**38**	35	41	35	27	34	34
Hardly ever	13	14	12	8	9	15	19	17	12
Never	22	**25**	18	**36**	18	18	19	17	**25**
In early evening				**				*	
Usually	33	33	33	18	30	**38**	**39**	32	34
Sometimes	35	33	38	37	40	35	31	38	34
Hardly ever	14	14	14	19	14	13	13	17	12
Never	18	20	15	**26**	16	15	17	13	**20**
After 9.00 pm		*		***					
Usually	32	35	27	9	17	37	**50**	30	32
Sometimes	32	32	32	18	32	41	31	34	31
Hardly ever	11	10	13	10	17	10	9	14	10
Never	26	23	29	**63**	34	13	10	22	28

Note: *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

TABLE 4.5c

Time spent on media per day, comparing those with and without access in their own room

	Have medium in bedroom and elsewhere	Have medium elsewhere in home only
***Television	159 minutes	122 minutes
***Video	45 minutes	28 minutes
***TV-linked games machine	34 minutes	15 minutes
* PC	48 minutes	27 minutes
*** Radio or hi-fi	73 minutes	22 minutes
***Books	17 minutes	10 minutes

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01,***p<0.001

CHAPTER 5

TIME FOR MEDIA

5.1 FITTING MEDIA INTO DAILY LIFE

5.1.1 Introduction

How are uses of time changing as the media environment changes? Focusing on the electronic screen, itself the centre of a growing variety of audiovisual and IT-based media, we examine how children and young people divide their leisure time among an expanding range of media, thereby charting the uses of media as they spread throughout the home and around the clock.

For some media, questions of time use have been little researched for the young audience, it being generally easier to measure access than use. However, while ownership and arrangement of media in the home is becoming increasingly complicated, as we showed in the last chapter charting time use is even more difficult. How is children and young people's time, particularly their leisure time, organised?[1] For different age and social groupings, how much free time do they have, what control do they have over it, and when do the media fit in?

We begin by considering the *meaning of time* - whether spent with or without media - for children and young people. We then consider *how much time* they spend with different media. (We do not underestimate the methodological difficulties in measuring time spent with media, especially for young children; see Appendix 5.2). In the following chapter we seek connections between the patterns of ownership of media established in the last chapter and patterns of time use.

5.1.2 The meaning of 'free time'

Interviewer:	In general, how much free time would you say that <H> has?
Mother:	About an hour a day.
Interviewer:	So how does he usually spend that time?
Mother:	Playing on his bike, or on his computer.

(Working-class mother of a 7 year-old boy)

The media variously fit into, and contribute to, the temporal organisation of young people's daily lives. In this chapter we focus on the structure of *the day*, comparing time use for those who differ by *age*, showing that whether time is measured in hours or years, the media occupy a central place.

While both these time-scales seem straightforward, the meanings of and expectations concerning both 'the day' and 'how old you are' are culturally constructed. A longer time frame is added by comparing parents' and children's perceptions of what it means to be young, and how one 'should' spend one's time when young. In their illuminating account of time as experienced by children, James et al (1998) note that our ready assumption that the adult experience of time applies also to children is inappropriate: children tend to live more in the present, experiencing themselves now rather than as tokens of the adults they will become. Thus children today may experience time differently, compared with their parents' childhoods and, looking forward, children and young people are also conscious of their future adulthood, when lives may be ever more media-dependent.

In moral terms, our culture attaches value to time according to the economic metaphor, 'time is money' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Time must be spent wisely, not wasted or thrown away, giving your time to others is an act of kindness, spare time is to be cherished, the thrifty will plan their time

[1] The question of parental regulation of media is taken up in Chapter 11.

effectively.[2] Such concerns are evident in parents' talk about new media:

> We used to have cable TV... I found it a waste of time... the children were only ever interested in the cartoon channel and I could never get anything out of them first thing in the morning so that was it... And I just didn't think that it was, I mean sometimes the cartoons that were on weren't very educational or anything like that. It was weird monster shaped figures who were supposed to be heroes, but they weren't my idea of a hero.
>
> (Middle-class parent of a 7 year-old boy)

> Sometimes he'll sit there until there's a dot on the screen, if I let him, but the TV generally doesn't go on until the evening. It's very very rarely on in the morning, I don't agree with having it on all day, every day, there are other things that they can do.
>
> (Middle-class mother of a 12 year-old boy)

Related to the 'money' metaphor for time, a second metaphor often reserved for media time is the 'diet' metaphor. Parents would like children to watch what is good for them, not to over-indulge, but to favour a good balance of media.

> It's just you see we watch like TV from 3.30 until 6 o'clock - want to try and cut down on that. She [mother] doesn't like all that TV, so she'll try and say oh no *Home and Away* and this lot.
>
> (10 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

> I refuse to get <cable>. My friend got cable. It got switched on on Saturday morning... She didn't see hide nor hair of them until 7.30 that night. They were just up in their bedroom watching the cartoon channel ... [and] nothing would ever get done.
>
> (Working-class parents of a 9 year-old girl)

> Modern children could be shown how to put a model together and how to paint it up, and show them what to do with their leisure time. And with programmes then yes you get cartoons and peculiar things where they are sort of jumping in custard on a Saturday morning, but that is like a mixture. I know that ours sit down and make models and things. Children have to be educated on how to play all these things don't they?
>
> (Middle-class mother of a 13 year-old boy)

Yet for many families, 'together time' is also media time:

> I quite like that actually in the morning time for them, because I think that makes it a family time, where you're mucking about in your dressing gowns and they're all in their pyjamas. They stay in their pyjamas, they watch the TV, they have different bits of toast, you know, I like that, I love that.
>
> (Working-class mother of a 10 year-old boy)

If children's culture 'emerges in and through the temporal, as well as spatial, interstices of adult social structures' (James et al, 1998:75), it is noteworthy that for children this culture fundamentally embraces media use. Adults and children are engaged in a continual negotiation over time use, often a negotiation between parental rules and principles and children's tactics of evasion. For parents, media use is often framed as time-wasting, precisely not time well spent (or, at best, filling up gaps between approved activities or, more calculated, used as a reward for valued activities successfully

[2]Indeed, in the late twentieth century, this 'time economy of domestic life' (O'Sullivan, 1991) is itself something to reflect upon and judge oneself for: has one spent one's time wisely?

completed). But when children find time for themselves in between the planned adult activities, this will very often be media time.[3]

> I get up and I usually put my clothes on and then clean my teeth and then go downstairs. I watch telly when I come downstairs and then when mummy comes down I have my breakfast and then we have to...
>
> (6 year-old girl living in a working-class family)

> So what they do first is that they go to their room and make sure their room is tidy. Then they come downstairs and watch some telly, and then they have their tea and then they watch some more telly and then they either stay in or they go out.
>
> (Working-class mother of 9 year-old girl)

> It's because it's [computer] got games on it and everything, so I can play them without my dad having to sneak in and tell me not to play it. Like, it is in my downstairs hall, so I play it when they're not in, or sometimes when they're in bed or something in the morning.
>
> (12 year-old boy living in a middle-class family)

5.1.3 Daily routine

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the modern media is that they have become an inextricable part of our daily lives. Routines are established in response to external, often non-negotiable constraints (e.g. disposable time, disposable income) combined with particular opportunities for choice. Within given constraints, we make choices about time spent with media, choices which in practice are rarely remade anew every day but rather allowed to fall into a pattern, a routine which offers familiarity as well as practicability, thus reflecting both existing constraints and positive preferences.

Leisure time, and within that, media time, for young people is that left over once school, sleep and timetabled activities with or arranged by parents have all taken their bite out of the day. In the main, these activities are regular, and thus so too is the remaining free time. Hence young people's experience of media is often tied to these structuring events in their day, with the media serving to organise, or punctuate, the flow of domestic activities:

> Well after school we've got like a routine in our house. We watch *California Dreams* then...
>
> (12 year-old boy living in a working-class family)

> Or music - when I'm getting dressed in the morning I put it on and then I go to school, and then I come back again and we're allowed our little dog upstairs now, and then I put it on while I'm getting changed into different clothes.
>
> (12 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

> I usually just come in, watch telly, tidy my bedroom some nights, get a bath, sit down and watch telly more.
>
> (10 year-old boy living in a working-class family)

This construction of routines is negotiated between children and parents:[4]

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[3]This depends on the medium, of course, and while screen media - television, computer games, etc - are all the activities poorly regarded by parents in terms of well-spent time, reading books is legitimate and approved (unless 'excessive').

[4]We discuss parental regulation of media more thoroughly in Chapter 10. Suffice to say here that such regulation depends heavily on the age of the child. By the early to mid teens, parents claim to exert relatively little regulation over media use, feeling that their children are now beyond such control and reserving their remaining

> Of a morning I always allow them to watch half an hour of TV when they sit in the living room and eat their breakfast. But if they are going to start messing me around and I feel that they are watching too much telly and not eating breakfast then off goes the telly until they are washed and dressed and everything is in place. Then they can have the TV back on.
>
> (Middle-class mother of a 7 year-old boy)

Perhaps taking on the quality of inevitability which is experienced with externally organised activities, routine media use is itself experienced as inevitable:

> Well if it's a Thursday night I have to watch *999*.
>
> (7 year-old boy living in a middle-class family)

> I've got to watch or listen to my music. Even if I have dinner I wear my headphones.
>
> (15 year-old boy living in a working-class family)

> As soon as I wake up in the morning it [radio] automatically turns itself on and whenever I am in my bedroom I sort of switch it on and listen to it.
>
> (15 year-old boy living in a working-class family)

Overwhelmingly, children express particular horror at the possibility of not having television (see Chapter 2), and in part at least, this reflects the structuring role it plays in organising their time.

> I really really like watching my television and if I didn't have my television, especially in the mornings and at the weekends before I got up I would be really bored... it wakes me up.
>
> (11 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

> The children watch, you know, they have like, *Alvin and the Chipmunks* every morning, that is a must before they go to school.
>
> (Working-class mother of a 10 year-old boy)

In charting the history of the schedules, Scannell (1988) argued that the television schedules (as in *The Radio Times*) do not merely fill up our time but, like the clock, they structure the day's media use just as school or work structures other parts of the day.[5] Breakfast Television defines breakfast time, Children's Hour sets bounds on the period when children may reasonably dominate the living room, the 9 pm watershed indicates the approved bedtime for children, and so forth. Further, television marks the difference between weekdays and weekends and it celebrates special times (e.g. Christmas) with special schedules of programmes. Certainly children often experience time through the television schedules:

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powers to regulate time spent in/outside the home.

[5]Television has a special relation with time, being the only medium really able to structure the day as described above (although we are seeing the beginnings of timetables for communal activities on the Internet). Most other media (from the video, magazine, or computer game) are free of scheduling or time-based rules of use, and so routines may be more freely constructed by their users. Thus we should not generalise from television to other media, for media both older and newer than television allow the user to decide when to use them. After all, nothing about the technology dictates that the radio should be so heavily used in the morning, but it is then that its portability and ability to fit in with other, visually demanding, activities makes it so useful. Even the cinema shows the same film every day for a week, allowing some flexibility. And print has always come without time dictates (except the newspaper is designed to be read daily and comics/magazines are coded with a weekly timetable).

D: I like Sunday on [Channel] Four because it's *Saved by the Bell* and *Sister Sister.*
J: I like it on Friday night when there's *Sybil* on, *Friends* and *Frasier*.
(9 year-old girls living in a working-class family)

During the week after school their favourite channel is ITV, um, but they've got the best kids' programmes ITV, well won't say the best programmes, between half three and sort of quarter past four-ish, that's when they'll sit there and watch television.
(Middle-class father of a 6 year-old girl)

Television then regulates time spent together and separately:[6]

Interviewer: Does <S> spend a lot of time in her room?
Mother: Well quite a lot, she does after school.
Father: It depends what's on the telly.
Mother: Well we turn the telly off at around about 6 o'clock, after Neighbours and it doesn't get switched on again until 7 so she's got an hour.
Father: (interrupts) That's for the news.
Mother: So even when the news is on she'll go to her room or she'll potter about upstairs and down here.
(Working-class parents of a 9 year-old girl)

Interviewer: Do you prefer the programmes that are for children after school, or do you prefer programmes that are, er, more in the evenings?
B: Hmm, evening ones, because I - I like watching them with my Mum and Dad.
(10 year-old boy living in a working-class family)

What, then, is the structure of the day? In Britain, the school day generally runs from 9 am till between 3 and 4 pm, and one must allow time to get to and from school.[7] For younger children especially, the other two main constraints on free time are bedtime and time for organised activities. How are media are fitted in and around these routine constraints?

5.1.4 Bedtime

The day ends at bedtime. This is not only the time children go to bed but also a social construct - staying up late is disapproved of, the obedient child goes early to bed, bedtime is celebrated in nursery rhymes and in such rituals as the bedtime drink, the bedtime story, the bedtime routine so beloved by child care experts.

Whatever bedtime means, in our survey we found that children and parents agree more or less on when bedtime is,[8] although predictably parents name a time a little earlier than their children (see Table 5.1a). The main differences are clearly age-related, though girls' bedtime is marginally earlier than boys', and overall, whether or not there is school the next day makes a difference of around one hour.

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[6]This is not to say that the schedules fit children's lives well: "TCC is like *Sweet Valley High*, *Madison*, *Ready or Not*, *Heartbreak High*, but the thing is that it finishes at five o'clock, so say if you get home and then everything's finished" (12 year-old girl living in a middle-class family). Such views reflect the motor for change which make a polychannel environment attractive to children.

[7]For Himmelweit et al (1958) the necessity of time spent travelling each day was regarded as one of the significant unsupervised periods in children's lives; today, as parents take children aged up to 10 or so to school (Hillman et al., 1990), this time has been lost.

[8]Correlation >0.8, $p<0.001$.

INSERT TABLE 5.1a HERE

Whether children actually go to bed at these times is less certain, but bedtime in Britain is taken to be a key marker of whether the parents is successful in imposing rules on their children, therefore representing a site of struggle between parent and child:

> They officially have a bedtime, but it doesn't always work.
> (Middle-class mother of a 10 year-old boy)

> <Bedtime> varies in the summer. He had three very late nights, well not late nights in comparison to some of his friends. Last week he managed to stretch it to 10 o'clock. Well I say he managed, I didn't mind him staying up for 10 o'clock, I don't mind him staying up providing he doesn't get silly with it.
> (Middle-class mother of a 12 year-old boy)

For younger children, it is television, via the schedules, which is often used to define bedtime:

> When *You've Been Framed* has finished we go to bed on Sunday.
> (6 year-old boy living in a working-class family)

> He is allowed to stay up until 8.30 on a Wednesday to watch Rolf Harris, that is the only extension on his bedtime that he has.
> (Middle-class mother of a 7 year-old boy)

And yet for these children, television - especially a set in the bedroom - also complicates the imposition of bedtime:

> Yes, he watches it [TV in bedroom] but I'm always worried and tell him to come and watch cartoons with me instead but he says 'No mummy I want to watch this' and he tries to sneak it on at around about 9 o'clock as well. Sometimes I'm sure that he's asleep and I go into his room and he's got the telly on and he's sitting there watching telly.
> (Working-class mother of a 7 year-old boy)

> I will enforce the TV rule. They can get round me with some of the rules, but not with the TV because if they stay up late watching TV then they're really tired the next morning, then I have all the problems in the morning, so it's easier just to get them to go to sleep.
> (Middle-class mother of a 10 year-old girl)

For older children, *bedroom time* - i.e. leaving the living room - might be a better description. As bedrooms are increasingly equipped with media, bedtime is more the regulation of family versus individual time than the effective regulation of leisure time *per se*. In other words, bedtime increasingly means time for parents and children to be apart rather than time for children's leisure time to end:

> I go to bed at ten o'clock, watch TV 'til about eleven.
> (12 year-old boy living in a working-class family)

> Interviewer: Would you say there are more advantages than disadvantages, um, for him to have a television in his bedroom?
> Mother: Yes, I think there's er, it's an advantage to me, um, basically 'cause it gives me a bit of free time... Er, you can, I can sit quietly down here - it's a small house... So if they're sat here, especially when you've got two or three friends in, and they've got a game machine on...
> (Middle-class mother of a 10 year-old boy)

He will stay up watching television until all hours. I do get up sometimes and shout at him if I can still hear it and it's getting really late. I tell him to go to bed but he won't go to bed until he's ready... I feel that as an adult I need adult time, and there's certain things on the television that are no-go to children. You don't really know what's going to come on.

(Middle-class mother of a 10 year-old boy)

5.2 ALTERNATIVES TO MASS MEDIA

5.2.1 Organised time

Look, if it's a Monday we go football training.

(10 year-old boy living in a working-class family)

I just go to the ice rink at the weekends sometimes, and there's this new club...

(15 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

The notion of 'media as clock' provides a dynamism to the economic metaphor of spending time wisely and well. As suggested earlier, the adult experience of time differs from that of children. Children's great fear is boredom - the need to fill up their time, and the desire to avoid boredom motivates many leisure activities. By contrast the parental lament is that of lack of time, and they particularly crave more time to spend both with their children and on themselves.

I mean in the evenings we are all together, but our minds are always busy. I feel bad because I'd like to do more with the children but we have the shop and my mind is always on it and my husband is in there all the time. We've even got a mini television in the shop now for him to watch and the children as well when they are in there.

(Working-class mother of a 7 year-old boy)

He's had to have a very structured life while I was at University, mainly because I had to be structured to be able to run the home and do a full time degree, and there was no room for manoeuvre...

(Middle-class parent of a 12 year-old boy)

C. Wright Mills observed that, in post-war western society, the pace of life is speeding up, so that pauses for thought or restoration become lost in the imperative to use time productively (Jones, 1997). In Britain, children and young people's lives are increasingly timetabled, with not only school but also organised after-school activities.

On Mondays I've got drama and then I've got Guides after, then Wednesdays I've got another drama, and Fridays I've got horse riding straight after school, so I do quite a few activities.

(12 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

Well I have two jobs. My mum works in an optician's so I clean there to get some money and I also work at a Mill bakery which I do three nights a week after school and Saturdays. Erm... Ventures and a heck of a lot of homework. On Friday nights I would usually go down the pub or, I'm going skating tomorrow, or go to the cinema depending on what's on really... I am in the hockey team so we so might practise or have a match after school. I am also on school council where we have several meetings, most of them are after school and I am on the sub-committee as well where we are trying to formulate a policy to prevent bullying... I do housework for my granddad at weekends.

(15 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

One night a week <S> goes to Scouts, one night a week he goes to football training. Until now he did another night at football, but he's finished that because he's left that school. Erm probably one night he'll go swimming after school, um, what else do we do? Don't know, my whole life seems to revolve around dropping them off and picking them up from somewhere.

(Working-class mother of an 11 year-old boy)

There are a couple of days where he goes to choir on one night which takes up an hour and a half in the evening, and another night he goes to music school, which is like a secondary school for an hour and a half, two hours, and we're out the house anything up to three hours then.

(Middle-class mother of a 10 year-old boy)

Importantly, timetables have an individualising effect on families:

I usually come in at about 3.30 and watch some television, and if they are not here in the afternoon I might watch a film sometimes. <J> likes his tea fairly early but <H> doesn't come home until about 7, so most of the evening is spent cooking and washing up.

(Working-class mother of a 15 year-old boy)

We normally basically all just do our own thing in the mornings. We all get our own breakfast and we each go our own way, shower and off out.

(15 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

And personal ownership of media supports this:

I've got a clock radio that comes on in the morning, and usually <R>'s got something entirely different on, and then when I come downstairs there's something different on in the kitchen as well.

(Working-class parent of an 11 year-old boy)

Interviewer: What is your daughter's favourite television programme?

Mother: I don't know if she has got a favourite programme. I am afraid that we are a family where we all go in our own rooms. We don't sit around together... The children go up in their bedrooms and have their telly on and I am in here.

(Middle class mother of girl aged 11)

Not all children live either such individualised or highly structured lives, of course, and both age and social class make a difference:

They have quite a lot of free time, you know, after school, so it's only Mondays and Fridays that they specifically do things, one of them might have a friend round for tea one day, or, you know, one of them might be going somewhere another day, but they do what they want really. I try not to sort of drag them shopping and things.

(Working-class mother of a 6 year-old girl)

Interviewer: And do you see them as having a lot of free time, or not having enough time to do that you'd like to do, or sort of, are all of these quite constructed for them?

Mother: Er, no it's, there is less structure at the moment, because they've given up sort of all the activities they did.

(Middle-class mother of a 16 year-old boy)

The percentages of children in different demographic groups attending clubs, music lessons, etc. is shown in Table 5.2a:[9]

Few of these after-school activities are gendered - both boys and girls learn to swim, attend Brownies/Cubs and youth clubs. However, while there are few differences overall in the average number of clubs attended per week, dancing lessons (and to a lesser extent music lessons) are more popular with girls, and nearly twice as many boys as girls attend a sports club.

INSERT TABLE 5.2a HERE

There are clear age trends, however. Some activities are much more common amongst younger children (e.g. swimming, dancing, Brownies). Membership of sports clubs peaks at 9-11, and music lessons and belonging to a youth club are most popular between the ages of 9 and 14. In general, attendance at clubs drops off after the age of 14: a third (34%) of 15-17 year-olds do not attend any. Thus younger children have considerably less time available for leisure at home, a fact which is reflected in their time spent with media.

There are also considerable differences between social classes. Middle-class children are more likely to learn swimming, dancing, music, sports and to attend Brownies/Cubs etc. Furthermore, 27% of working-class but only 15% of middle-class children attend no clubs. The only reversal of this pattern is a slightly greater working-class attendance at youth clubs.

Overall, after-school attendance at clubs is most common for children of higher social grade households (see Table 5.2b).

INSERT TABLE 5.2b HERE

One factor behind this may be levels of parental fear of the future competition their children face, such that the time of childhood itself becomes a time for preparation.[10] Thus the timetabled lives of middle-class children appear to reflect a parental concern about 'wasted' time.

> To be honest I'm too strict, but I would rather be strict now and have him grow into a decent adolescent teenager than one that was running round the streets creating havoc. There's a few at his school that are very, their freedom is never questioned, they're out in the morning and they go back at 9.30, 10 0' clock at night, and they have terrible, terrible reputations, and I don't want that for <A>, I want him to have a reputation of being a nice child, and a nice human being, but I don't want him to have a reputation of being a thug and an out and out bully.
>
> (Middle-class mother of a 12 year-old boy)

While one might describe those who attend many clubs as rich in activities, the corollary is that they are time-poor, while those without so many clubs and after school activities have much more free time.

> And he also opted to drop cubs and things like that, cause he couldn't have friends round and that. We've relaxed it a little bit more and tried to fit in, 'cause we have a couple of free days.
>
> (Middle-class mother of a 10 year-old boy)

---

[9] We also asked about computer clubs as indicative of specific interest in IT, but it is very much a minority interest (4% of the sample, with little variation for demographic categories).

[10] As James et al (1998: 74) put it, 'whether in relation to education, work and employment, or in respect of their spiritual, physical and mental well-being, children are judged, nurtured and protected with the future adult in mind'.

However, it is also the case that those children and young people who say there is 'not enough for them to do' in the area where they live are significantly more likely to attend fewer clubs.[11]

5.2.2 Informal leisure activities

Not all leisure activities are formally organised. What other kinds of activities do children and young people fill their leisure time with? Table 5.2c shows how many engage in a variety of activities, and Table 5.2d shows the frequency with which those who do the activity report doing it in a typical week.

Taken together these tables show that spending time with friends is both a near-universal and a near-daily leisure activity, and this is especially true for older teenagers and for working-class children.

INSERT TABLE 5.2c HERE

Unstructured outdoor activities ('play/mess about outdoors') show a predictable pattern by gender and social class, with girls and middle-class children being more restricted in this respect. Older teenagers are less likely to do this also, or at least to recognise this as a description of their leisure activities. Organised outdoor activities (club) are also more common for middle-class children, and also for boys.

Other activities show stronger age trends - paint, draw or make something being a good example, and this is also more commonly done by girls. Middle-class children claim to do more homework, as do girls. And middle-class, younger children, as well as girls, are more likely to play a musical instrument (though for those who do play, there are no demographic differences in frequency of playing). Letter writing, insofar as it occupies any time at all in the average week, is relatively more common among older girls.

Going to the cinema, despite being very popular is a relatively marginal part of children and young people's lives, at least in terms of its frequency (though most - especially older and more middle-class young people - do go on occasion).

INSERT TABLE 5.2d HERE

5.2.3 Absence of leisure activities: boredom

> If you're with your friends you probably wouldn't bother with TV, you'd want to go out and do something because, just TV's something you watch if you're, well unless it's like a cliff hanger and you want to know what happens, when you're bored and you've nothing else to do.
>
> (15 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

> [When I'm bored] I would probably just meet up with people or go into town, or, I don't know, maybe go around to different people's houses and see how they are doing.
>
> (16 year-old girl living in a working-class family)

We suggested in Chapter 4 that children and young people generally prefer to spend time out with their friends than stay home with the media. Here we pursue the ways in which media are used to allay boredom.

Forty years ago, Himmelweit et al expressed concern that 'doing nothing' was being displaced by television. This is a difficult claim to test: people do not like to fill in a diary with 'doing nothing', partly because 'doing nothing' is often a pejorative adult description of time which, from the child's viewpoint is well-spent.

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[11] Average number of clubs attended at least once a week = 1.2 for those with 'enough to do in area' and 0.9 for those with 'not enough to do in area' ($p<.01$).

She's at the age where she can spend endless hours just laying around chatting with her friends and not doing much at all.
(Working-class parent of teenage girl)

But children value time spent daydreaming, resting, thinking, fantasising, escaping the family or just working out what to do next.

[My bedroom] has got all I need in it. But it is nice because I have got like a stereo and a TV so if I need some peace and quiet, or I just want to be on my own I can just go up there and do what I want.
(16 year-old girl living in a working-class family)

Interviewer: Why wouldn't you want a TV [in your room]?
A: 'Cause I just want to dream and sleep and sleep and sleep 'til the morning.
(5 year-old girl living in a working-class family)

This must be clearly distinguished from the kind of 'doing nothing' which for children means boredom. While adults strive to fill their children's time constructively, children may collude in this not because they too value the future-orientation of time spent 'well' but because living in the present makes boredom an unpleasant experience rather than a waste of time. In the main, children overwhelmingly regard the media as a means to fill up the gaps. The media - especially television - thus represent a lifeline or safety valve, a guarantee of pleasurable activity however otherwise unpromising their present surroundings.

When you get bored you watch videos.
(12 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

If you're bored you can just put it [music] on, it just lifts you.
(15 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

If you're in and you're bored you can just watch TV.
(9 year-old girl living in a working-class family)

Sometimes I read most of it [*The Sun*], sometimes if I'm bored.
(9 year-old boy living in a middle-class family)

Indeed, from their accounts of boredom (and interest), we gain a sense of how children and young people experience time: pleasurably spent time is being where the action is; boredom is almost a reproach to parents for not providing sufficient entertainment:

Yes, sometimes I get a little bit bored with reading because I think I'm just like... at home like if I'm reading something I think I'm missing out on something, because I'm just reading my book and everyone else is doing something different.
(9 year-old boy living in a middle-class family)

Well she [Mum] doesn't really mind, but she does mind if I just moan around doing nothing, and I'm like moaning around and
saying what can I do, I'm really bored, I'm bored.
(6 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

Maybe there is also some stigma for young people in watching 'too much' television - not because they could be using the time more productively but because it reveals them to be without a social life:

In weekday nights I do watch quite a lot of telly... but I only bother watching it when I'm bored and that sort of thing, so I don't normally watch you know.
(15 year-old boy living in a working-class family)

Far from wishing for more time, one gets the sense that time passes too slowly for some:

> Interviewer: So does it get rid of your boredom when you watch TV?
> F: It just makes the time go faster.
> (9 year-old boy working in a middle-class family)

Given the importance of alleviating incipient boredom, when asked to draw her 'ideal bedroom', one girl described her picture thus:

> They've got this girl, she's got this com- TV on the bed ...[there's a] remote from that, there's another remote, and she's got all these comics on the bed, and she likes to read them, and she's got a computer next to her TV so if she gets bored she can just move around quick, and she's got like a computer booklet on computers and TV, and she's got a telephone with a Hi-fi midi system sort of thing.
> (9 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

In fact, media use may itself be a way of 'doing nothing'. For example, while the video game involves rather little talk and much action (Skirrow, 1986), its users may talk a lot in front of the screen, recreating the 'doing nothing' of the street corner where again talk is central (Corrigan, 1976). As on the street corner, too, the point is the playing not the winning - the passing of time rather than the achievement of a particular activity.[12] If the street corner is about waiting for something to happen (and about making that unpredictable something happen) primarily in order to alleviate boredom, then as the street corner becomes restricted, disapproved and young people are 'repatriated' to the home (Cunningham, 1995), a new kind of making things happen can be seen, now focussed on, or in front of, the screen (as children discuss with friends how to move through the levels of the game, swapping folk lore about how to play, etc; LaFrance, 1996).

Interestingly from the present day viewpoint, Corrigan had contrasted the potential unpredictability of the street with the alternatives of Mum and Dad in the front room or the known environment of the youth club. If those were the alternatives of the 1970s they have changed in the 1990s: for many young people we interviewed, the youth club has closed down and the front room is diversifying into a multiset, multimedia home with private as well as public rooms. Perhaps street corner culture is being reproduced in the bedroom, transforming the male culture of the street in the direction of the historically female culture of the bedroom (McRobbie & Garber, 1993).

5.3 TIME SPENT WITH MEDIA

5.3.1 How much time is spent with which media?

Given the constraints on disposable leisure time of the school day, of bedtime, and of organised social activities, how much time do children and young people actually spend with the media? In our main survey we asked all those aged 6 to 17 to estimate the amount of time spent with each medium in their daily lives.[13]

Do we need another study on time use? Academic research has investigated time spent with television,

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[12] Here the video game is unlike the audiovisual drama, where the climax must be worth the investment in watching, although it may more resemble the viewing of television as flow, rather than as discrete narratives. As Skirrow (1986:128) notes, 'since there can be no adequate reward for success the game has to be about lack itself - the desire to continue to play - rather than about a final satisfying resolution'.

[13] As discussed in Appendix 5.1, 9-17 year olds estimated their media time use by estimating both days per week spent with the medium and hours/minutes spent with a medium on a day when they used it. For 6-8 year olds we asked them more simply to estimate days but not hours, the hours/minutes data being provided by their parents. These two figures (days and hours) were then combined to estimate a figure for average minutes per day spent with each medium. See Appendix 5.1 for a discussion of the issues involved in time use measurement.

and scattered studies exist also for time spent with some other media. The broadcasting industry, of course, invests considerable effort in deriving measures of time use (or, for some media such as magazines, the measures instead focus on the size of readership). However, there were several advantages to conducting empirical research in this already well-ploughed field.

First, to produce research findings specifically for the public domain. Second, to produce findings specific to children and young people: the unit of analysis for much data collection is the household, the adult population, or only a very broad grouping of children and young people (e.g. as the undifferentiated 5-15 year old category). Third, to apply constant measures across different media, allowing for direct comparisons across media. Fourth, to produce data which could be analysed beyond simple cross-tabulations, so as to identify patterns of media use: in an age of media abundance, it is precisely the relations between the different media which are important when charting the growth or decline of particular media and when relating media use to the shifting pattems of daily life.

In this chapter, we first ask which children and young people make *any use at all* of a variety of media. Then we consider *how much time* is spent by the users of each medium. Further, we consider how children *divide their time* among the different media. (In the following chapter, we will consider the *patterning of media use*, asking how children combine media to occupy their disposable leisure time.) As in previous chapters, we focus on eleven media:

- audiovisual: television, video
- music media
- print media: magazines, newspapers, comics, books ('not for school')
- IT - computer games, PC (not for games), gameboy, Internet.

Media use depends, of course, on the question of access: some children lack access to certain media, while some have access but make no use of them. For the most part, in this chapter we consider the question of time use either for the whole sample or more often for users only (i.e. those who make use of a particular medium at all).

5.3.2 Who uses which media and how long do they spend?

We now discuss each medium in turn, focussing on:

- who uses particular media at all (see Table 5.3a)
- time spent by users (see Table 5.3b).

Having asked children on how many days a week and for how many minutes on a typical day they used each medium, we calculated two other useful summary measures:

- average number of minutes per day (see Table 5.3b)
- four styles of time use
    - occasional users:
        1. 'low' (low use on few days per week)
        2. 'binge' (high use on few days per week)
    - regular users
        3. 'steady' (low-medium use on most days)
        4. 'heavy' (high use on most days)

We present the data for all media in the tables which follow, and thereafter draw out the key points medium by medium.

INSERT TABLE 5.3a HERE

INSERT TABLE 5.3b HERE

Television

In terms of the amounts of viewing, television remains far and away the most popular medium, followed by music, video and computer games. Thus, as tables 5.3a and 5.3b make clear, despite all the public hype about the new media, as the twentieth century draws to a close *television* remains the only ubiquitous medium.

Television is watched by 99% of children and young people aged 6-17 years (only 1% claim not to have television). On average, it is watched for 6.2 days per week for 162 minutes on a typical day, making an overall average of two and a half hours per day (147 minutes). Older children and those from lower social grade households watch for longer.

While children and young people vary considerably in how much time is spent viewing, there are very few 'occasional' viewers at any age: at 6-8 the great majority of children (85%) are 'steady' viewers. Thereafter there is an increase in 'heavy' viewing: by the age of 15-17 34% are 'heavy' viewers and only 61% 'steady' viewers.

Music

Nearly all (99%) have access to either a hi-fi or radio, and almost all (86%) listen to it. On average, children and young people listen to music on 5 days per week, for 91 minutes on a typical day, making an overall average of one and a quarter hours per day (76 minutes).

There are clear gender and age differences. Amongst the minority who do not listen to music, there are nearly twice as many boys as girls, and girls spend around an hour and a half a day listening compared with just over one hour for boys. Age-related differences are especially noticeable. The numbers listening to music in their leisure time increase from under three-quarters (71%) at 6-8 to almost everyone (97%) at 15-17.

Figures for time spent on listening show the differences more starkly: at 6-8 children listen to music for around half an hour per day: at 15-17 those who listen at all spend on average just over two hours doing so. The popularity of music is also evident in the regularity of its use: few listen to music only occasionally, and for teenagers, 'heavy' use becomes increasingly common (typical of 38% of 15-17 year olds).

Video

Only 4% do not have a VCR (see Table 4.3a), although about one fifth of children aged 6-17 say they do not use it (see Table 5.3a). Videos are watched on average for 2.4 days per week, for around 109 minutes per day, making an average overall of 39 minutes per day.

Videos are watched by more children in the youngest age group. There are also differences between the social grades. While those from middle-class households are somewhat more likely to watch videos, they do so for a little less time than do viewers from working-class households.

Videos tend to be watched occasionally rather than regularly, with teenagers more likely to indulge in 'binge' use. For this reason the *average* time cited of 39 minutes is somewhat misleading. As we saw above, on a typical day when they do watch a video, more than half (57%) of children and young people say they spend around two hours doing so.

Computer games

Computer games are played by two thirds (64%) of children and young people aged 6-17 (see Table 5.3a) and are played on average for 3.3 days per week, for around 79 minutes per day. This makes an overall average of three quarters of an hour per day.

Very few children and young people (6% of boys and 14% of girls) have no means of playing computer games at home (i.e. most have one or several of a gameboy, TV-linked games machine or PC). However, some 17% of boys and 39% of girls have access to such equipment but say they do

not play computer or video games in their leisure time.

The largest single proportion (44%) of games players are 'low' users, playing occasionally for a short time.

A:	Well the longest time that I have been on it [computer] is for half an hour, I don't go on it for very long.
Interviewer:	So you never play for like four hours at once, you never do that?
A:	No, definitely not.

(11 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

Overall, only 19% are 'heavy' users. There are, however, marked gender- and age-related differences. Over three-quarters (79%) of boys play, compared with under half of girls (48%). Boys spend more than twice as long playing and are more likely to be 'heavy' users (25% compared with 8% of girls). More middle-class children tend to be 'low' users (49% compared with 39% of working-class children) and fewer are 'binge' users (8% compared with 18% of working-class children).

Computer game playing peaks between the ages of 9 and 14, and is least popular among 15-17 year olds, although the 49% who do play at that age spend just as long doing so. The youngest children aged 6-8 are more likely to be 'low' users and least likely to be 'heavy' users. After this age, 'heavy' users account for some 20% overall. By age 9-11, the dominant pattern of 'low' use is giving way to 'steady' use. By 15-17 'binge' use is more common amongst those who are still playing at age 15-17.[14]

Books

While 87% of children have books at home (see Table 4.3a), books (not including those for school) are read by a little over half (57%) of children aged 6-17.

The modal style of use is 'low' - occasional use on a few days a week for a comparatively short length of time (specifically, 51 minutes per day on an average of 3.3 days per week). The average time spent per day by readers is around half an hour. Reading books decreases in popularity with age. However, while 6-11 year olds tend to be 'low' or 'steady' readers, reading for a relatively short stretches at a time, only 19% of 15-17 year-old readers have a 'low' reading style, and 45% are 'binge' readers, reading occasionally, but for longer.

More girls than boys, and more children from middle-class compared with working-class families read. On the other hand, there are no gender- or social grade-related differences in the time spent by readers.

Comics

Comics are read by only half as many as read books. Boys are more likely to read comics than girls (33% compared with 23%) Comics tend to be read occasionally rather than on a daily basis (around 21 minutes per day, 1.7 days per week). On average therefore children spend only 7 minutes a day reading them.

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[14]

	AGE			
	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17
	%	%	%	%
Occasional				
Low	**54**	40	46	35
Binge	7	9	11	**30**
Regular				
Steady	27	**30**	17	15
High	12	21	20	20

Magazines

We also asked the older children (9+) how much time they spent reading magazines and newspapers. The numbers reading *magazines* increase markedly after the age of 11 and many more girls than boys read them.

However time spent by readers of magazines (varies little by age or gender, averaging at 38 minutes per day on 2 days per week or 13 minutes per day averaged over the whole week). Amongst readers, the modal use is 'low', and girls and boys share similar styles, except that girls are somewhat more likely to be 'binge' readers, turning to magazines on few days a week, but spending relatively long amounts of time reading when they do (25% of girls, compared with 14% of boys, are 'binge' readers of magazines). The likelihood of reading magazines rises with age but time spent doing so and style of use does not change.

Newspapers

Around a third (35%) of children over the age of 8 read a *newspaper.* Young people aged 15-17 are around twice as likely as those who are younger to read a newspaper and to spend longer reading and boys spend a little longer reading than girls.

'Steady' use is the common pattern, with the average time spent being some 21 minutes per day on each of 4 days per week. The overall average is 13 minutes per day. However, relative to the average style of newspaper reading, boys are more likely to read heavily (37%) while girls are more likely to read occasionally (28%); this itself reflects a shift with increasing age from 'low' to 'heavy' use style.

Personal computer

Overall, a third (36%) of children and young people use a *PC (not for games)* in their leisure time. While overall they spend around half an hour per day using it, this represents an average of one hour's use per day on 2-3 days per week.

Having a PC at home, as we would expect, is a major determining factor, and in this respect working-class children are disadvantaged. Almost twice as many children in working-class families (60% compared with 32%) live in a house without a PC (see Table 4.3a). While two thirds of children in middle-class, and over half of children in working-class, families who own PCs use them for non-games purposes, only around one in ten without such access does so (see Table 5.3c).

INSERT TABLE 5.3c HERE

Having a computer at home does not, however, wholly determine use: 33% of middle-class and 45% of working-class children (and 34% of boys and 42% of girls) who have a PC at home, say they do not use a PC for non-games purposes in their leisure time. This may be because they only use it to play games, or because they lack interest in PCs, or even because their parents forbid their use. A further 9% overall who do not have a PC at home, nevertheless say they use one at least sometimes in their leisure time. As we will see in Chapter 10, almost a quarter 28% of boys and 19% of girls sometimes visit a friend's house to use a PC.

The majority (55%) are 'low' users, spending short amounts of time occasionally, and only a few (9%) are 'heavy' users. There are, however, major differences in the user styles of different age groups. Three quarters (78%) of PC users aged 6-8 are 'low' users. By the age of 15-17 only a third (33%) are 'low' users and 41% are 'binge' users occasionally spending comparatively long periods of time on the PC.

There are no appreciable differences in time spent or style of use between boys and girls or amongst the different social grades. This suggests that efforts should be directed at encouraging girls and working-class non-users to use the technology for non-games purposes, rather than encouraging those who already do so to become more interested.

Interviewer:	Did any of these come into your house and sort of change your life?
G:	The computer.

Interviewer:	What did it do?
G:	I don't know, it just made things a lot easier you know, so what I tend to do is write things on the computer and save it in case anything gets lost, because I have lost quite a lot of stuff but I saved it on the hard disc anyway so it was OK, but if I hadn't had got that I would have had to do it all again.
Interviewer:	So it is helping you with your school work?
G:	Yes, well that is basically all I use it for.

(16 year-old girl living in a working-class family)

If it is difficult to ask children to estimate time spent with different media, it is even harder to get them to estimate time spent on different activities with one medium. Nonetheless, we wanted to gain some sense of how children were using the PC at home, and so asked users to estimate what proportion of their time was spent on games (Table 5.3d) and homework (Table 5.3e).

INSERT TABLE 5.3d HERE

As Table 5.3d shows, game-playing is a much more common use of the PC for boys, while girls are more likely to use it for homework (Table 5.3e). A parallel pattern exists for age, with game playing decreasing and homework increasing as children get older. Interestingly, given public prejudices about PC use in the home, for those who have access and use a PC at home, there are no significant differences in the balance between game-playing and homework by social class.

INSERT TABLE 5.3e HERE

Internet

While most children (93%) do not have access to the *Internet* at home (see Table 4.3a), of the 19% who use the Internet in their leisure time (at home/friends'/school/etc.), they are more likely to be boys, older, and middle class, although again the amounts of time spent are small and vary little by demographic categories (see Chapter 7). The average minutes per day figure is misleading insofar as Internet use tends to be very occasional: users claim to spend around 50 minutes per session on a day when they do use it.

Overview

To conclude, gender influences young people's use of video, music, magazines, computer games, books, comics, and the Internet. Other media are associated with age trends, being used either more (music, PC, newspaper, Internet) or less (video, computer games, books, comics) as young people get older. Social class is significant for far fewer media - television, books, PC, and the Internet. However those media are precisely the ones around which moral panics are most commonly focussed, supporting the contention that moral panics are the result of middle-class fears about a working class who, it is supposed, watch a lot of television, don't read books and are being left behind in the Information Technology revolution (e.g. Pearson, 1983).

Television and music are the only media commonly used on a daily basis. While television appears most successful at timetabling the lives of its viewers, music is listened to regularly because it provides the backdrop to a range of other activities (although this is also becoming a feature of television use). Most other media are used only occasionally, fitting into, or even facilitating, a more individualised use of leisure time. This is especially the case for print media - even newspaper reading takes time to develop as a regular daily habit. However computer games also are mostly used occasionally, as is the VCR and the PC. New media, we might conclude, add to the repertoire of leisure activities but do not, or have not yet, found a slot in the regular daily timetable. Once again, television is the exceptional medium rather than the prototypical.

5.3.3 Time budget diaries

Within the structure of the day, when do children and young people make use of these different media? How do children and young people divide their day among the variety of media and other activities available to them?

Following the introduction of television in the 1950s, fitting daily life to the television schedules represented a major restructuring of family routines. However, it seems today that the newer media are increasing flexibility for users, from the VCR which allows for time-shifting across programmes and management of the text within programmes (aided by the remote control), to computer games, the PC and the Internet which have no time restrictions. While cable/satellite broadcasting is also tending to free the viewer from the schedules, and as terrestrial television also extends its broadcasting hours, one outcome is the spread of viewing across the day. For example, while the period after school has been defined as children's leisure time since broadcasting began, increasingly the period before school, and later into the evening, is becoming incorporated into children's television day, as morning television, multichannel options and, particularly, multiset homes, become common.

Having obtained a completed weekly diary from 358 young people aged 9-10, 12-13 and 15-17 on which they noted time spent on each of 10 activities at half hour intervals through the day, we can identify a typical time profile for each medium. This also provides a picture of how different groups of children and young people use different media according to the day of the week and the time of day.

All the data discussed in this section are presented as Figures in Appendix 5.2.

Television and video viewing

It is well known television is used differently on different days of the week. Commonly, weekdays are taken to be Monday to Thursday, with Fridays treated as part of the weekend. As we had data for a whole week, we first compared time profiles for each medium on each day of the week. This showed that Mondays to Thursdays were extremely similar in terms of time spent with media. In the mornings, Friday shows a very similar picture to the other weekdays, and for these five days, morning viewing is a little earlier than it is on Saturdays and Sundays. However, at the other end of the day, Friday becomes part of 'the weekend', with more and later viewing, while Sunday resembles a weekday with an earlier night, given school the next morning (see Figures 5.1-4).

For television and video viewing across the week, the data show that about 20% of children and young people (9-16) watch television in the morning and about 30-40% are watching *at any one half hour time period* after school and into the evening. On all days of the week, viewing is greatest in the afternoon and evening, though there is also an early peak in the mornings on school days and a slightly later morning peak on Saturday and Sunday.

If we break this picture down by age group (where weekdays are defined as Monday to Thursday and compared with Saturday), we see that the early morning peak is more pronounced for 9-10 year olds, especially on Saturdays (see Figure 5.2), and the evening peak extends later according to age: at 8pm for 9-10 year olds, at 9pm for 12-13 year olds (see Figure 5.3) and at 10pm for 15-16 year olds (see Figure 5.4). Again these peaks are more extended by an extra half an hour or so on Saturdays.

The picture for 15-16 year olds is much more evenly spread across the day, compared with the 'twin peaks' (am and pm) of 9-10 year olds. If we break this picture down by gender (see Figures 5.5 and 5.6), there are rather few differences, the most marked being that boys watch later in the evening while girls watch more in the early evening, presumably reflecting their preferences for soap opera over action adventure and sport. By social class, the graphs show a slightly more peaked pattern for middle-class (see Figure 5.7) and a slightly more spread out pattern across the day for working-class young people (see Figure 5.8).

Computer game playing

Having determined that Fridays are like other weekdays in the morning but resemble weekends in the evening, while the reverse is true for Sundays, our analysis of the other media concentrates on weekdays (Mon-Thurs) and Saturdays.

Predictably, the graphs of television/video viewing include much higher proportions of children engaged in this activity than is the case for other media. Computer games, for example, barely reach 6% at any one time (see Figure 5.9). The shape of the graph also differs: computer games are hardly played in the morning or late evening, and the main peak is from 4-7 pm, although as with television, the after-school peak is strongest for the youngest group and playing is more spread out for the older

groups.

As Figure 5.10 shows, more boys than girls play computer games and as was the case for television, the pattern of playing across the day is slightly more concentrated for middle-class, and rather more spread out for working-class, players. For Saturdays, the graph is simply spread across the entire day, again with the gender difference being the most marked (see Figures 5.11 and 5.12).

Listening to music

Music tells a very different story: the age differences are considerable, with few in the youngest group listening much to music. Music clearly has no association with certain times of day, but rather spreads across all available leisure time, morning, afternoon and late evening. For the oldest group, listening to music in the mornings is as common as watching television.

Reversing the story for computer games, girls spend more time across the day with music, with middle-class girls being especially likely to listen in the mornings while working-class children, girls and boys, listen the most after school (see Figure 5.13). On Saturday, music again spreads across the day, with a mid-morning and mid-evening peak for the 15-16 year olds, and no particular pattern for the younger children (see Figure 5.14).

Reading

In the diary we asked about reading in general, not specifying books, comics or newspapers, but excluding reading especially for school. Again, the percentages reading at any particular point in the day are low: on weekdays, a few read in the morning, a few read after school, but essentially reading is done at bedtime, with the peak around 9 pm being most marked for the 9-10 year olds, and more spread (to include a little later in the evening) for the older children (see Figure 5.17).

Reading is clearly gendered, with the bedtime peak largely composed of middle-class girls; though of those who do read in the morning or afternoon, there are few differences according to age, gender or social grade (see Figure 5.18). On Saturdays, reading appears to be a sporadic activity spread across the whole day, with no particular peak at bedtime (see Figures 5.19 and 5.20).

Other activities

We also asked about *'messing about or playing outside'*. For weekdays, only the 9-10 year olds seem likely to mess about outside before school, and they are also the most likely to play outside after school, although they clearly come inside at 8 pm. The 12-13 year olds go out a little less, but come in at the same time. The 15-16 year olds mess about outside even less, but may stay out till 10 pm (see Figure 5.21). While boys are more likely than girls to mess about outside after school, it is the working-class children who are slightly more likely to stay out later in the evening (see Figure 5.22). On Saturdays, the main time to spend time out of doors is across the middle of the day; otherwise the demographic patterns are similar as for weekdays (see Figures 5.23 and 5.24).

As for *homework*, very little is done on weekday mornings, and there is a strong age trend - 15-16 year olds do homework between 4 and 10 pm, with fewer 12-13 year olds and very few 9-10 year olds doing this (see Figure 5.25). Girls show some tendency to get their homework done earlier in the evening, boys leaving it till later, and working-class boys doing the least of all (see Figure 5.26). Very little homework is done on Saturday, but we here include the graph for Sunday, as homework clearly spreads across Sunday as an activity particularly for teenagers; again, girls and middle-class boys do the most homework (see Figures 5.27 and 5.28).

Overview

Lastly we put all the media-related activities, and a few others, on the same scale (see Figures 5.29 and 5.30). On weekdays, this shows clearly how watching television or videos is the dominant activity, closely followed by messing about outside. After school, homework comes next, together with music, and all other activities occupy relatively little time by comparison with these top four. Only television shows an evening dip (presumably for tea, or because of the schedules, or because different groups watch either before or after tea). Messing about outside stops the earliest in the evening, making way for other relatively less popular activities within the home.

On Saturdays, again television and messing about predominate, though here they occupy complementary time slots - television more in the morning and evening, messing about outside more in the middle of the day. Music spreads across the day as the next most common activity, with attendance at clubs on Saturday mornings next.

Different media have different time zones, playing a greater or lesser role in young people's leisure depending on the time of day. Reading is for bedtime, music is for the morning, television is for after school. Such routines establish meaning in young people's lives, providing a means of structuring leisure time and a context for conducting social relations (see Chapter 10). Children are attached to 'their' routines: they retell them in great detail - as apparent throughout this chapter - knowing that they thereby tell us about themselves.

5.3.4 Total time spent with media

What is the total amount of time spent with media? In our survey, the average of total time spent with media (6-17 year olds) was 5 hours per day[15] - a considerable investment of time which reveals much about children and young people's priorities amongst the leisure options available to them.

However this average is likely to be an over-estimation, as some of this time may involve overlapping media use (listening to music while reading a magazine, for example; see Appendix 5.3). Moreover, there was considerable variation amongst children in total time spent with media amongst children, with the top 20% ('heavy' users) spending nine and a half hours a day and the bottom 20% ('light' users) spending only around one and three-quarter hours.

Interestingly, however, 'light' media users spend a *greater proportion* of their media time with television than do 'heavy' media users (59% compared with 38%).[16] This is because heavy media users tend to spend more time with a variety of media and in particular spend a greater proportion of their media time playing computer games and listening to music.[17]

5.3.5 Who are the media addicts?

The notion of children and young people being addicted to a medium - usually a screen medium - is commonplace in public, policy and occasionally professional discourse. We encountered a number of parents, for example, who were uneasy about the amount of time their children were spending with television and computer games in particular, and a few who even used the metaphor of addiction.[18]

> Mother: I mean even the little'un, he's addicted, he loves it. I mean every time that he's bored he wants the computer on.
> Father: Yerh, he really loves it, they all do.
> Mother: Yes, as soon as they come home from school they sit down and watch what they want to watch and then they say 'Oh mum can we have the computer on?'
> (Working-class parents of a girl, 9 and boy, 6)

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[15] The total media time was 304 minutes with a standard deviation of 170 minutes.

[16] In real terms heavy media users spend over twice as long as long each day with television compared with light media users (two and a half hours compared with one hour).

[17]

	Heavy media users		**Light media users**	
	Mins	% total time	Mins	% total time
Listening to music	149	26	15	15
Playing computer games	68	12	7	7

[18] There have been some attempts to define such addiction in psychological terms (Griffiths, 1993) although generally this is a lay conception of addiction - a way of referencing a rather ill-defined concern with 'excessive' time spent with just one medium.

Interviewer: Some people say that children get addicted to computer games, what do you think of that?

A: No, because some people just spend ages on them and people think that they are addicted to them but then the next day you could be out playing football or something, or listening to the radio.

(10 year-old boy living in a middle-class family)

Parents even objected to children spending time with books, if they saw that interest as excessive.

F: My parents disapprove and approve of me <pointing to books>

Interviewer: They disapprove and approve of books.

F: Yes because they think it's good that I do read books and spend time reading them, but they also disapprove that I read them all the time.

Interviewer: So it's a question of anything you spend too much time at parents disapprove of.

F: Yes.

P: Yes.

Interviewer: What do they want you to be - why?

P: Because they want you to spend time doing lots of different interesting activities.

F: Yes, that's exactly what they say.

(Middle-class city boys aged 12-13)

We prefer to avoid the term addiction insofar as we have no information to assume that such a use is in any way negative or harmful in its causes or consequences. However it is of interest to ask who fall into the top 20% of users for a single medium only. These individuals we will call heavy *mono-media* users.

Table 5.3f shows that such mono-media usage as a style of media use is comparatively rare, involving in total only 16% of children between the ages of 6 to 17.Television is undoubtedly the most common mono-media 'addiction', although only 5% of children and young people are exclusively television 'addicts'. No children or young people are solely addicted to PCs amongst the media, according to our definition, and addiction to books is slightly more common than to computer games (4% compared with 3%). Book 'addicts' spend much less time than average on all other media (which explains why they figure relatively prominently amongst mono-media 'addicts'), while 'addicts' of television, computer games, videos and music spend less time than average with books.

INSERT TABLE 5.3f HERE

Who then are the mono-media users? Comparing the groups 'addicted' to television, books and computer games (for whom sample sizes are sufficiently large), it appears that for television (where the average viewing per day of 'addicts' is 222 minutes), those aged 9-14 are more likely to be 'addicts', as are working-class children. There are no differences in the observed proportions of boys and girls.

Book 'addicts' (who spend an average of 80 minutes per day reading), are more likely to be girls, younger, and middle-class. Computer games 'addicts' (where average time spent per day playing is 119 minutes), are much more likely to be boys, younger and working-class.

Really understanding why these respondents make such heavy use of one medium is beyond the scope of our study, but it is indicative that 44% of the book addicts say 'never' when asked 'do you often get bored', compared with 31% of computer game addicts and only 19% of TV addicts - confirming that TV 'addiction' particularly may be motivated by boredom. It also appears that television 'addicts' may be somewhat less content with their lives than either book or computer games 'addicts': of the four in every five children who are non-addicts, 68% say they usually 'like being the way they are'; this compares with 82% of the book addicts, 77% of the computer game addicts, but only 58% of the TV addicts.

Perhaps media which generate a sense of effort and involvement, like books or computer games, are

selected by those who feel positive about themselves, and perhaps, as television is the medium chosen most often when bored, it is heavily used by those who feel less good about themselves. On the other hand, there is little difference in how much 'addicts' cut themselves off from social contacts through this use of media: of the 'non-addicts', 45% report spending a lot of time in their bedroom. This compares with 54% of the book 'addicts', 40% of the TV 'addicts', and 44% of the computer games 'addicts', offering little confirmation of the concern about addictive media use encouraging social isolation at least within the family. The social contexts of media use are further developed in Chapter 10.

5.4 SUMMARY

We begin from the premise that despite the difficulties in estimating time spent with media, especially for children, actual media use cannot simply be inferred from media possessions (Chapter 4) or preferences (Chapter 3). Consequently, to understand how children and young people divide their leisure time among the diversity of media and non-mediated activities available to them, this chapter draws on time use measures in the main survey and the diary to discover how much time is spent with media. We contextualise this inquiry in three ways.

First, we explore the meaning of time for young people. While parents are concerned with spending time 'well', with not 'wasting' time, children are concerned to find free time, and especially media time, in between the activities their parents arrange for them. They are also strongly motivated to avoid boredom, but if bored, they turn to the media to alleviate this. We trace the ways in which the media are both integral to daily routines of domestic life and also play a role in structuring those routines, including practices of shared or separate leisure.

Next, we locate time for media in relation to free time. Leisure time on a weekday is bounded by the school day and by bedtime. As this latter is under family control, we ask where and how boundaries are set. Clear age and social grade differences exist here, but girls' and boys' bedtimes are similar. For older children, given the widespread availability of personal televisions, we suggest that 'bedroom' time rather than 'bedtime' might be more appropriate, the key being the division between family time and separate (though still mediated) time.

Last, we show how free time is also defined in relation to organised leisure. Children live complicated lives in terms of the diversity of organised leisure activities they undertake, and this too encourages separate but parallel lifestyles within the household. Such activities are also strongly related to age and social class, with young middle-class children living particularly time-tabled lives. When we consider also a variety of other activities, it becomes clear that spending time with friends especially, but also playing/messing about outdoors, occupies a fair amount of children and young people's time.

For time spent with domestic media, we chart what proportion of children and young people engage with each of 11 media and, for those who do, how long they spend with them. Age, gender and social class make a difference in nearly every case but in different ways, thereby complicating the story of media use.

Overwhelmingly, television remains the most popular medium, watched for an average of two and a half hours every day by 99% of 6-17 year olds. Viewing is higher for older and more working-class children, with no significant gender differences. Everyone has access to music, and it is highly popular (for fans, rivalling television viewing), and regularly listened to. The demographic variations are considerable - many more girls than boys, more teenagers than younger children listen.

Other media are used more sporadically. Video is highly popular, especially for boys and younger children. It tends to be used occasionally rather than regularly, occupying half an hour per day on average.

Just over half of 6-17 year olds read books, and those who do (more girls, more middle-class, more young children), spend around half an hour per day reading. Like other print media, this is an occasional rather than regular activity. Magazines and newspapers are primarily teenage media. While they occupy relatively few minutes per day on average, magazines are important for girls as something to read occasionally, while newspapers become increasingly important with age, especially

for boys, as something to read little and often.

Computer games occupy three quarters of an hour per day on average, though they are generally played occasionally rather than daily. They are much more played by boys and working-class children.

While half have access to a PC at home only one third of 6-17 year olds use a PC at home not for games. These are twice as likely to be middle-class children, though among users there are no class-related differences in time spent. On average, those who use the PC spend around half an hour a day on it. The few who use the Internet use it intermittently, for nearly an hour per session.

In short, the amounts of time devoted to newer media (computer games, video, PC, Internet) are still relatively small compared to overall media use, suggesting that while they certainly add to the variety of options available to young people, they have yet to find a significant slot in their leisure timetables.

The time budget diaries show further that for television, viewing is spread across the day - including morning and night-time, though peaking in the afternoon and evening. A similar story holds for music. Playing computer games - which occupies barely 6% of the population at any one time - is concentrated in the after school period, especially for boys. Reading is shown to be primarily a bedtime activity, homework is sporadic through the week, with rather few working class boys doing much homework at all. And the pattern for playing/messing about outside reveals clearly the relatively greater constraints on girls, younger children and middle-class children.

In all, 6-17 year olds spent around 5 hours per day with one medium or another. We complete our picture of young people's time use by those who spend considerable amounts of time, relatively speaking, on just one medium on most days of the week. Such 'mono-media' usage (which describes one in five children and young people) is most common for television, followed closely by books and computer games. Interestingly, those who make such use of books and computer games, both media which demand involvement, report feeling relatively more positive about themselves, compared with those who mainly and heavily use television, suggesting that television (the medium chosen most often when bored) is heavily used by those who feel less good about themselves.

TABLE 5.1a

Average bedtime (children's survey, N=1303)

	SOCIAL GRADE BY AGE							
	ABC1				C2DE			
	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17
School next day	8:14	8:58	9:56	10:50***	8:22	9:07	9:55	10:55*
No school next day	9:13	10:04	11:00	11:54***	9:28	10:23	11:07	11:59***

Note: * p<0.05, ***p<0.001

TABLE 5.2a

Percentage of children who attend activity at least once per week (Parents' survey,N=978)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boy	Girl	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
Sports club	28	**37**	19***	26	**37**	30	19***	**36**	21***
Swimming lesson	22	22	23	**40**	33	11	5***	26	19*
Brownies etc	18	17	20	**28**	24	14	7***	**23**	14**
Music lesson	16	13	**19***	14	**21**	**18**	9**	**21**	11***
Youth club	13	12	14	8	**16**	**17**	11***	11	15
Dancing class	9	2	**16*****	**15**	9	7	4**	**11**	7*
Computer club	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3
Other	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	3
Don't go to any club	21	21	22	18	13	22	34***	15	27***

Note: *** p<0.001, ** p< 0.01, * p< 0.05

TABLE 5.2b

Average number of clubs attended at least once a week (Parents' survey, N=972)

	AVERAGE	AGE			
		6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17
SOCIAL GRADE	***	***	**	*	
AB	1.6	2.1	1.8	1.5	0.7
C1	1.2	1.3	1.7	0.9	0.7
C2	1.0	1.2	1.3	1.0	0.5
DE	0.9	1.1	1.1	0.8	0.5

Note: *** p<0.001, ** p< 0.01, * p< 0.05

TABLE 5.2c

Percentages who ever engage in variety of activities during their leisure time

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boys	Girls	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
All aged 6-17 (1303) Spend time with friends	86	85	87	82	80	89	92***	88	84
Play/mess about outdoors	66	69	63*	80	77	66	42***	69	64
Paint, draw or make something	54	50	59***	81	69	42	27***	54	55
Go out to a club	50	55	46***	47	52	52	49	58	44***
Aged 9+ only (980) Do homework	72	71	74	N/a	70	79	68**	78	68***
Go to the cinema	62	61	63		54	64	67***	68	57***
Write a letter	33	20	48***		30	31	38	36	31
Play a musical instrument	27	22	33***		36	27	19***	35	21***

Note: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01

TABLE 5.2d

Frequency (in days per week) of engaging in activities during leisure time (for those who do at all)[19]

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boys	Girls	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
All aged 6-17 Spend time with friends	4.7	4.8	4.6	4.4	4.8	4.6	4.9*	4.3	5.0***
Play/mess about outdoors	4.6	4.8	4.3***	4.9	4.9	4.3	3.9***	4.3	4.9***
Paint, draw or make something	2.6	2.6	2.6	3.0	2.7	2.0	1.9***	2.5	2.7
Go out to a club	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.7
Aged 9+ only Do homework	4.1	4.0	4.3*	N/a	3.1	4.7	4.5***	4.5	3.9***
Play a musical instrument	2.8	3.1	2.6		2.9	2.9	2.7	2.9	2.7
Write a letter	0.7	0.6	0.8		0.6	0.6	1.0*	0.6	0.9
Go to the cinema	0.3	0.3	0.3		0.3	0.3	0.3	0.26	0.31*

***p<0.001, *p<0.05

[19] 6.5= 6-7 days a week; 4.5= 4 or 5 days a week; 2.5= 2 or 3 days a week; 1= once a week; 0.25= once a month; 0.1= less than once a month.

TABLE 5.3a
Percentages who use medium at all during their leisure time

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boys	Girls	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
All aged 6-17 (1303) Television	99	99	99	99	98	100	99	99	99
Music media	86	81	**90*****	71	83	**91**	**97*****	85	86
Video	81	83	79	**89**	79	79	77***	**84**	79**
Computer games	64	**79**	48***	63	**70**	**73**	49***	62	65
Book -not school	57	49	**64*****	**67**	**62**	52	45***	**64**	51***
PC -not games	36	38	34	30	36	39	39	**48**	26***
Comics	28	**33**	23***	**42**	**38**	21	12***	29	28
Internet	19	**23**	15***	5	14	25	**34*****	**24**	16***
Aged 9+ only (980) Magazine	66	56	**77*****	N/a	56	**71**	**71*****	67	66
Newspaper	36	38	33		21	29	**56*****	33	38

***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

TABLE 5.3b
Average number of minutes per day spent by users only, by medium

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boys	Girls	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
Users aged 6-17 Television (1135)	147	148	145	101	142	**165**	**167*****	133	**158*****
Music media (1024)	76	68	**84****	36	46	72	**127*****	72	80
Comp. games (754)	45	**57**	24***	35	47	47	50	39	**50***
Video (965)	39	41	36	37	42	40	34	32	**44*****
PC-not games (409)	29	32	26	14	22	28	**44*****	27	34
Book-not school (671)	26	24	27	25	27	24	27	27	25
Comics (302)	7	7	6	8	7	7	3	5	8
Users aged 9+ Magazine (639)	13	11	13	N/a	10	13	12	11	12
Newspaper (337)	13	**14**	11*		8	10	**16****	12	13
Internet (226)	8	6	5		3	6	7	6	6

***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

TABLE 5.3c

% using PC (not for games) in leisure time: social grade by whether or not have PC at home

	ALL	SOCIAL GRADE BY PC AT HOME			
		ABC1		C2DE	
		With PC (373)	Without PC (174)	With PC (282)	Without PC (417)
% using PC (not for games) in leisure time	36	67	11	55	8

TABLE 5.3d

Proportion of time spent playing games on PC at home by demographics (N=539)

	ALL	GENDER***		AGE***				SOCIAL GRADE	
	%	Boys %	Girls %	6-8 %	9-11 %	12-14 %	15-17 %	ABC1 %	C2DE %
Hardly any/ none	19	12	**25**	14	7	16	**36**	18	19
Less than half	22	20	**25**	15	18	**29**	**25**	23	20
About half	29	29	29	**33**	**36**	**31**	17	30	26
Most or all	31	**40**	22	**39**	**40**	25	22	29	34

Note: ***p<0.001

TABLE 5.3e

Proportion of time spent doing homework on PC at home by demographics (N=539)

	ALL	GENDER***		AGE***				SOCIAL GRADE	
	%	Boys %	Girls %	6-8 %	9-11 %	12-14 %	15-17 %	ABC1 %	C2DE %
Hardly any/none	46	**52**	41	**81**	57	30	24	42	51
Less than half	21	21	21	12	21	25	23	22	18
About half	20	20	19	5	19	29	23	19	20
Most or all	14	8	**20**	2	3	16	**30**	16	10

Note: ***p<0.001

TABLE 5.3f

Percentage of mono-media users for different media (N=1168)

	%
Mono-media users	16
Television	5
Books	4
Computer games	3
Music	2
Comics	1
Newspapers	1
Other (magazines, videos)	1
Not mono-media users	84

CHAPTER 6

COMBINING OLD AND NEW MEDIA

6.1 FROM TIME USE TO LIFESTYLES

Structuring leisure time is increasingly a matter of balancing options, putting together meaningful combinations of activities to suit specific interests. Even though television still dominates young people's leisure time and interests, the previous chapters have shown that it is by no means the only medium important to young people. Given the growing variety of media options available to them, children and young people face daily choices regarding media use as they construct and reproduce the routines of everyday life.

Our contextual approach has led us to encompass a range of media, for each medium may serve to set the context for the use of both other media and non-mediated leisure activities. For example, one may wonder whether use of computer games displaces time spent watching television, or whether having a television in the bedroom affects time spent with other media or, indeed, with friends or family.

The diversity of media available in the environment of children and young people invites a mapping of the *diversity of media lifestyles*, so as to supplement the data presented hitherto on uses of individual media. Patterns or styles of media use may depend on traditional socio-demographic factors, but there may also be other factors which affect media use.

In this chapter we ask first, how far the use of one medium is associated with the use of another. Second, we examine the patterning of media use by generating a typology of media-use styles. Third, we ask whether media are not just being combined in ever more complex patterns but rather it may be said that new media are displacing older media.

6.2 ASSOCIATIONS AMONG MEDIA

How far is time spent with one medium, or one type of media, associated with time spent on another? We examine here how children and young people combine those media to which they have access in their daily life.[1]

Table 6.2a reveals many correlations between time spent on the different media - nearly half of all possible correlations are statistically significant. All of these correlations bar one are positive, indicating that greater use of one medium, far from displacing time spent with other media, is associated with spending more time with other media.

INSERT TABLE 6.2a HERE

It is noteworthy that the only significant negative correlation - which suggests that those who spend more time watching television also spend less time reading books - is the one about which many are concerned. Thus we pursue the possibility that television displaces reading later.

Many of the higher correlations, as we might expect, indicate relationships among *media of the same type*. Thus there are positive correlations among the different computer-related activities. The positive association between playing on a TV-linked games machine and using a PC (not for games) deserves

[1] The figures on time spent with each medium presented in Chapter 5 refer to all children and young people, irrespective of their access to particular media. As some media are only available to some children, in the present chapter we consider use figures only for those who have access to the relevant media hardware.

note, in view of the fact that most parents and teachers wish to encourage the latter, but often do not see computer game-playing as constructive.

In addition there are positive correlations between time spent with television and video, and between each of these and TV-linked games machines, indicating positive relations among all the screen media (justifying the category of 'screen entertainment' developed in Chapter 4 and below).

On the other hand, correlations among print media are not as strong as might have been expected - newspapers and books correlate with magazines but not with each other, and comics are unrelated to any of these. We have seen earlier (Chapter 2) that children's images of the media suggest the decline of print compared with the ascendancy of screen media: the present pattern of correlations suggests further that print media do not 'hang together', undermining the notion of a 'print culture', again by contrast with the coherence observed across the different screen entertainment media.

Table 6.2a also shows some correlations *across media types*. Interestingly, using the Internet is related almost as strongly to reading books as it is to playing computer games, and using a PC is associated with both game playing and with reading newspapers and comics. A variety of media are combined with music, namely watching television, using a PC and reading.

When we examine these associations according to age, gender and social grade (Table 1, Appendix 6.1), we see that while most correlations are found across demographic variables, some are markedly different. These primarily concern gender: in general, the screen media are more inter-correlated for boys than girls, while for girls there are more correlations across media types, particularly between screen and non-screen media. Most notably, although there is a negative correlation between television viewing and reading books for both boys and girls, it is actually significant only for boys (correlation: -0.12). The positive correlation between serious use of the PC and playing computer games on a games machine is also restricted to boys (correlation: 0.22). This is understandable in view of the comparative dearth of computer games aimed at girls and the fewer numbers who play.

To conclude, there is little evidence here that the use of one medium displaces time spent with others, with one notable exception - those who watch television a lot tend to spend less time reading books. In particular, the more time is spent with one screen medium (television, video, TV-linked games machine or PC) the more a child is likely to spend with the others. However print media are used rather differently in children's leisure. Time spent reading books is not related to time spent with magazines, newspapers or comics: Interestingly it is most closely related, for those few who have access at home, to use of the Internet.

6.3 A TYPOLOGY OF MEDIA LIFESTYLES

Can we define groups of young people in terms of different media lifestyles? Every young person constructs an individual style of time use, drawing on different combinations of the various media according to ownership, access and preference. These may subsequently be summed, as in the previous chapter, to give aggregated accounts of time use for the population as a whole and demographic sub-groups within in it. However, there are advantages in developing an account at the level of lifestyles, pitched between the general and the individual. This account acknowledges that individuals may combine media in different ways and that these media lifestyles may in themselves be used to define different groups of young people.[2]

Such a classificatory system may be imposed 'top-down'. One may suppose, for example, that some children are 'screen users' and others are 'print users', or that some are heavy 'entertainment users' while others are more 'information-oriented', and there is modest justification for this in the research literature. But this would be to miss the emerging trend, for the point about new media is that they blur our traditional distinctions for thinking about the media. Print now occurs on the screen. Children learn through educational games on the PC. And in any case, these are often adult distinctions which map poorly on to children's own ways of structuring their media use.

[2]Despite a body of theory on lifestyles, their nature is often left to the empirical researcher to discover rather than hypothesised *a priori*. One possibility is that lifestyle analysis might vary according to the focus of study. A more parsimonious approach would propose general lifestyle categories which operate across different research foci.

In order to explore, "bottom-up", the way in which children combine media, we cluster analysed the time use variables[3] for each of 10 media.[4]

Looking across all age bands, the children and young people in the survey could be broadly classified in terms of the following four media-use styles (where one of these, the specialist group, contains three subgroupings):

- *Specialists* (35% of sample)
  These groups spend particularly large amounts of time either reading books, using PCs or listening to music.

- *Screen entertainment fans* (28% of sample)
  This group spends above average amounts of time with all entertainment-oriented screen media (television, videos and computer games) and comparatively little time with books, and they are also low for PC use.

- *Traditionalists* (20% of sample)
  This group spends the bulk of its time with what we might call a "traditional" media mix - television, music, books and magazines, though only for books do they spend more than average amounts of time, and they spend very little time with PCs and comparatively little with computer games.

- *Low media users* (17% of sample)[5]
  This group spends least time overall[6] with the media and are not major users of any one medium.

Table 6.3a shows the average time spent on each of the media by those belonging to the six different media-use styles.[7] This is provided as a check, and to aid interpretation of these media-use styles. In the rest of this section, we consider who falls into each use-style and why.

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[3]Statistical analysis based simply on 'average minutes per day' produced an unsatisfactory result, neither stable nor interpretable. A new scale was therefore produced for each medium dividing the respondents into 4 groups - non-users, low users (bottom 1/3 of sample of users), medium users (middle 1/3) and high users (top 1/3). As high/low usage varies with age, this classification was conducted separately by age group. Prior testing confirmed that this 4 point scale produces more interpretable, robust results. It is standardized so that the category of non-user does not unbalance the data across different media and so that raw scales used with many distinctions - e.g. television, with a range in the hundreds) do not dominate over scales used with much lower range (e.g newspapers, measured in just a few minutes). (Children aged 6-8 were not asked about magazines or newspapers and their parents told us how many hours/ minutes they spent on media, although they themselves told us how many days per week they did these activities.)

[4]A Wards' Cluster Analysis was conducted, based on average minutes/day spent with the 10 media in Table 6.3a - as so few used the Internet, this was not entered into the analysis but is used to describe the clusters subsequently. We analysed the age bands separately, generating a six-cluster solution for each which formed the basis for interpretation. The search for patterns is of course an abstraction. Cluster analysis provides a statistical means of constructing styles of media use according to the latent structure in the data, making as few assumptions as possible. A hierarchical cluster analysis can be interpreted at any level of clustering from 1 to N: solutions for each level from 2 to 6 clusters were compared to find the optimal number of clusters, based on the criteria of stability, replicability and interpretability (Everitt, 1986).

[5]We avoid the value-laden terms 'heavy' and 'light': while our culture values 'heavy' readers but 'light' viewers, we seek to understand lifestyles without value judgements.

[6]Summing time spent across media gives a working figure for total media use. However, it should be interpreted with caution; for example, listening to music may be done concurrently with other activities.

[7]While the cluster analysis used the whole sample, *regardless of whether or not they had access* to particular pieces of media hardware, as to do otherwise would have drastically reduced the size of the sample, the data used to describe the clusters (Table 6.3a) are based only on those who have access to the relevant media in the home.

This table clearly demonstrates the importance of television viewing, for this dominates all the media-uses. Only listening to music amongst music fans comes near to accounting for a comparable amount of time.

INSERT TABLE 6.3a HERE

Which children and young people fall into each of these categories or styles of media use? Table 6.3b shows a clear age trend in the styles of media use. Media 'menus' become more selective and specialised as children grow older and the importance of the newer, computer-based electronic media increases. Few (17%) of the youngest children are 'specialists' (spending a particularly high proportion of time with one medium) and the largest single proportion (42%) are low media users. At 9-11 the number of low users has almost halved, and the numbers of children spending a higher than average amount of time with PCs has more than trebled.

'Serious' computer use peaks at 9-11: without longitudinal research it is impossible to tell whether this is a genuine age effect, or whether these children will continue to show a special interest in computers as they grow older. By the age of 12-14 we found no low users, while the numbers of traditional media users had doubled and the numbers of screen entertainment users increased. Amongst 15-17 year-olds the majority (60%) are specialists - largely due to the emergence of a new specialist group - those who spend large amounts of time listening to music - and an increase in the numbers spending more time with books.

INSERT TABLE 6.3b HERE

There are also significant differences in the styles of media combination most common amongst girls and boys and between social grades. Boys are more likely to be screen entertainment media users (37% compared with 18% of girls): girls are more likely to be traditional media users and mix some reading with their television viewing. They are also more likely to be music fans. Interestingly enough however, girls are no more likely than boys to be amongst the book fans.

Middle-class children are more likely to be specialists generally (43% compared with 29% of working-class children). In particular they are more likely to spend more than average amounts of time with books or PCs: there was no difference in the number of music fans. Working-class children, on the other hand, are somewhat more likely to be screen entertainment media users (32% compared with 23% of middle-class children).

The level of economic and cultural capital (as defined by household income and the age at which the parents stopped full-time schooling) generally but not always coincided in the different styles of media use (see Table 6.3c). For example although the household income in the homes of low media users is only about average, the educational level of both parents is high. On the other hand both income level and educational levels are low in the families of screen entertainment users and high in those of specialist book lovers.

INSERT TABLE 6.3c HERE

Does differential access to media at home explain style of media use? We examined how these media-use styles relate to the types of households we identified in Chapter 4. Table 6.3d shows that the type of media environment in the home *only partly accounts for differences* in children's media use.

INSERT TABLE 6.3d HERE

Low media users, for example, are as likely to come from media-rich homes, and no more likely to come from media-poor ones, than average. However, there is one striking association: specialist media-users are much more likely to come from media-rich environments. Two thirds (66%) of all those who are classed as avid PC users come from such homes and over half of heavy readers (59%) and heavy music listeners (54%).

There is also an association between the kind of media children have in their bedroom and their style of media use (see Table 6.3e), although once again it is clear that media in the bedroom is *not* the definitive factor in all cases.

INSERT TABLE 6.3e HERE

For example, being a music fan is not related to having a 'book/music' bedroom. This apparent anomaly occurs because these bedrooms are not found in the 15-17s, yet all the music lovers fall within this age group. At this age, almost all bedrooms have music equipment, and thus music lovers may be found across a range of bedroom types.

On the other hand, screen entertainment fans are more likely to have screen entertainment or media-rich bedrooms, in which almost everyone has television and two thirds have TV-linked games machines. PC fans are more likely to have media-rich bedrooms in which the highest proportion of PCs are found: book fans and traditionalists (who read more than average) are more likely to have the type of bedroom where the great majority have books. Similarly children who are low media users are somewhat more likely to have relatively poorly equipped bedrooms.

6.4 MEDIA-USE STYLES AND MEDIA "FANDOM"

What attitudes and behaviours distinguish among media-use styles? A variety of media-related attitudes and behaviours, particularly concerning the different uses and gratifications attached by children to media, distinguish among the groups. We asked children to say which out of 11 media they:

- talked to friends about
- concentrated on
- would choose if they were feeling bored
- would choose if they wanted to relax
- would choose if they wanted excitement
- would choose if they wanted to learn about something
- would choose if they wanted not to feel left out.

Their responses were summed, giving a uses and gratification or 'fan' score of 0-7 for each medium. Table 6.4a shows that media-use style is significantly associated with these fan-scores.

The strongest associations are between PC fans and high scores for gratifications linked to using a PC, and between screen entertainment fans and high scores for gratifications linked to playing computer games. However, although other correlations are small, they confirm that associating gratifications with particular media is likely to influence style of media use.

Traditionalists associate more gratifications with print media (with the exception of newspapers) and are less likely to value computer games. Book lovers are less likely to name television as a source of gratification and more likely to name books and the telephone. Music lovers are less likely to name computer games, PCs, books or magazines and are more likely to name music or a newspaper as a source of gratification. Those who are low media users show no tendency to associate more gratifications than others with any of the media we asked about and associate fewer gratifications with a number.

The fan scores of the six media-use styles correlate with demographics variables (see Table 6.4a). As noted earlier (see Table 3.1b) boys find more gratifications than girls in screen entertainment media, particularly computer games, and girls find more gratifications in audio, print and communication media. Interestingly there are no gender differences in gratifications associated with PCs.

Younger children find more gratifications in reading books and comics and with playing computer games, while older children find more in listening to music and reading newspapers and magazines. Those in the higher social grades find more gratifications in reading books, talking on the telephone, using a PC (not for games) and, less expectedly perhaps, watching television.

Is the typology of media-use styles simply explained by demographic variables, or do we also need the fan-variables to understand media-use styles?[8] The analysis showed that fan scores (the amount

[8]Logistic regression analysis was used to predict type of media-use style, entering both demographic and fan variables. The percentage of cases correctly classified ranged across media-use styles from 73% to 91%. As fan

of personal gratification the child associates with particular media) used alone predicted media-use styles just as successfully as did demographic variables. When the two types of variable were combined, this did not increase the percentage of cases correctly classified, although both demographic and fan variables contributed significantly to the final equation (see Table 6.4b).

INSERT TABLE 6.4a HERE

Thus, one can predict media-use style equally well using just fan (or uses and gratification) variables as using demographic variables. Or, one might say that the fan variables give us an understanding of how and why demographic variables relate to media use (e.g. boys are more likely to use screen entertainment media *because* they find them relaxing, something to talk to friends about, etc).

INSERT TABLE 6.4b HERE

6.5 PROFILES OF MEDIA-USE STYLES

We have identified styles of media use based on the different ways of that children and young people combine media in everyday life. Let us look more closely at each style in turn.

6.5.1 Screen entertainment fans

Interviewer:	Do you like reading?
A:	No, I just don't want to sit there for like two hours just reading something. I would read a magazine but not a book.
Interviewer:	What is the difference between sitting reading a book for two hours and sitting and playing a computer game for two hours?
A:	One is much more exciting than the other. One you can actually see and do, and one you just read and do nothing.
Interviewer:	Would you put on the television before you would read a book?
S:	Yes.
Interviewer:	Do you think that books are on their way out?
S:	Kids don't read books any more. They all read these magazines and just play on computers or are out doing something.
Interviewer:	Do you ever do any of those things, like watching television, playing on the computer, that you might do for more than an hour at a time?
S:	Yes, it takes ages to complete a level on the computer games... About 5 minutes to do every level and if there is about 10 levels then it is about, and then there is a big boss which is the sort of thing that you have to destroy at the end so that takes about half an hour or 45 minutes or so.
A:	Yes, maybe longer, sometimes I could sit there for about two hours trying to beat

(10 and 14 year-old boys living in a middle-class family)

Demographic characteristics. Two thirds of screen entertainment fans are boys and a similar proportion are working class. The numbers are highest amongst 12-14 year-olds: two in every five (39%) in this age group are screen entertainment fans (see Table 6.3b).

Media environment in the home. Three in every ten (30%) have screen entertainment bedrooms and almost as many (27%) have media-rich bedrooms. Three quarters (78%) have their own television set and half (50%) their own games machine. However, as a group, screen entertainment fans are amongst the least likely to spend a great deal of their time in their own rooms.

Media-related activities and attitudes. Although almost all (94%) say they feel comfortable with PCs

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scores are significantly correlated with each other and with demographic variables, the analysis can only reveal whether adding fan scores to the equation significantly improves prediction: while we entered the demographic variables first, we cannot claim to have controlled for them (see Tabachnik and Fidell, 1996).

and find them exciting (86%), they spend very little time on serious PC use (see Table 6.3a), and 40% of those who do have a PC at home say they spend all or almost all of their time with them playing games. These findings would suggest that the playing of computer games does not necessarily stimulate interest in serious computer use. They also spend comparatively little time with books.

Asked which media they concentrate on (see Table 6.4a), they are most likely to name television and computer games. Television is the medium most name as something they talk about with friends and videos and computer games are also cited by them more frequently as conversational topics than by any other group. Their passion for computer games in particular marks them out. When they want excitement or to combat boredom, it is computer games which they are most likely to turn to. They are also most likely to swap computer games with friends, rather than any of the other media we asked about.

Values and interests. Sport is their central interest - their favourite computer game is most likely to be a sports game, their favourite television programme a sports programme and they are the group most likely to name being good at sport as something that makes you popular with people your own age.

6.5.2 Traditionalists

> Well, usually I watch television with my family but if my brother wants to watch his programmes or something, I go upstairs and do my homework, listen to music, and my typewriter's up in the attic because when I was little I used to type anything on it.
>
> (Girl, 12, living in a middle-class family)

Demographic characteristics. The majority (60%) of children with these kinds of tastes in media are aged 12-14:[9] after that age, we found no traditionalists.[10] Traditionalists are a little more likely to be girls (58% girls) but are representative of the sample as a whole as regards social grade (59% C2DE).

Media environment in the home. More than the expected proportion of traditionalists have Books/Music bedrooms (30% compared with 20%). However they are not a group which proportionately spend a lot of time in their bedroom.

Media-related attitudes and behaviours. Traditionalists spend average amounts of time watching television and listening to music and somewhat more than average reading books (see Table 6.3a). Like screen entertainment fans, they spend little time with computers, although they almost all feel comfortable using them (92%). However they also spend little time with computer games - hence the label "traditionalist".

Like the group of specialist readers, they are most likely to turn to a book if they want to learn about something. They are also almost as likely to name a book as something they concentrate on as they are to name television. Books are not however a major topic of conversation with friends, although magazines come third on the list after television and music. They are also the only group where more buy magazines than buy music tapes or CDs with their own money. Otherwise there is a fair spread in the media chosen to combat boredom, not to feel left out, to relax with or for excitement.

Values and interests. They are, together with low users of media, amongst the children most likely to say they often feel bored. Being younger, they are still amongst those most likely to be focussed on school. They are almost as likely to name a good education as a happy family life when asked what will be most important to them when they grow up and (although it still comes second from bottom of the list) almost a quarter (23%) think that doing well at school makes you popular.

As in all bar one of the groups, sport is the interest of the largest single proportion of traditionalists.

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[9] In the age group 12-14 we found no low users and few specialists: the majority (78%) were evenly split between traditionalists and screen entertainment fans.

[10] Young people aged 15-17 were mainly specialist media users with developed media tastes (60%), and the remainder were equally divided between screen entertainment fans and low media users.

However sizeable minorities, as with low media users, also name music, animals or wildlife and comedy as an interest. There is also no one type of television programme which dominates their list of favourite programmes. Apart from rather more than usual enthusiasm for books and magazines, this is a heterogenous group with no specially strong affiliation to any one medium, or one type of interest, in particular.

6.5.3 Low media users

Interviewer: Which of these pieces of media equipment would you miss the most if it got broken or taken away?
L: My bunny. I don't want that to break.
Interviewer: So what's more important - your bunny or the TV?
L: My bunny.
(6 year-old girl living in a working-class family)

Demographic characteristics. Two thirds (67%) of low media users are under 12 years old and one third (33%) between 15-17 years old. In the middle age range (12-14 years) we found no such users. Low users reflect the social grade composition of the sample as a whole (59% working class) and are only marginally more likely to be girls (55%).

Media environment in the home. Around the average proportion (43%) come from media-rich homes, and have media-rich bedrooms (22%). However rather fewer had screen entertainment bedrooms (14% compared with 20% in the sample as a whole) and rather more have media-poor bedrooms (35% compared with just over a 27%).

Media-related attitudes and behaviours. These children spend most of their media-related leisure time watching television (see Table 6.3a). However they are the least likely to use the TV guide to choose what to watch. They are also unusual in the gratifications they associate with media, choosing television rather than music most often to relax and television again rather than computer games or videos for excitement.

Fewer in this group than in any other talk to their friends about television, videos, music, magazines or the telephone. Fewer than in any other group say they concentrate on reading magazines. They are particularly low on buying magazines and videos with their own money compared with the other groups and on swapping videos with friends. Once again, although few have computers, the majority (91%) feel comfortable using them although fewer think they are exciting (74%).

Values and interests. Together with the traditionalists they are the group most likely to complain often of feeling bored. Like the specialist readers however they have comparatively positive attitudes to school. They are also the least consumerist of our groups. Significantly fewer say that "having the latest things" is something likely to make you popular.

6.5.4 Specialists: book lovers

One of my best friends - I don't know how she does it - she reads about six books a week. The library is open on Fridays and she will go down there before we go out. The amount of books that she takes out is incredible and she reads them all and you can tell she loves them. It's like enjoyable as well, isn't it?... I mean with the TV you are getting the image in front of you but with a book you can make it all up can't you in your head... It's just that everyone expects you to read more. It's more educational.
(16 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

Everyone loves horror... whenever we go into the library, we always go up to the librarian 'Do you have any horrors?' and she never has, because everyone's always got them out... I think one thing that makes me read it is because my mum doesn't like it.
(12 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

Demographic characteristics. Book lovers are more likely to come from middle-class homes (60% compared with the expected 44% did so), but, contrary to expectation are not more likely to be girls. Their numbers decrease slightly until the age of 14, but at 15-17 the percentage doubles, accounting for 19% of the age group.

Media environment in the home. There is an association with a home environment which is media-rich (59% compared with the expected 45% come from such households), and with a books/PC bedroom (23% compared with the expected 13% have such a bedroom).

Media-related attitudes and behaviours. These children and young people watch less television than any other group except the low media users, but spend more time with PCs than any group apart from the PC lovers (see Table 6.3a).

Book lovers are much more likely than children in any of the other groups to buy books with their own money, to swap them with friends, to say they concentrate on reading books and talk to friends about them. Only children with traditionalist tastes in media come anywhere near to naming books as often with respect to any of these activities**.** Traditionalists and book lovers are also very much more likely than children in any of the other groups to say they would turn to a book if they wanted to learn about something.

Values and interests. There is a hint in our data that book lovers tend to be less materialist in their values. When asked what made someone their age popular, significantly fewer amongst the book lovers than any other group choose "having money to spend" and (although not statistically significant) together with music lovers they are least likely to say that "lots of money" will be most important to them when they were grown up. Together with the low media users they have the most positive attitudes to school and are least likely to say they get fed up with their parents telling them what to do, suggesting that there is less conflict than in other groups between them and the values of the adults around them.

6.5.5 Specialists: PC fans

Interviewer:	Are most of your friends into computers?
C:	Well yeah, mostly yeah.
Interviewer:	For schoolwork or for games?
C:	Both. There are a few that just buy the games consoles, but I've got a friend whose got three games consoles and two PCs, well one he uses but it's his brothers, but he's got a pretty high tech thing with all the new stuff.
Interviewer:	Do you ever go round there?
C:	I've been round there a couple of times, yeah. That's where I first used his CD-ROM, on his computer.

(16 year-old boy living in a middle-class family)

Demographic characteristics. PC fans are more likely to be middle-class (62% ABC1) but surprisingly, are not significantly more likely to be boys. The numbers peak at 9-11 and decline thereafter.

Media environment in the home. Two thirds (66%) come from media-rich homes. The great majority (87%) have access to a PC somewhere in the home, although only a quarter (25%) have their own PC. The largest single proportion of PC lovers (32%) have media-rich bedrooms. However no more than the average percentage (8%) have a books/PC bedroom. PC fans are no more likely than the average to spend large proportions of their time at home in their bedrooms.

Media-related attitudes and behaviours. While book lovers spend more than average amounts of time with PCs and less with television, this interest is not reciprocated by the PC group. They read little, but spend a substantial amount of time with television and computer games, suggesting that they have a screen-based rather than print-based culture (see Table 6.3a).

Even the PC fans aged 15-17 (an age when reading attracts more serious attention from a few) read very little. As many PC fans as screen entertainment fans would choose computer or video games for excitement and buy computer or video games, although they are less likely to swap them with friends.

PC fans are very much more likely than any other group to say they concentrate on serious PC use and to talk to friends about PCs.

Values and interests. Answers to the question about what will be important to them when they grow up suggest that these children are significantly less likely to consider friends important. However there are no significant differences in the proportions saying they spend most of their time alone.

6.5.6 Specialists: music lovers

> I suppose me and my friend really got into music when we were about 12 or 13 and most of my music now is unheard of and people say "Who?" and I say "Yes! It's someone they haven't heard of!" And I buy quite a lot of tapes and have got nearly 200. That has been collected over the last couple of years... It's on all the time when I do my homework. My mum can't understand how I can listen to music when I am doing my homework. When my friends come round we usually have it on in the background somewhere.
>
> (15 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

Demographic characteristics Music fans as a special interest group only emerge in the age group 15-17. These young people are predominantly girls (74%) and are more likely to be working class (67% C2DE). Since dissatisfaction with leisure opportunities outside the home is particularly marked among older children, girls and young people from working-class families, it is no surprise that significantly more in this group than in any other feel that there is not enough for them to do in the area where they live (83% say this).

Media environment in the home. Around a third have either book/PC bedrooms (32%) or media-poor bedrooms (31%): 19% have a screen entertainment bedroom and a similar number have a media-rich bedroom. Three quarters have their own television set, which is average for their age group, and the highest percentage in any media-use group (41%) report having a video recorder. Out of all the groups they report spending most time in their bedrooms. Although differences between the groups overall are not significant, music fans spend least time with their families and most with one best friend.

Media-related attitudes and behaviour. Although not into books, computer games or PCs, as well as spending on average 141 minutes a day listening to music (see Table 6.3a), music lovers watch a great deal of television and are amongst the most avid readers of magazines, comics and newspapers, making them the heaviest media users of all. They choose videos for excitement, music for relaxation, turn to television to stop being bored and to the telephone not to feel left out. They are the least comfortable of all the groups with computers and only around half (52%) agree they are exciting. They are significantly more likely than those belonging to any other group to swap and buy magazines, music tapes or CDs and videos. Significantly more say they concentrate on listening to music and talk about it to friends. They are also the only group more likely to name music rather than sport as an interest.

Values and interests. Music fans are significantly more likely to think that a happy family life would be important to them when they grew up and the least likely to think a good education would be important, although they do value an interesting job. They are also the group with the least positive attitudes to school. They are very much concerned with appearances, being more likely to think wearing the right clothes and being good looking makes you popular

6.6 DISPLACEMENT OF OLD MEDIA BY NEW?

Established media are inextricably part of our everyday lives, but new media are as yet outside existing routines and need to be, somehow, fitted in - or not.

6.6.1 The thrill of the new

Diffusion curves of new media over time (Rogers, 1995) suggest that when a medium first enters the

home, a greater amount of time is spent with it than will be the case thereafter.[11] The user is attracted by the very unfamiliarity of the new medium, and tries out various possibilities for where and how it might become part of daily life. While only longitudinal data can chart usage over time, our interviews suggested that early heavy use of a medium often does not last.

Families describe a period of intense use, after which old habits reassert themselves.

Interviewer:	And how did things change when you got Sky?
Mother:	Ohhhh, God, the kids, as soon as they got up at 7 o'clock in the morning they were watching it, 'cause that's on from like 7 o'clock to 7 o'clock... And they would just sit there glued to it and not get ready for school or anything so I had to turn it off.
	(Working-class mother of a 9 year-old girl)
Interviewer:	Does he spend a lot of time on that [Amstrad computer]?
Mother:	At first he did, but now he seems to be bored with the games because they are all too easy.
	(Working-class mother of a 7 year-old boy)
Interviewer:	So how long did that last, you being on it all the time?
B:	I'd say about three weeks.
	(15 year-old boy living in a working-class family)
Interviewer:	So the camcorder, did it seem exciting when you first got it?
G:	Yes, that is what happens with a lot of things. You are really excited at the start and then it gets so boring that you can't believe it.
	(13 year-old boy living in a middle-class family)

We were able to use the survey data to compare those who had bought a piece of media equipment in the last 6 months with those who had owned it for longer. If those who have had a medium for longer than six months spend just as long with it as recent acquirers, then we can assume that there is no appreciable falling-off of interest. On the other hand, if they spend significantly *less* time, then we may assume that the initial interest has dissipated.

In our sample 11% of parents with cable/satellite television in the home had acquired it in the past six months. After controlling statistically[12] for the effects of age, gender and social grade, multiple regression analysis suggests that children (but not parents) in homes who have had cable or satellite television for longer than six months do tend to watch less television than those who have had it for longer, suggesting a dissipation of interest incable/satellite television.[13]

Ownership of a PC, a TV-linked games machine and Internet are all correlated with social grade, making the separate contribution of recent acquisition difficult to disentangle. However, we can say that there is some support for reduced interest amongst long-term owners of PCs,[14] and a tendency which just fails to reach statistical significance for reduced interest among long-term owners of TV-linked games machines.[15] By contrast, there is no evidence for a falling-off of interest amongst those who have had an Internet link or a gameboy for longer than six months.

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[11]Indeed, the history of technological 'market failures' indicates that some media are quickly dropped, as for the home computer in the 1980s; Haddon & Skinner, 1991).

[12]Ownership of cable/satellite is not significantly correlated with demographic variables, allowing us to identify the separate contribution to the equation of these variables.

[13]R-square change = 1%, $p<0.04$; an average difference of 17 minutes per day.

[14]R-square change = 5%, $p<0.001$; an average difference of 24 minutes per day.

[15]R-square change = 1%, $p<0.06$; an average difference of 8 minutes per day.

These results suggest that, after the first six months, the initial thrill of acquiring a new medium does dissipate for cable or satellite television and PCs, while interest in gameboys and the Internet (and possibly TV-linked games machines) does not reduce at all. Thus the tendency to spend longer with a new 'toy' depends on the medium.

6.6.2 Displacing the old?

For media which have been successfully incorporated into the routines of daily life over years or decades, one wonders how room has been found for them within already full lives. Neuman (1991) notes that before television arrived in America, children spent several hours a day listening to the radio and they went to the cinema weekly, though they read rather few books. The draw of television, rapidly coming to occupy several hours each day, led many at the time of its introduction, and ever since, to ask what did people do with their time before television and, adding a nostalgic gloss, what has been lost?

Both Himmelweit et al (1958) and Schramm et al (1961) examined the question of displacement at the time of television's arrival. Perhaps surprisingly, both these and subsequent studies (see Neuman, 1991) show little effect on children's bedtime or homework, although there is some displacement of radio listening, cinema attendance and comic reading. This suggests that the introduction of a new medium alters the balance of media uses.

Reading books, the activity whose possible displacement has aroused the most public anxiety, shows few clear displacement effects, and there is evidence that television has even stimulated book reading in some cases (Himmelweit et al, 1958; Neuman, 1991). Interestingly, studies from the 1940s and 50s suggest children spend an average figure of 15 minutes per day reading for leisure, while in our survey we found the same figure for the 1990s.[16]

So where does the time for a new medium come from? Neuman (1991) follows the suggestion made by Himmelweit et al (1958) that those media used for similar purposes (i.e. which have 'functional equivalence) may be key candidates for displacement. Hence television displaces cinema and comics, for example. Alternatively, it maybe that when a new medium is introduced, existing media are transformed, becoming more specialised - as when radio moved into narrowcasting, specialising in particular types of music, and transmitting these at more varied times of day than broadcast television. In consequence, each new medium may result in a larger number of media options for children.[17] A third possibility is that it is casual activities which are crowded out by the new medium - most obviously 'doing nothing' or 'messing about'.[18]

In the 1990s there are several potentially displacing new media and so the same questions arise once more. One may ask whether cable and satellite television are displacing viewing of terrestrial channels, particularly public service channels, whether computer games displace television viewing, or whether the widening range of media options detracts from time for reading?[19]

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[16] Any longitudinal comparisons across studies must be interpreted with caution, as differences in methods, samples and analysis are not always apparent. But this observation is in line with the most reviews of research on displacement, finding no consistent displacement effects across studies or media (e.g. Lin, 1998).

[17] Thus in cautioning against the often-exaggerated claims about the Internet, Newhagen and Rafaeli (1996: 10) note that 'the evolution of mediated communication rarely leads to extinction. We have had conversation, lecture, letter writing, storytelling, playing, acting, exhorting, defaming, creating - and we still have them. The Net will no doubt become one more place where these occur'. Indeed, in the history of new technologies, the cases of replacement - where an older technology drops out of use - are few and far between (Marvin, 1998).

[18] Himmelweit (1958, p.36) notes that 'in so far as outdoor activities or social pastimes are affected at all, the more casual, unstructured activities are the ones to suffer, rather than the organised or more purposive ones'.

[19] Schoenbach and Becker (1989) surveyed the impact on households of media introduced in the 1980s (particularly VCR and cable/satellite television) across a variety of Western countries. They found little evidence of a reduction in time spent on non-media leisure, nor did they find much evidence of a reduction in time or money spent on print and auditory media. Instead, as suggested by Neuman above, there was consistent evidence for increasing specialisation in uses of all media, not just the new ones. Integrating transformation of media uses with

There is a simple correlation between having multiple television channels (i.e. cable and/or satellite) or not and the individual's amount of television viewing and reading. This shows that having multiple channels is associated positively with amount of time spent watching television and negatively with amount of time spent reading books, although the correlations are not especially high.[20]

Interestingly, having a PC at home (as opposed to spending time with a PC as discussed at the beginning of this chapter) also has an 'effect' on time spent with television or books. Having a PC is negatively correlated with amount of time viewing television and positively correlated with amount of time spent reading books.[21]

But we have put 'effect' in scare quotes, because we have no information about children's media use *before* the time of our survey, and do not know, for example, whether those children who now have cable and satellite television already watched more television before acquiring more channels. This makes it difficult to determine whether hidden causes are operating and direction of causality: for example, did these families acquire cable or satellite because they were heavy viewers, or did they become heavy viewers because they acquired such access?[22]

Controlling for hidden causes

Multiple regression analysis allows us to examine whether having cable/satellite makes a difference to the amount of television children view, once we control for the most obvious contenders which may represent hidden causes - age, gender and social grade.

Results showed that even after age, gender and social grade are taken into account, having cable/satellite is still a positive predictor of amount of television viewed.[23] Interestingly, this effect does not occur for children aged 6-8 years old or for young people aged 15-17. However, for those aged 9-11, an additional 4% of the variance in television viewing is accounted for by ownership of cable/satellite television ($p<0.001$). For 12-14 year-olds, a similar result approaches significance ($p=0.06$), accounting for an additional 1% of the variance in viewing time. When we run the analysis separately for boys and girls, however, it appears that the effect differs also by gender, as shown in Table 6.6a.

What does this mean in terms of amount of time spent?

INSERT TABLE 6.6a HERE

Both boys and girls spend longer watching television as they get older. This is true whether or not they have satellite or cable. Boys' viewing is increased by having satellite or cable only between the ages of 12-14, whereas for girls the effect occurs earlier, at 9-11 (see Table 6.6a).

In order to find out what might be attracting these two particular groups of children to watch for longer if they had cable or satellite, we looked at their programme preferences. Asked to name their favourite programme, both boys aged 12-14 and girls aged 9-11 with cable or satellite were more likely to name a cartoon. This group of girls were also more likely to name a narrative series or serials (such as *Sister, Sister*) and less likely to name a terrestrial soap. The boys were more likely to name a comedy or a soap as their favourite programme, and less likely to name sport, making them appear

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the functional similarity hypothesis, they conclude that while there is little evidence that new media create new audience interests, they may provide new means of satisfying existing interests.

[20]For television, $r=0.096$, $p<0.001$; for books, $r=-0.075$, $p<0.05$.

[21]For television, $r=-0.085$, $p<0.001$; for books, $r=0.080$, $p<0.01$.

[22]Displacement cannot be satisfactorily addressed in a project without a longitudinal design, for only this allows a comparison of time use before and after the acquisition of a new medium. This was possible for Himmelweit et al but is no longer practicable in a complex environment in which different media are acquired at different rates, resulting in a diversity of combinations of media possessions in the home.

[23]R-square change = 0.9%, $p<0.01$.

somewhat atypical teenage boys as regards programme preference. This would suggest that it is programming targeted specifically at the young audience on cable and satellite - cartoons and series - which is attracting those boys and girls who watch more.

Does having cable/satellite make a difference to the amount of time children spend reading books? We already know that the numbers of readers decline steeply with age (see Table 5.3a). However, in each age group there are more readers in homes without cable/satellite: overall, 47% of children in cable and satellite homes do not read at all, compared with 41% in homes where there is only terrestrial television ($p< 0.01$). Looking just at the readers, multiple regression analysis, controlling first for age, sex and social grade, shows that cable/satellite ownership is a significant negative predictor of reading books, accounting for an additional 0.5% of the variance in reading time ($p<0.05$). This is made up of some 2% variance explained for 6-8 year-olds ($p<0.05$), 1% of variance for 9-11 year-olds ($p<0.05$), and is not a significant predictor for the older two groups. However, the effect of having cable or satellite on time spent reading only holds for girls.[24]

This relation between reading, age, gender and having access to cable/satellite television is complex (see Table 6.6b). After the age of 8, having cable or satellite makes no difference to reading amongst boys: difference in reading times are not statistically significant at any age. Girls however until the age of 14 spend less time reading in cable or satellite homes and the difference at age 9-11 does reach statistical significance.

INSERT TABLE 6.6b HERE

Given the earlier finding that 9-11 year-old girls with cable or satellite watch television for about an hour longer each day, it is interesting that they also read for less time than girls of their age without cable or satellite in the home. In as far as the increase in girls' viewing times at this age may be seen as due to the increased choice that cable and satellite channels provide for narrative television programmes[25], this finding would seem to offer some support for the 'functional equivalence' argument (see section 6.6.2) for displacement discussed earlier. In this case the functional equivalence would involve the satisfaction of the same type of interest (i.e. narrative), as opposed to a similar type of entertainment medium (cinema/ television). This might lead one to speculate that if narrative content on the PC or Internet were to be more commonly available, it might more successfully attract the interest of girls.

We also asked whether having a PC makes a difference to the amount of television children view. Here multiple regression shows that once age, sex and social grade are controlled for, having a PC is not a predictor of television viewing. In other words, the negative correlation observed earlier (see section 6.6.2) is explained by an underlying causal factor, namely the association between social grade and both ownership of a PC and amount of television viewing. In other words, lower social grade children spend more time watching television and are also less likely to have a PC at home. However, just for the 15-17 year olds, a multiple regression does show a significant negative relation, indicating that in this age group only, those with a PC watch less television.[26]

Once age, sex and social grade are controlled for, there is a slight tendency which just fails to reach statistical significance ($p<0.06$) for those with a PC to spend *more* time reading. However, this analysis includes those who do not read at all, as well as those who do. If we consider readers only, the regression equation offers no evidence that those with a PC read more.[27] Thus the evidence suggests that those with a PC are significantly more likely to be readers (59%) than those without a PC (52%), but that there is no difference in the time spent by those who are readers.

In sum, having cable/satellite television does appear to exert some influence on the amount of time with 'traditional media' - terrestrial television and reading books, although, once the effects of age,

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[24]R-square change = 0.8%, $p<0.05$.

[25]Interest in such programming almost doubles after the age of 8 (see Table 3.2i).

[26]R-square change = 1.5%, $p<0.05$.

[27]In fact, it appears that boys who are readers do read more if there is a PC at home (R-square change = 1.3%, $p<0.05$, an additional 6 minutes per day, on average), but this is not the case for girls.

social grade and gender are controlled for, these effects appear to be small. In particular, girls aged 9-11 with cable or satellite at home watch more television and read less.

Direction of causality

It is possible that those families who elect to buy a PC or instal cable or satellite television already differ in ways which could explain subsequent differences in reading and viewing times. Only a longitudinal study can solve this issue satisfactorily (see footnote 25 above). However, we can compare households in which parents plan to acquire certain new media goods in the next six months, with those where the parents do not. In other words, we can ask whether families who plan to acquire certain media *already differ* in their media use from those who have no such plans.

In households in the survey without cable or satellite television, 5% of the parents plan to acquire either one or the other in the next few months. Further, among parents without a PC, 13% plan to get a PC in the next few months.

Multiple regression analysis showed that, after controlling for the age and gender of the child and the social grade of the family, there is no difference in the time children spend viewing in families with and without the intention to install cable or satellite, nor is there any relation between purchase plans and parents' viewing once demographic variables are controlled for.

We would expect associations between the *parent*'s intention to buy and time spent by the *child* on media to be slight. However the fact that we have found no difference in parents' or children's viewing times in houses where there is the intention to buy satellite or cable reinforces the conclusion that the increased viewing of cable and satellite viewers in our sample is not likely to be the result of prior differences in the viewing cultures of such families.

6.7 SUMMARY

While it is clear that television dominates young people's leisure in terms of time, lifestyles are constructed from the combination of a variety of media, as well as non-media activities. As new media become increasingly available in the home, they begin to find a place within the construction of young people's lifestyles, and to a certain degree, this is a matter of personal preference as well as social positioning. When we ask young people about the media they are most interested in, or that are most important to them, they describe diverse media, from music and magazines to computer games and the Internet. As the available media become increasingly diverse, we may suppose that television will become increasingly just one part of a complex 'media-scape' within which young people live their lives.

In this chapter we began exploring this complexity by identifying the associations in media use across a variety of different media. What may seem surprising here is that with only one, telling, exception (which shows that for boys especially, the more they watch television, the less they read books), media use is positively correlated. In other words, for each of eleven media, the more young people use one medium, the more they tend to use another. This suggests that over and above the use of any particular medium is the question of how much of a young person's leisure overall is devoted to media. This may be related to the observation we made in Chapters 4 and 5 that the major determinants of media use appear to be less to do with the media themselves than with the constraints and structures of young people's lives, such that for some more than others, the media appear the most accessible and desirable option.

The bulk of this chapter is based on the premise that while young people may construct individual lifestyles according to their particular preferences and available resources, it should be possible to discover broad styles of media use, based on the balance of different media within a lifestyle, so as to construct a typology of media use. From the survey data on time spent with each of 10 media, we proposed four broad categories of children and young people: specialists, screen entertainment fans, traditionalists, and low media users. We also divided the specialists into those focussed primarily on books, on music, or on the PC.

The overall trend is for media 'menus' to become more specialised as young people grow older, and for the new computer-based media to play an increasing role in leisure lifestyles. Those who are

overall low media users are particularly common among the youngest age group, traditionalists (who use a variety of 'old' media in combination) are common in middle childhood, especially for girls. Screen entertainment users tended to be more working class, and more boys, again in the middle of our age range. And the specialists are interestingly unrelated to gender (i.e. being a book or a PC specialist is not more typical of boys than girls) except for girls tending to be music lovers, but they do increase with age and they are more middle class.

There is a clear link between media possessions and media time-use styles, although the former does not wholly account for the latter. Those from media-rich households are more likely to be media specialists. And those from media-poor or traditional households are more likely to be screen-entertainment users. Moreover, those with media-rich bedrooms are also likely to be media specialists, while those with media-poor bedrooms are more likely to be low media users. There is a clear association between having a screen entertainment bedroom and having the lifestyle to match, in terms of time spent with screen media, while those with more books are more often the book lovers. Such associations between media possessions and media uses may seem obvious, but the point of the analysis is both to identify where the associations hold true and the extent to which young people vary, notwithstanding these broad associations.

Strong associations also exist between time-use styles and being a 'fan' of certain media - what one talks about, concentrates on, chooses to alleviate boredom or excitement, and so on. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that preferences for audiovisual media do not discriminate among the time-use styles: this proved to be a recurrent issue throughout the project, for as the vast majority spend so much of their time on television (and video), the amount of viewing is unable to discriminate different types of media users as defined in relation to other media. On the other hand, preferences for the PC in particular do discriminate the different time-use types, although this occurs in various ways. To a certain degree, 'fandom' of computer-media is opposed to that for more traditional media (e.g. press, music, phone), although there is also a distinction between preferences for 'serious' and game-playing use of computers. It would appear that preferences for, or interest in, newer computer-based media are affecting the criteria by which preferences for other, more traditional media, are determined. Indeed, even among those who do not have a PC at home, the PC as a preferred leisure medium - for some but not others - still appears to frame preferences for other media.

The chapter then provides detailed profiles of each of the six types of time-use styles for combining media that we have identified, in order to fill out our understanding of each.

Lastly, we consider the thorny problem of displacement of old media by new. The initial thrill of obtaining a new medium in the house is described by young people and their parents as resulting in considerable use at first, tailing off as old patterns of time use reassert themselves. Based on the survey data, we suggest that those who have recently acquired cable or satellite television may watch slightly more television overall than those who have had it for longer, and this holds also for those who have recently bought a multimedia computer. This suggests that the initial thrill of gaining access to more channels and to a multimedia PC may be somewhat short-lived, while the thrill of having a TV-linked games machine or access to the Internet is likely to last for at least six months.

There are both theoretical and empirical difficulties with the much-discussed notion of displacement, and without a longitudinal design there is little we can do to pursue this question satisfactorily. However, the data do show that, for example, while those who plan to get cable or satellite television do not already watch more television, once they get it, the children - and especially the younger girls - do then watch more television. There is also a weak indication that these children may be less likely to read books after obtaining cable/satellite television. Those who intend to get a PC do not differ in their media use from those who do not, and once they have the PC there is no apparent effect on time spent watching television.

TABLE 6.2a

Significant correlations ($p<0.05$) among media for time spent (minutes per day), for those with home access to each combination of media

TV										
VCR	.15									
Games machine	.19	.17								
Game-boy			.11							
PC (not games)		.12	.19							
Internet			.32		.67					
Books	**-.07**					.25				
Newspapers					.09					
Comics		.11			.12					
Magazine	.08						.08	.13		
Music	.16				.15		.08	.19		.12
	TV	**VCR**	**Games mach.**	**G'boy**	**PC**	**Inter-net**	**Book**	**Newspaper**	**Comic**	**Mag**

TABLE 6.3a

Average minutes per day spent with media for each of 6 media-use styles[28]

	ALL	YOUNG PEOPLE'S STYLES OF MEDIA USE					
		LOW	SPECIALIST			SCREEN	TRAD.
			Books	PC	Music		
MUSIC* ** (1210)	**65**	*43*	87	77	**141**	62	64
SCREEN							
***Television (1142)	**146**	*116*	123	157	**179**	**172**	148
***Video (1151)	**31**	*14*	23	32	34	**40**	37
***Comp. games (931)	**34**	*10*	27	37	*10*	**59**	26
*Gameboy (436)	**8**	-	*1*	6	**10**	**10**	8
I.T.							
***PC (not games) (619)	**18**	*5*	**32**	**39**	*3*	15	*4*
Internet (84)	**6**	-	**14**	7	-	6	*2*
PRINT							
***Books (1066)	**15**	*9*	**38**	11	*7*	*7*	**24**
***Comics (1233)	**2**	-	-	3	-	1	**6**
***Magazines (9+) (965)	**8**	2	9	9	**12**	6	**12**
***Newspapers (9+) (961)	**4**	3	**8**	1	**9**	6	1
TOTAL MEDIA USE* ** (1240)	**301**	*192*	330	366	**396**	356	314

Note: *** p<0.001, * p<0.05

[28]Only those with access to the relevant media at home are included. Bases therefore vary from a low of 74 for the Internet to 1034 for television.

TABLE 6.3b

Media-use style by demographics (N=1050)

	ALL	GENDER***		AGE ***				SOCIAL GRADE***	
		Boy %	Girl %	6-8 %	9-11 %	12-14 %	15-17 %	ABC1 %	C2DE %
Low users	17	15	20	**42**	22	-	20	16	18
Specialist	35	31	39	17	32	22	**59**	**43**	29
Books	13	12	13	11	11	9	**19**	**17**	9
PCs	14	14	13	6	21	13	**11**	**19**	9
Music	9	5	13	-	-	-	**29**	**7**	10
Traditional	20	16	**23**	22	18	**39**	-	18	21
Screen ent.	28	**37**	18	19	**28**	**39**	21	23	**32**

Note: ***p<0.001

TABLE 6.3c

Household income and educational attainment of parents by media-use style

	ALL	STYLES OF MEDIA USE					
		LOW	SPECIALIST			SCREEN	TRAD.
			Books	PC	Music		
INCOME (855)							
Under £5,000	13	13	8	5	17	12	12
£5,000-£9,499	12	12	8	11	14	12	17
£9,500-11,499	5	5	8	4	2	9	7
£11,500-14,499	9	9	9	11	7	10	9
£14,500-17,499	7	7	8	14	10	11	12
£17,500-24,999	25	25	20	19	14	20	18
£25,000-34,999	16	16	22	21	21	14	13
£35,000+	13	13	19	16	14	12	12
FATHER EDUC.* (892)							
Under 16	22	18	17	27	31	29	15
16	37	39	36	31	29	36	43
17-19	23	18	25	25	26	23	23
20+	18	24	22	17	14	12	20
MOTHER EDUC. (938)							
Under 16	17	13	14	17	21	22	13
16	40	37	35	36	35	43	46
17-19	27	28	32	27	29	23	24
20+	17	22	19	19	15	12	17

Note: * $p<0.05$

TABLE 6.3d

Type of media environment 'elsewhere' in the home by media-use style (N=1302)

	ALL	STYLES OF MEDIA USE***					
		LOW	SPECIALIST			SCREEN	TRAD.
			Books	PC	Music		
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Media-poor	29	27	26	20	34	37	34
Traditional	26	30	16	14	12	26	28
Media-rich	45	43	**59**	**66**	**54**	*37*	*38*

Note: *** p<0.001

TABLE 6.3e

Type of media environment in child's bedroom by media-use style (N=1302)

	ALL	STYLES OF MEDIA USE***					
		LOW	SPECIALIST			SCREEN	TRAD.
			Books	PC	Music		
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Media-poor	24	**30**	20	20	**31**	20	23
Book/PC	13	15	**27**	8	**32**	5	5
Book/music	20	20	20	24	0	18	**31**
Screen entertainment	20	14	11	16	19	**30**	23
Media-rich	24	22	22	**32**	19	**27**	18

Note: *** p<0.001

TABLE 6.4a

Correlations (p<0.05) between demographics and uses and gratifications for different media

	GENDER [29]	AGE	SOCIAL GRADE[30]	STYLE OF MEDIA USE					
				Low	Trad	Screen entert.	Specialist		
							Book	PC	Mus
Screen entertainment									
Television fan		.06		-.11			-0.08		
Video fan	-.07		.14			.12			
Comp. games fan	**-.49**	-.11	-.08	-.11	-0.07	**.28**			-0.18
Audio									
Music fan	**.20**	**0.33**				-0.07			0.16
Radio fan	.07								
I.T.									
PC (not for games) fan			0.14	-0.11				**0.32**	-0.14
Print									
Book fan	.13	**-.24**	.08		.17	-0.17	0.19	-0.07	-.12
Newspaper fan		**.34**			-.12				.16
Magazine fan	**.26**	.19		-0.13	.10				-.09
Comic fan	-.12	**-.29**	-.06		.13				
Communication									
Telephone fan	**0.22**	**0.28**	0.1			-0.08	0.12		

[29]Positive correlation means girls associate more gratifications.

[30]Positive correlation means higher social grade associate more gratifications.

TABLE 6.4b

Logistic regression: media use style predicted by demographic variables and media fandom

STYLE OF USE	PREDICTORS	
LOW MEDIA USE	Age of child (younger) *** *Not a magazine fan**** *Not a computer game fan* *** *Not PC fan****	*Not a video fan* *** *Not a book fan* ** *Not a comic fan***
SPECIALISTS **Book Lovers** **PC Fans** **Music Lovers**	Age of child (older) * Social grade (higher) ** Social grade (higher) ** Gender of child (girls)** Age of child (older) ***	*Book fan* *** *Telephone fan* ** *PC fan* *** *Not a fan of PC* **
SCREEN ENT. FANS	Gender of child (boys) ** *Computer games fan* *** *Not book fan* ***	*Video fan* * *Not PC fan* *
TRADITIONALISTS	Age of child (younger) * *Book fan* *** *Magazine fan* ***	*Comic fan* ** *Not newspaper fan*** *Video fan* *

Note: * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

TABLE 6.6a

Minutes per day watching television, for homes with and without cable/satellite television, by age and gender (N=1135)

		GENDER BY AGE							
		Boys				Girls			
	ALL**	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17
Without cable/sat.	141	98	145	154	164	97	109	161	164
With cable/sat.	155	99	143	**181***	171	108	**169*****	166	170

Note: *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

TABLE 6.6b

Minutes per day reading books, for homes with and without cable/satellite television, by age and gender (Base: all those with access to books at home, N=1047)

	GENDER BY AGE							
	Boys				Girls			
	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17
Without cable/sat.	14	16	12	14	27	**2 4**	19	13
(% readers in group	*62*	*60*	*46*	*42*	*81*	***7 3***	*66*	*52)*
With cable/sat	86	12	10	13	17	12*	10	18
(% readers in group	*6*	*44*	*37*	*39*	*71*	*70*	*58*	*44*)

CHAPTER 7

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AT HOME AND SCHOOL

In this chapter we focus on the personal computer, the CD-ROM and the Internet. We first explore the meanings of these information technologies (IT) for children and young people, and then examine their access to and use of IT. For many young people it is the school rather than the home which provides the main point of access for IT, as will become apparent. Thus in this and the next chapter, we broaden our scope to encompass the school as well as the home. In this chapter we investigate the relation between these two sites of IT use. In the next chapter we consider the relation between teachers' and pupils' perspectives on IT.

7.1 MEANINGS OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

> All I know is that I can see computers being as much part of the home as the TV and video.
>
> (Middle-class mother of a 7 year-old boy)

Interviewer:	A multimedia computer with CD-ROM, a camcorder, cable, satellite: tell me what you think when you see those?
T:	I want that.
D:	I want that.
M:	I want it.

(Class of middle-class 12 year-old boys)

The cultural meanings and practices for older media are well-established, but new media and information technologies are just beginning this process of familiarisation. They diffuse through the market at different rates in different countries and for different socioeconomic groups. Following purchase the process of domestication takes over, as people find a place, a time and a set of meanings for new technologies in their lives. Thus meanings, access and use of IT are inextricably intertwined.

While many households do not yet have personal computers, and fewer still have CD-ROMs or Internet and email, images of these technologies are widely circulating. Advertisements carry a website URL, television programmes remind us to fax or email our responses directly, and the direction, regulation and potential of these new technologies is much debated in commercial and public spheres. As a consequence, for both owners and non-owners, cultural meanings of these new technologies frame understandings of possible and actual purchases, shaping the context within which new media practices emerge.[1]

New technologies are rarely understood in isolation but instead may be thought of in similar terms as, and sometimes as directly linked to, older media. Being able to trace a constant content (usually a popular theme like Disney characters, or sports, or favourite television characters) across diverse media directly facilitates such interconnections. For example, here a girl understands the Internet in terms of a popular television programme, a variety of media (the fax, computers, photography), and face-to-face social relations (talking, meeting):

Interviewer:	Tell me, what you have heard of the Internet?
A:	Well, it has been on *Blue Peter* and someone has sort of been to an open evening at Birmingham indoor arena and they had those computers there and they were faxing messages to them in the *Blue Peter* studios and they were

[1]Rogers (1995) has charted the diffusion of new technologies through society, on a cultural level Appadurai (1986) analyses the 'biography' of objects as they travel through a culture and, for the household, Silverstone (1991) describes the 'career' of goods within the home.

saying things and things. And errm it was quite interesting because they had pictures of things that were there and they were sending them over to the studio and they were telling them what things were and they had photos of the people who were talking. And there were loads of computers and it amazed me how they got them all in there.

(11 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

In many of our interviews we asked children and young people to tell us what they thought of as 'new' media, and this opened up a wider discussion of what is really new about the new media.[2] For example, the following extract starts with a familiar list of new media, and then illustrates how 'new' is conceived as a mixture of recency in time, particular technological features (e.g. discs, mobility), and new social possibilities (most commonly, as here, new opportunities for social interaction):

Interviewer:	<Showing picture cards>What here then strikes you as the most modern, up-to-date, you know, new, futuristic thing?
G:	The Internet...The mobile phone...And the fax machines...And also the CD player as well...And the CD-ROM.
Interviewer:	And the CD-ROM, alright. So can you talk to me a bit about those? What makes them feel modern?
G:	Well that's like a cordless phone, you can carry that anywhere you want, but it's only been around for a few years or something. The Internet is ever so modern. I mean that's only been around here a few years. And that's like for connecting people, which is I think really good. That is CDs and the CD-ROM. I mean they're like discs, they're really futuristic, and like say, you'd think that they would make them. . . And the fax machine's really good because you can write something down and then you can fax it to your friend or something. If they've got a fax machine instead of using the telephone, it's easier.

(13 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

This mix of what is recent, what is technologically innovative, and what is new for society is reflected in many of our interviews. And over and again we see that making sense of what is new is achieved by anchoring the new to the familiar, fitting it - with greater or lesser success - into well-worn frameworks and established routines. Thus, when asked what they think the Internet is, those who do not really know link it to more familiar technologies:

Is it when you like pick up the phone and you speak and it records the whole thing?

(12 year-old boy living in a working-class family)

It's something at the back of your TV, you plug...

(6 year-old girl living in a working-class family)

Older media, having been domesticated over years of use, are more or less invisible as technologies and are mainly thought of in terms of their content (e.g. books are boring, music is fun) while newer media are most salient as technological artifacts (what are its features, where shall we put it). Consider this free association task with a group of 9-10 year olds. For the computer, it is the CD-ROM feature which is most salient, while for the older medium of television, the first response is to its content:

Interviewer:	When I say 'computers' what's the first thing that comes into your heads?
R:	CD-ROMs.
Interviewer:	Just shout out things.
S:	CD-ROM.
D:	CD-ROM.
P:	CD-ROM.
J:	*Lemmings*.
Interviewer:	OK, when I say 'TV' what's the first thing that comes into your head?
S:	*Neighbours*.

[2]This is not easy to specify in academic or policy circles either (Livingstone, in press-b).

P: *Neighbours*.

(9 year-old girls living in middle-class families)

Yet whether children think of media as technological goods or contents, newness is itself a valuable currency among peers:

> [I'd like a] multimedia computer because I can boast about it to my friends and they would probably get jealous.
>
> (11 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

Interviewer: If somebody of your age at school didn't really know anything about computers then would they feel a bit left out or would they be OK?

A: They would sort of feel left out, because I didn't know much until I met my friend Nick, who had a friend who has a PC and a CD-ROM, so he goes around there and plays on that. So I sort of learnt a bit more about computers.

(12 year-old boy living in a middle-class family)

> I was talking to my parents about getting a mobile phone but they say that it's too expensive, but I still want one... I suppose it's 'pose-ability' really.
>
> (16 year-old boy living in a middle-class family)

As the above suggests, new media technologies are widely seen as prohibitively expensive:

> Well it's just so expensive. I mean I know that there's kids at school that have got that sort of thing. But I mean their parents work and have got the money. I don't think it's fair because then you've got people like us who just can't afford them. I mean our oldest daughter really wants a computer but we just can't afford one. They're £13-1400, it's far too much. If I had the money I'd get the lot. I'd love to know how to work the stuff because you can contact people all over the world and it's really exciting.
>
> (Working-class mother of a 9 year-old girl)

In consequence, those who do have such technologies at home are seen as well-off:

Interviewer: What sort of person would have all this new kind of stuff?

C: Someone who's earning a lot of money and can afford to pay for it all.

(16 year-old boy living in a middle-class family)

Social relations around media depend on a certain critical mass of users: games machines have clearly reached this stage, multimedia computers are not yet there.

Interviewer: Do you swop CD-ROMs as well?

M: No, because not many people have got CD-ROMs. They have got games computers, we swop those games.

(13 year-old boy living in a middle-class family)

In general, new media are anchored to, or understood in terms of, various combinations of older media. In what follows, we consider children and young people's perceptions first of the personal computer and then of two newer media - the CD-ROM and the Internet.

7.1.1 The personal computer (PC)

We asked 10-16 year olds on the YoungView Panel, 'If someone were to offer to buy you a new computer and price didn't matter, which kind of computer would you like?' We were astonished at the detailed answers we received, some of which suggested the children had catalogues to hand. One otherwise typical 13 year-old girl (who talks with her friends about 'Boys, music, TV, what we are doing at weekends' and watches TV 'because of the soaps, because I like finding out gossip and because I'm bored') does not have a computer at home and writes:

> Olivetti is a highly specified multi-media computer it is the one I'd choose with pre-loaded Windows '95 as this is fast to run programmes. I'd like it to contain 8mb RAM,

420 HDU (Hard Drive Unit) soundblaster compatible to play games and great quality sound. Sound card should be a minimum of 16 bit. Quad CD-ROM drive and active speakers in order to play games to their potential. That's the computer I would like to have, if I ever got one.

In the main survey we asked several questions about computers (Table 7.1a). Answers showed almost all children feel comfortable with computers and four-fifths think computers are exciting.

Attitudes depend on the age and gender of the respondent. Interestingly, 15-17 year olds stand out as significantly more negative about computers - they are less likely to feel comfortable using computers or to think computers are exciting. Younger children are particularly likely to disagree that computers stop people thinking for themselves.

While the oldest group is less enthusiastic, they are also more aware of the importance of computing skills in the job market. They are most likely to think people get left behind if they don't know about computers and to agree that it is more important for young people to understand about computers than for their parents.

INSERT TABLE 7.1a HERE

As we might expect, more boys are comfortable using computers than girls (94% compared with 89%, $p<0.01$) and are more likely to find computers exciting (boys - 87%, girls - 75%; $p<0.001$). There are, however, no differences between boys' and girls' views about the importance of knowing about computers or their effects on people's ability to think for themselves. This suggests that boys and girls differ in their enthusiasm for computers but not in their beliefs about their importance in society.

Interestingly, given the differences we discuss later in access to computers at home by social grade, there are no significant social grade differences in attitudes to computers. The exception is a slight tendency for working class children to consider it more important for young people to understand about computers than for their parents, perhaps reflecting a sense that their parents are less able to support their entry into the new world of IT.[3]

7.1.2 The multimedia computer

Most young people are very positive about multimedia computing:

> It's different isn't it? It's a CD. I think that it is the CD that does it, because it has got such good graphics on - it is so brilliant. I like to find out things like what happens around the world and stuff like little geography. Things look quite good on that because I have seen it on telly and you can get all that music and stuff.
>
> (15 year-old girl living in a working-class family)

For computers in general, but particularly for the multimedia computer, a common comparison was with books. When we explored this analogy, we found that a preference for the PC is often associated with less favourable attitudes to books:

R:	Computers you can learn like. You can do all sorts of interesting things on it - you can like have countryside things on it, and you just learn off them.
D:	And some computers you can go to the Internet.
R:	Yes.
Interviewer:	Why can't I just do that from a book?
R:	Well because when it's on a computer, it's like showing you all what you can do on it, but in a book you're just reading it and it gets a bit boring.

(Class of middle-class 9 year-old girls)

L:	That [multimedia PC] helps 'cause it's got all the sort of things on there, so if you've got to read so you can just get them really easily, and it's really detailed.

[3] 59% of ABs, 61%of C1s, 67% of C2s and 65% of DEs said 'yes' to this question ($p<0.1$).

Interviewer: And is that, um, better than a piece in an encyclopaedia?
L: A lot better, yeah.
J: It's quicker as well.
L: It's a lot quicker and it is much simpler, you get more.
J: More, yeah.
(Class of working-class 15 year-old girls)

Some parents see computers as a solution for non-reading children, others are ambivalent:

> I'd quite like one [PC] for him because he doesn't read very much. I think he'd be more inclined to if we had the sort of encyclopaedias that you can get on CD-ROM. I think he'd be more inclined to use that rather than go to a book and look things up... But again, they can be a bit of a disadvantage, because they just find what they want and print the whole page out and don't actually bother to read the thing.
> (Working-class mother of an 11 year-old boy)

Notwithstanding the approval with which 'looking up information' is regarded, the public image of the computer is also as a socially isolating medium. Yet, as we develop further in Chapter 10, many children invest the PC with social possibilities:

Interviewer: Now what do you think here would be the most fun? (Child points to the multi-media computer) What would you do with that?
D: I would always play games on it. When my friend's here and my friend can play on it as well.
(6 year-old boy living in a working-class family)

Children who own PCs get to regulate use when friends come round, to the extent that one might say a new 'play' role, that of pure spectatorship, is emerging. 'Sharing' the computer is often at present not as easy, or as equal, as watching television together, for holding the mouse offers more control for one partner, although given more up-to-date interfaces, this limitation is likely to be short-lived:

> My friend's also got a CD-ROM computer... I've watched my friend, but I've never been on it.
> (10 year-old boy living in a working-class family)

This graphic description of a video game conveys something of the thrill children and young people associate with CD video games and the way in which they can encapsulate for them the slightly menacing excitement of a technologically-dominated future:

> Computers are the future, but it might be robots and that, like the game I had for the Mega CD. It's called *Snatchers*, and it's set in the future and that, about these people that kill you and steal your body. It's got this man sitting down like with dead blood dripping from his head. In between you can see the spine hanging from ... it's dead realistic and that, cartoon graphics, it's good, one of the best ones.
> (12 year-old boy living in a working-class family)

Such computer-based pleasures may have consequences for the use of other media:

Interviewer: Does it [the computer] change your drawing in any way, or does it change what you want to read about in any way?
A: Yes, I like to read a bit more horror stuff and things like that, recently I have, I have got two books out of horror. What else? A bit of the drawing, yes, because I copy some off the computer and draw those.
(Middle-class boy, aged 12)

7.1.3 The Internet

Interviewer: Back to the free associations, modem, or Internet link, first things that come

to mind?
P: Communication.
R: Computing.
L: Information.

(15 year-old girls living in middle-class families)

INSERT TABLE 7.1b HERE

Most young people have heard of the Internet and email, although the majority of the youngest children have not (see Table 7.1b). Both are marginally less familiar to girls and significantly less familiar to working class children. Only one in five (19%), however, have used the Internet personally and even fewer (6%) have ever used email.

Given how few children have personally used Internet or email and the relatively restricted use made of them by these users, it is not surprising that some of the children and young people we interviewed had little to say about these media, and others were confused. The groping after answers seen in the following group discussion was typical of many:

Interviewer: Everyone know what a modem and the Internet is?
T: Mmm.
B: Yeah.
D: Mmm.
Interviewer: Who's going to tell me?
B: It's a computer. But, um, the Internet is like...
T: You can't get the Internet unless you've got a modem.
Interviewer: Right.
T: And you have to get a modem and then I can't remember what you have to do but you can...
B: Install it and...
T: Install it
B: And every time you want to go on the Internet you have to do something to it.
T: The modem.
Interviewer: Right, and what is the, when you go on the Internet, what does that mean?
D: It's finding out information.
B: Yeah.
T: It's about...
B: More information.
T: More information about things that you want...
Interviewer: Right, and where do you find out about that information from?
T: Um, people put it in there, don't they?
B: Yeah.
D: (...) programmes.
B: Yeah and they have those little things at the bottom where you use whatever, you ring them up or whatever.
Interviewer: Right, they have their addresses.
B: Yeah.
T: Yeah.
B: With all the, um, e-mail...
T: Yeah.
D: I don't know what that is
Interviewer: Right. Anyone know what e-mail is?

(pause)

T: Isn't that like when you send like a message through the computer to somebody else?
B: Yeah.

(Class of middle-class 12 year-old girls)

For the majority who had heard of the Internet, various images emerged from the interviews. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) note that as a culture we draw on established metaphors for making sense of new phenomena, and this searching around for appropriate images is very visible in relation to the Internet, for at present this is a technology for which people have more imagery than experience.

This is not to say that all metaphors are equally helpful, and it may be that communication-based metaphors would be more encouraging, especially for girls, than technology-based ones. And, relating the Internet to the telephone may be off-putting for poorer families especially.

The Internet inspires both positive and negative associations. Most commonly, it is seen as a source of information:

Interviewer: Does anyone know anything about the Internet?
P: It's on, like you can get pages of stuff like-
S: Or you can send messages to each other, other people.
P: You can get stuff about football and stuff, you can get the new strips and everything.
(Class of middle-class 9 year-old boys)

This example is typical in that the information sought is itself hardly new. Sites of interest are those concerned with sports, music, popular culture - little different from the favoured contents of older media.

Among positive associations, the Internet is most often thought of as a means of communication with others. Little distinction is made between Internet and email, and since most Internet service providers provide an email address, this confusion is understandable:

Interviewer: If you had to explain, let's say to a little brother or something, what the Internet was, what would you say?
F: About communicating with other people, it's like, communication.
(12 year-old boy living in a working-class family)

H: It means it links you to other people.
S: You can contact people without leaving home.
P: And you could meet lasses and all that on it.
(Class of working-class 15 year-old boys)

Such communication is seen as linking Britain to other countries, especially America:

Interviewer: The Internet, heard of it?
L: No.
M: No.
K: Yes, you can, if it's on your computer you can erm ... if you went on holiday into America and you go back home and contact them on the computer if you've got their address.
(Class of middle-class 6 year-old girls)

C: It's talking to other people in like America or something.
R: Did you get through to them in America?
C: It's pretty good.
Interviewer: Who were you talking to and how did you get to them?
C: Just like put a message in to say hello, what's your name or something, and then you just start talking.
(Class of working-class 15 year-old boys)

G: It's people round the world isn't it, you can like contact people round the world, we've got one in our school.
Interviewer: You have?
G: Yes we can contact up to America.
Interviewer: Gosh have you ever done it?
G: Yes, it's really good.
(13 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

In the first quotation above, the friends are known face-to-face, in the next two, the friendships are virtual. While commentators make much of the distinction between face-to-face and virtual relationships, in interviews children and young people did not themselves make very much of this. Rather, some anchored this new communicative relationship to that of the pen pal friendship - which

generally relies primarily on letter-writing, but may also involve face-to-face communication. The advantage of the Internet - here understood by these children as the same as email - is that it combines the pleasures of such long distance communication with the immediacy of the telephone:

> A lot of people like Internet at the moment because you can, it's like writing to a pen pal except that you get a straight-away answer.
> (12 year-old girl living in a working-class family)

> It's just like telephone really, you know, passing information instead of just sending sheets of papers. You know, you can just do what you want, you know, click into a file, click into whatever you want, you've got more of a choice.
> (15 year-old boy living in a working-class family)

While the language of 'talking', 'getting through', 'contacting' is that of the telephone, the glamour of the Internet is not always compelling. We encountered both resistence and, more commonly, ambivalence, towards the Internet among children and young people.

K:	That would be boring for me.
Interviewer:	Internet will be boring for you?
K:	That's right.
D:	Boring.
R:	Boring.
K:	That's the best there.
D:	Telephone, I phone up my friends.

(Class of working-class 9 year-old boys)

Particularly, the notion of 'surfing', often associated with the Internet, is poorly regarded:

Interviewer	And Internet, do you know what that is?
B:	Internet, surfing the Internet.
Interviewer:	That's right.
B:	Yeah, when I went to America, we, our friend has one.
Interviewer:	Right... So you had a go at surfing the Internet did you?
B:	Nah, I couldn't be bothered! (laughing)

(10 year-old boy living in a working-class family)

The major down-side of the Internet, mentioned by many children and parents, is cost:

S :	We have like Compuserve, which is like an Internet server where you can get around the world and stuff like that.
Interviewer:	Right, and why did you get that?
S :	Because Dad saw it at work and he brought it home, and we bought the modem and we just played around with that and stuff.
Interviewer:	But you don't use it very much?
S :	No
Interviewer:	Why not?
S :	Well, we are not on Compuserve any more because <my brother, 13> ran up a bill of about £300 or so ... he kept talking to people in different places like Malaysia and America and everywhere.

(10 year-old boy living in middle-class family)

> <H> keeps - he brought it home, and I told him 'Not in my life'. They're not having it while I'm paying, the Internet. He's dropping hints like somebody possessed, and I said 'When you can pay the bills you can have it, but it'll not be here'.
> (Working-class father of a 16 year-old boy)

Interviewer:	So why did you say 'No way!' to Modem?
Father:	Modem? Have you got any idea how much the 'net costs?

Mother: What's a modem?

Father: It's the phone link to the Internet. When you go onto the Internet it costs you the price of a call, depending on where about it is, and what you link up to. The children could run up a bill astronomically.

(Working-class parents of a 10 year-old boy)

For parents particularly, the following discussion illustrates a range of points which emerged over and again. First, we see a fairly typical disagreement between the mother who opposes virtual to 'real' relationships and the technophile father:

Interviewer: Are those [IT] services that you would really want to have if they were available?

Mother: Only if I am disabled from the neck downwards! (Laughter). Never!

Interviewer: Never? And why are you so adamant about that?

Mother: Because for me life is interacting with other human beings, that is what makes me tick. And if I can't see a smile on another human being, and I can't exchange things. Well I don't want other people to choose my food for me, I want to do it myself, it is not something that I would want in my life at all.

Interviewer: And what about you (to husband)?

Father: Well I think that a lot of the graphics on this new technology would be great, I'd appreciate it from that point of view. I see them at work but I wouldn't want it all at home.

Interviewer: OK, so you say that they are wonderful but that you wouldn't want them at home, can you just talk me through that a bit more?

Father: Well I work in a high school and a lot of the kids spend more time looking at the graphics of a map of the world than they do actually looking at the map of the world. They won't print any of it out, they want all the games with the great graphics.

Mother: (to husband) You have got a great respect for the technical achievement haven't you?

Father: Oh aye, yes. I could spend hours on them, the Internet and everything. They are just there as a tool for me.

(Middle-class parents of a 6 year-old girl)

Earlier research (Livingstone, 1992; Moyal, 1995) has shown that adults typically discuss the telephone in exactly these terms - as mediating real social relations, or as a tool to fulfil a practical function - and here we see for this new medium, the 'tool' metaphor taking priority for the father, while the mother is more concerned with the loss of social relations. Similarly then, when asked about the possibility of their 6 year old daughter having access to the Internet, the father seeks technical control (using the analogy of Citizens' Band radio) while the mother thinks instead of interpersonal control (using the analogy of books):

Father: We are just about to put control on it because we have got a special card that puts a stop on it and puts the lines on it (xxx). So that can also be done, so that doesn't matter. I mean the Internet is a bit like CB radio, all the interest in it will just drop off.

Mother: I think that it is so much harder to monitor, I mean when you have a book, or a library of books in a school, you can monitor which ones are on that shelf and you can see what is being read. But with the Internet it seems to be to be a system which can so easily be mal- used and it seems to me to be so huge, massive, what you can do with it and the information that you can get.

Father: I think that it is brilliant, have you used it?

Interviewer: Yes.

Mother: But you could over-load yourself, you could over load your child's head within minutes couldn't you, flashing information on to the screen like that. With a book at least you have the chance to turn the page and give yourself time to digest what you have read.

(Middle-class parents of a 6 year-old girl)

And not everyone welcomes change, being more inclined to be suspicious of it:

Interviewer: Have you got any final comments that you would like to add?
Mother: I sometimes wish that we could ride away to an island away from all of this.
(Working-class mother of a 15 year-old girl)

Mother: Well I don't really know a lot about it. I think that the Internet is just probably a way of advertising.
Father: (loudly) Do you realise how far behind the Americans in years we are?
Mother: (to husband) Shhh. Well in the home I'm not really expecting things to change much because I can't see me rushing out to get the latest thing like the phone with TV on and errr, not that I'd be tempted to do that anyway (laughs).
(Working-class parents of a 12 year-old boy)

I personally don't think it's doing society a great deal of good. I don't disagree with having computers and computerised systems, but I do feel that on the whole what people perceive as an improvement in technological things that can improve things along the line, sometimes these things are replacing people and maybe if technology wasn't as it was then more people would be in jobs... I'm not sure I agree with all the things, things like the Internet when child pornography can get on it, forget it, I think that's awful, and this is another thing where I'm not sure I would agree with having that sort of facility that I couldn't police. Again, it's do they grow up too quickly?
(Middle-class mother of a 12 year-old boy)

But while parents' reactions vary between enthusiasm and anxiety, most young people are optimistic about the prospects, if sometimes critical of what is currently available. As their comments indicate, they are aware that not only are there a host of new media technologies on the horizon but also that traditional media are changing: television is expanding from a few to many channels, from national to global channels, and it is converging with computer technologies to form Internet or web TV, video on demand, interactive television, and so forth.

When we asked children what changes they thought might be coming, it seemed that while adults may be reluctant, fearful or sceptical of change, children are not only aware of the developments while may lie ahead, but are positive about these changes. The picture which fronts this chapter is a fairly typical, albeit delightful, drawing which resulted from our enthusiastically received invitation to draw 'your ideal bedroom in the year 2000'. The comment accompanying this picture resembled a media-marketing dream:

I've got a cinema screen. That's cinema films - a cupboard full to the top - you can't get in. A TV here and this is your desk thing or what ever. That's a video games and computer cupboard. That's a bank cell with loads of money. That's a little bit in the middle with all the TV computer hi-fi and these are telephones all around my bed and TV all round the edge... This is all cable... And these speakers are everywhere round the room, everywhere you look. So it's sound-blaster sound.
(10 year-old boy living in a working-class family)

Other comments and images from the other pictures drawn for us include:

- a 'virtual mom'
- a 'cyberwardrobe'
- the phone where a different boy answers whenever the girl picks up the receiver
- a pull-up television and video
- an interactive television and cinema-size playstation
- a miniature watch-computer and teleporter

All these suggest that children are both fascinated by what new technologies have to offer and keen to tailor these offerings to their particular interests. The pictures revealed an appreciation of complementary tendencies in technological development: first, the way that media increasingly surround us, so that our lives become swept up within an immersive, media-saturated environment

(the larger screen, the multiple sets, the simultaneous use of different media); and second, the way that the media are becoming integrated within an ever-smaller, more multifunctional black box which does everything and over which we have control (the PC/CD player, the radio alarm, the TV/video remote control).

7.2 ACCESS TO INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AT HOME AND SCHOOL

Public concern over the social advantages or disadvantages potentially brought about by new media at present focus on computer-based media. For as we saw in Chapter 4 (Tables 4.3a and 4.3b), considerable inequities exist in access to computers in the home (though in the coming decade the question of access to digital television will become pressing, renewing the debate over the emergence of a cultural 'underclass' without access to key cultural fora and events). Concern focusses on the PC, partly because it spreading beyond early adopters to a wider market, partly because of its growing importance in education and work, and partly because PC access is essential for access to newer media such as CD-ROMs, email and Internet. In this chapter we link questions of access and use, for access without use is worth little. Later in this chapter we draw on these data to inform the debate over the 'info rich' and 'info poor'.

7.2.1 Use of information technology at home

> We've got the Internet and stuff, but my Dad doesn't know how to work it so we can't use it.
>
> (12 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

There are major differences between access and use of IT at home and at school (see section 7.2.2), which have profound implications for working-class children in particular.

Chapter 4 showed that around half of all 6-17 year olds have a PC at home, though access is considerably higher in middle-class homes. How do children and young people *make use* of the hardware to which they have access? While purchase of such expensive items is largely determined by parents, usage figures are likely to indicate an interest on the child's part in such media, assuming parental permission.

The PC is used at home by 42% of 6-17 year olds (Table 7.2a). This is slightly lower than the figure of 53% who have access to a PC at home (see Table 4.3a), as would be expected if children are not always interested in, or parents always willing to allow, use of domestic IT. Multimedia computers are used at home by around half that number (21%), while use of the Internet and email is restricted to a very small minority.

INSERT TABLE 7.2a HERE

In the best-known theory of product diffusion, Rogers (1995) classifies individuals into 5 categories - innovators (2.5%), early adoptors (13.5%), early majority (34%), late majority and laggards - according to the point in the diffusion curve at which individuals acquire a particular new technology. Both access and use figures suggest that the multimedia PC is rapidly approaching the stage of early majority, while Internet and email are still used by innovators only, at least at home.

The major finding is the large discrepancy between the numbers of middle-class and working-class children using IT at home. Almost twice as many middle-class, compared with working-class, children use a PC, three times as many use a multimedia computer and eight times as many have personally used to the Internet. There are few age or gender-related differences.[4]

[4] Previous research on adult householders shows that early adopters of the personal computer tend to be younger, more affluent, and already owners of other communication technologies (e.g. Lin, 1998). Interestingly, while in the early days of the personal computer both gender and number of children in the household made a difference, more recent research finds that men and/or parents are no longer likely to be higher adopters of the PC (Lin, 1998). Research also suggests that while income continues to be important, education may no longer matter so much, as economic rather than cultural capital becomes the significant predictor of new media ownership (Lin, 1998; see also Chapter 4).

7.2.2 Use of information technology at school[5]

Compared with use in the home, twice as many children use IT at school (see Table 7.2b).[6] While 88% use a PC at school, only 42% use one at home (see Table 7.2a). Similarly more than twice as many (49%) use a CD-ROM and Internet (11%) at school compared with those using a multimedia computer (21%) or the Internet (4%) at home. There is no difference, however, in the tiny percentage (2%) claiming to have used email at school compared with at home.

In striking contrast to use at home, there are *no* significant social grade differences in the use of IT at school (see Table 7.2b). However, there are trends, though statistically significant only in the case of the Internet, which suggest that marginally fewer girls at school have access to IT. This would offer some support for the accounts given by pupils of PC use at school, where girls feel themselves to be both less interested in, and somewhat excluded from, computer use (see Chapter 8). As in the home, at school there are clear age differences in the use of multimedia computers and Internet, which are primarily used by secondary school pupils. This age trend is particularly strong for the use of the Internet.

INSERT TABLE 7.2b HERE

7.2.3 Location of Internet use

Overall, one in five respondents have used the Internet themselves somewhere (19%). This use is spread across several key locations: 11% have used the Internet at school, compared with only 4% at home or at a friend or relative's house (see Table 7.2c), and a handful have used it in other places (e.g. college or open days at University).[7]

INSERT TABLE 7.2c HERE

Thus, access to the Internet in Britain is either domestic or managed by schools: public provision in cybercafés or libraries is almost nonexistent - in contrast to some other countries, notably Scandinavia (Livingstone et al, in press).

Interestingly, more middle-class children, more boys, and more teenagers say they use the Internet at a friend or relative's house, suggesting that these groups are not only advantaged by their home environment but also by the social circles to which they have access.

In sum, the majority of schoolchildren at present gain their experience of PCs (55%) and CD-ROMs (64%) in the classroom and not at home (see Table 7.2d). Even in the case of the Internet, where, as yet, school use is not well established, 40% of users have gained their only experience through the school.

For working-class children the picture is especially clear. They are almost twice as likely as middle-class children to get their only experience of IT through the school.

INSERT TABLE 7.2d HERE

Finally, we note the perhaps unexpected importance of region (Table 7.2e). Although some of the sample sizes are small, it seems clear that Scotland and Northern Ireland lag behind England and Wales in provision of IT both at school and at home. Moreover children and young people in the southern part of England have a clear advantage, particularly with regard to home provision.

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[5] In the parents' survey we asked about the type of school attended by respondents in the child survey, with the following replies (n=978): state primary school (44%), private preparatory school (2%), state secondary school (31%), state middle school (4%), state high school (8%), sixth form college (3%), private secondary school (3%), has left school (3% - NB these 32 young people are subsequently excluded from analyses of school pupils, as were the 2% about whom we had no information and the one respondent being educated at home).

[6] For the PC at school, we did not ask about access separately from use, as doubtless every pupil would say there is a computer somewhere in their school; the question is whether they personally use it. (For the CD-ROM and the Internet at school, it was meaningful to ask questions of access and use separately.)

[7] Out of the 44 individuals who cited an alternative location where they had either used the Internet or seen someone else use it, 15 named college/ University, 9 television, 7 work experience and 5 shops (such as PC World).

INSERT TABLE 7.2e HERE

7.3 USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AT HOME AND SCHOOL

7.3.1 Comparing home and school for time spent with the PC

So far the school has emerged as redressing to some extent the class, if not gender, inequalities in IT use which are found in the home. The story is a little different, however, if we look at *how long* users spend on the PC at home and at school (see Table 7.3a).

INSERT TABLE 7.3a HERE

In the home, we find that while older children spend longer using the PC, the social class differences are no longer in evidence. In other words, while working-class children are much less likely to have and use a PC at home, those who do use one spend just as long on their machines as their middle-class counterparts.[8] Equally interesting is the finding that girls who use a PC at home spend significantly fewer days per week doing so compared with boys; they also spend less time with the PC on those days when they are using it.[9] This might suggest that the resistance of girls to computers is not merely a matter of availability.

When we compare this picture with time spent on PCs *at school*, there are three striking findings. First, there are no gender differences, suggesting that girls who use PCs at school have less scope to opt out than at home. Secondly, there is a small but significant tendency for working-class children to spend longer with multimedia computers at school. In both cases the school can be seen as helping to reverse social inequalities.

However, the third finding cautions against undue optimism, for on average children use the PC at school between 1 to 2 days a week only,[10] compared with between 2 to 3 days a week spent by home users. This suggests a less than thorough incorporation of IT into the various subjects of the school curriculum. As we see in Chapter 8, IT is often taught as a separate subject, for both pedagogic and resourcing reasons. Yet the question of how pupils are taught to use IT at school is important especially because access to IT at home, while growing rapidly, remains heavily dependent on the social grade of the household.

7.3.2 Comparing home and school for type of PC use

The main use of the PC at home is for playing games (77%; see Table 7.3b). At school the main use is overwhelmingly for writing (74%; see Table 7.3c), though almost the same proportion of home users use their PCs to write (65%). Unexpectedly perhaps, looking up information on CD-ROMs is as common at home (33%) as it is at school (30%). There is one interesting exception here: 6-8 year olds are twice as likely to use a CD-ROM to look up information at home (16%) than they are to do so at school (9%).

Other work uses are more common at school. Fewer use the PC at home for drawing or design work (39% at home compared with 49% at school). Similarly, fewer than one in five use the PC at home for databases or spreadsheets or to do maths or number work, while almost a third of school users do so. Although the numbers programming at school are small (12%) even fewer use the PC at home to do this (7%). Similar small percentages of users at home and at school claim to use Internet (6% at school, 7% at home).[11]

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[8] Although the difference is not statistically significant, working-class children spend on average 43 minutes per day, compared with 36 minutes spent by middle-class children.

[9] If they have a PC at home and use it, boys on average spend 50 minutes a day, while girls spend 27 minutes.

[10] In interviews teachers are likely to describe this as 'as often as once a week', while their pupils are more likely to call this 'only about once a week' (see Chapter 8).

[11] The differences between the above figures for Internet use (based on answers from *users of PCs* about what they used their computer for) and those recorded in Table 7.2c (based on answers from the *whole sample* about Internet use) require further elucidation. The figures for Internet use *at home* are acceptably close: re-percentaged on

INSERT TABLE 7.3b HERE

Once again, social grade differences are less evident at school than at home. For use at home, middle-class children are almost twice as likely to use their PC for looking up information on CD-ROMs, for databases or spreadsheets, or for maths/ number work. Differences are even more stark for Internet or email, presumably because as we saw in Chapter 4, relatively fewer working-class families have a modem at home. There are, interestingly, no differences in the numbers of middle-class and working-class children claiming to play games on the computer at home. There is only one social grade difference in use at school: more middle-class children at school use the PC to look up information on CD-ROMs.

The main story for school use is of increasing use with age. Most uses of the PC are only introduced into the curriculum by secondary school. Writing, use of spreadsheets, CD-ROMs, programming, Internet and email are all more widespread amongst older children. Writing, drawing/design work and maths/number work are, however, a little less typical of the oldest age group and the clear exception to the pattern is playing games, which falls off substantially with increased age. This presumably reflects the different kinds of software - and hence different mode of engagement - available in educational applications for younger and older children.

INSERT TABLE 7.3c HERE

The gender differences in Tables 7.3b and 7.3c suggest that boys' preferences at home lie more in the direction of games, programming and email, while at school they are somewhat more likely to use the PC for drawing/design and for maths/number work. That there are no uses more common for girls than boys may reflect either their interests or the absence of sufficiently 'girl-friendly' software.

INSERT TABLE 7.3d HERE

We also asked what proportion of their time on the PC at home children spent playing games or doing homework. Table 7.3d shows that just under a third (31%) of children and young people say they spend most or all of their time on the PC at home playing games. This rises to two in every five children (40%) of boys and 9-11 year-olds. By the age of 15-17 the figure has dropped to 22%, and 36% say they never or hardly ever use the computer to play games.

Girls and older children are correspondingly more likely to say they spend a greater proportion of their time on the computer at home doing homework. However overall almost half (46%) say they never or hardly ever do so.

As we will see in Chapter 8, teachers are often reluctant to ask children to use computers at home for school work, in view of the large social grade differences in access. However it would appear that there is increasing scope for teachers to encourage just such use of the PC.

7.3.3 Uses of the Internet

For all those who had personally used the Internet, whether at home, at school or elsewhere, we asked which of a list of eight possible applications they had used it for (see Table 7.3e).

INSERT TABLE 7.3e HERE

The most common use is looking up information (44%), followed by browsing more generally

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the base of the whole sample, the figure in Table 7.3b is 3%, compared with 4% in Table 7.2c. However the 6% of PC users claiming to use the Internet at school represents only 5% of all school pupils, which is considerably below the figure of 11% recorded for Internet use at school in Table 7.2c. The discrepancy is easily accounted for. In many schools very few computers are linked to the Internet and Internet use is not likely to be a regular feature of PC use for most pupils. The answers reflected in Table 7.2c (which recorded 11% Internet users) asked whether children *had ever* used the Internet, while the answers reflected in Table 7.3b (which recorded the lower figure of 5%) were given to questions which focussed on *regular* use. Thus the 11% figure probably reflects those who have ever used the Internet at school while the smaller figure of 6% reflects those who use it more regularly. Also, the earlier question dealt exclusively with the Internet, while the present question used a check list in which the Internet was one of nine possible options: we would always expect some under-reporting of less common activities for this type of task. Discrepancies in the figures for email use can be explained in the same way.

(33%). Only about half as many (18%) use the Internet to access chat groups.

Surprisingly perhaps, very few users (8%) say they played games on the Internet, even fewer report downloading of software, and almost no-one joins the news groups or uses email. Only four individuals made their own web page. Arguably, all or most of these little-used activities represent the more interactive potential of the Internet. Certainly young people 'pull' down information when surfing, hence the popularity of sites dealing with familiar, already-popular material such as stars, sports and music. The number of children actually interacting with the Internet (or other users of it) to create new material, however, is as yet minimal.

Interestingly, boys seem to be more inclined to surf, there is a slight tendency for girls to make more use of chat groups and there are no differences in email use. However, middle-class children are twice as likely to name chat groups, reflecting perhaps their greater opportunity to use the Internet at home and their parents' lesser concerns about the costs.

We examined the answers given by the relatively large proportion (14%) citing an 'other' category of use, finding that around a third referred to activities involving looking up information, and others suggested school-related use ('homework', 'other schools', 'to learn how to use it', 'business studies projects'). It is thus no accident that these answers come mainly from working-class children, who are more likely to have their only access at school.

7.4 THE INFORMATION RICH AND INFORMATION POOR

The simple version of diffusion theory - that given time, information will spread to all parts of the globe - is problematic. It remains the case that substantial inequalities in information access remain and, as many fear, these are widening rather than lessening.[12] In western societies, television is a near-universally available conduit for information, but computers are highly unequally distributed, and in most countries, Internet or CD-ROM based information is as yet available only to a privileged minority. Books represent a more complicated case: they are widely available through public libraries, yet for reasons of education and cultural capital many do not make use of library resources.

However, while academic and policy literatures frequently talk about the 'information-rich' and 'information-poor' (Schiller, 1996) - the problem of social inequalities in access to the so-called information society or information future - these terms are rarely defined. This is partly inevitable, because poor and rich are themselves relative terms, depending on the stage of diffusion through a particular society reached by a particular technology. Also rarely defined are the consequences of being info-rich or info-poor beyond a strongly felt but little articulated concern about being left behind or left out in some unspecified competitive race to the future.

Being information-rich is not only a matter of the quantity but also the quality of information. While this is notoriously difficult to judge, a common heuristic has been to conflate quality with format (Haywood, 1995). For example, print formats are seen as more serious than television - as is very evident in the perennial worry over whether children 'still' read books, despite the existence of many poor-quality books as well as high quality television genres. But in the computer age, even this heuristic no longer holds good, and informed views are no more settled than those of the children we interviewed when each debates the relative merits of print and electronic encyclopaedias, or when they question the quality of information available on the Internet.[13]

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[12] Hence more sophisticated approaches to diffusion focus on knowledge gaps and the policies which may close such gaps (Tichenor, et al. 1970; Ettema et al. 1983). The terms 'info-rich' and 'info-poor' are most often applied to the gap in the information resources of industrialised and developing countries (Haywood, 1995), but they are also applied to socioeconomic inequalities within countries - particularly those of socioeconomic status (or social class), gender, ethnicity, region and age. Here we focus on inequalities within Britain.

[13] These uncertainties in determining the value of information make life difficult for parents and teachers who have to make daily decisions about what goods to buy or avoid and which activities to encourage or restrict. In effect they are making their own rules as they go along and often they feel ill-equipped for such a task. As one middle-class mother of a 13 year old girl said, "I went to an exhibition and it was totally over my head and it was a different language... I mean I do not even understand what a CD-ROM is, I mean what is a Rom? What is the Internet?... [The children] could work out the computer that we have upstairs far more than I could. They knew straight away... what buttons to press, they have got a big advantage over me."

Although the empirical examination of issues of quality is beyond the scope of this report, our survey allows us to make a modest contribution to the debate on the information-rich and information-poor. In order to avoid some of the implicit difficulties with this concept, we will focus specifically on access to the PC and take a 'top-down' approach - asking *a priori* what are the best and worst cases - what is the most a child could have, or the least - in terms of access to, and use of, IT? This allows us to identify the PC-rich and poor in terms of demographic characteristics and explore some of the consequences of this classification.

7.4.1 The PC-rich and PC-poor[14]

Home and school represent the two main locations at which 6-17 year olds might have access to, and use of, a PC. The most privileged, might fairly be said to be those who make personal use of a PC both at home and at school, and we term these the *PC-rich*. Those who do not use a PC in either location we term the *PC-poor*. Those who have access to and use computers in only one of the two locations we term *School provision* or *Home provision* respectively. There are two remaining categories - those who have access in both places, but who never use the PC at home, which we have labelled *School provision+*, and those who have no access at school and have a PC at home which they never use, which we have called *PC-poor+* (see Table 7.4a).[15]

INSERT TABLE 7.4a HERE

The first important point to note is that very few 6-17 year olds these days have no experience of using PCs, and so few fall into the categories of *PC-poor* (5%) or *PC-poor+* (2%). Use exclusively at home is also rare (5%). The great majority of children and young people fall almost equally into one of two categories the *PC-rich* (39%) or *School provision only* (41%).

In both cases (see Table 7.4b) it is the social class difference which predominates: the *PC-rich* are twice as likely to be middle-class and the *School provision only* group is almost twice as likely to be working-class, underlining the central importance of school provision of PCs for working-class children.

INSERT TABLE 7.4b HERE

There is a tendency for the oldest age group to fall rather more in the *PC-rich* category and less in the *School provision only* category. Fewer girls than boys also fall into this category, while rather more girls are either are *PC-rich* or have access to a computer at home but do not use it (*School provision+*).[16]

7.4.2 Other social inequalities in computer access

We have shown that lack of access to or use of a PC at either location clearly is already rare in the late 1990s. Predicably, the social grade difference is the most important one: less than 2% of AB children do not have or use a PC anywhere, while 9% of DE children do not.

Family type also matters: because of the association between family type and social grade, the children of single parents are less likely to be PC-rich than are children in two-parent households (23% vs. 42%), more likely in consequence to rely on school provision (56% vs. 38%) and marginally more likely to be PC-poor (9% vs. 5%).

We found no significant differences in access to PCs by ethnicity, though as fits the national statistics, only 5% of our sample classified their ethnic origin as non-white.

The association between social grade and household location means that only 29% of those who live

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[14]Some 17 year olds have left school, so the question of access at school does not arise (and indeed they may have access at work). Because we here compare those with and without IT access at home and at school, in this section we consider only school pupils, thereby omitting some 17 year olds.

[15]While home and school represent the two main locations at which 6-17 year olds might have access to a PC, the further possibility of use at a friend or relative's house will also be discussed.

[16]It will be remembered (Table 4.3a) that more girls (56%) than boys (50%) have access to a computer at home.

in the inner city or town centre are PC-rich and 8% are PC-poor, while of those who live in suburban or rural locations, 41% and 45% are PC-rich respectively and only 4% are PC-poor.

There are also strong regional differences, due to differences in both school and home provision (see Table 7.2e). For example, in the South East, 52% are PC-rich and only 2% PC-poor, while in the Midlands, 33% are PC-rich and 7% PC-poor. And in Scotland, only 28% are PC-rich while 10% are PC-poor.

7.4.3 Comparing the PC-rich and PC-poor

Having established that these different groups differ demographically, one wonders if they differ in their attitudes towards, and use of, computers.[17] It is not yet clear what it is about computer access that brings certain advantages to certain groups over others. Is it merely possessing a computer at home, or actually using a computer at home, or is being able to use it at school sufficient? And what are these advantages?

When we compare how children feel using a PC, 9 out of 10 overall claim to feel comfortable using a computer (92%). But predictably enough, these figures are significantly higher for the four groups who do use a computer (95% PC-rich, 94% School+ and School provision, and 89% Parent provision) than for those who do not (56% PC-poor+ and 75% PC-poor).

It also appears that children with school access (the first three groups in Table 7.4c) are more appreciative of the advantages of computer skills in the job market. Interestingly, they are also markedly more likely to think computers are exciting. Perhaps unexpectedly, those groups with a PC at home (PC-rich, Home provision, PC-Poor+ and School provision+) are no more likely to enjoy or value computer skills than other groups. Taken together these small indications provide yet another indication of the importance of school access to IT.

When we asked 'In your family who knows most about computers generally and how to use them?', if parents have provided a PC at home, the tendency is for children to think their father (not mother) knows most about computers. But if their main access is at school, or if they have no access at all, the child thinks that he or she knows most about computers themselves. The 'no-one knows anything' response was chosen by 2% of children on average, but 8% of the PC-poor.

INSERT TABLE 7.4c HERE

Computers feature not only as a source of interest (or as an opportunity to demonstrate expertise) in the family, but also as part of wider peer group networks. While we pursue this in more depth in Chapter 10, it is worth asking whether type of access to a PC matters here. Interestingly, while PC-rich children are more likely to talk about using a PC with their friends (15% vs. 6%) than those whose access is only at school, they are no more likely (30%) than School provision children (34%) to talk about computer games in general with their friends,[18] suggesting that home access need not generate more interest in computer games *per se*.

While PC-rich children talk about the PC more, the School provision children are much more likely (31%) than the PC-rich children (20%) to go to a friend's house to use a PC (not for games), and to play computer games (50% vs. 40%), again suggesting that if they lack access at home they will be motivated to find it elsewhere. The figures for the PC-poor children fall somewhere in between (only 19% use a PC at a friend's house, but 44% will go to a friend's house to play computer games), suggesting that they too are integrated into social networks where a friend is likely to have a PC.

Is the type of access to the PC associated with knowledge about and access to newer forms of media, particularly Internet and email? Table 7.4d shows that indeed, our different groups do differ in their knowledge of newer media. The PC-rich, and those whose parents provide a computer at home, are more likely to have heard of the Internet and of email. Those who have access only at school are a little less knowledgeable, and the PC- poor are particularly low on awareness.

Usage figures follow suit, with the PC-rich rather more likely to have used the Internet and email, while those with only school access and, especially, the PC-poor, having had less experience. Clearly, by definition the PC-rich are more likely to have a choice of locations in which to use these

[17] Numbers in those groups without school access are small and should be treated cautiously.

[18] Though recall that computer games in general may include TV-linked games machines.

technologies, including home, school and also, being more middle-class, greater access in friends' and relatives' houses.

INSERT TABLE 7.4d HERE

7.4.4 What leads parents to provide a PC at home?

J: I do my homework and that on it... My Dad thought it [multimedia PC] would be good to have, like educational.
Interviewer: Right. Is he right?
J: Yeah, I suppose it's got a lot of stuff on it.
(15 year-old girl living in a working-class family)

At present, the 6-17 year old population is fairly evenly divided into those with and without a PC at home, though of course ownership is heavily socially stratified. Is the acquisition of a PC purely a matter of social grade, or are there other factors associated with PC acquisition?

Over and again, parents told us in interviews that they see computers as offering their children an educational advantage. They list such advantages as familiarity with the keyboard, confidence with new technology in general, knowing how to use a Windows environment, being able to manage a data base, getting ahead at school and getting good marks, and so on. For example, while this working class mother considers game-playing an insufficient benefit, providing facilities at home to match those at school seems valuable:

> I would love to buy one of these, you know, like a multimedia PC, but I just don't have the money. Not necessarily for them to play games on... I think they're educational, I mean, <R> uses them at school a lot. She does a lot of her work on school computers, and it would be nice for her to be able to do it at home.

She also sees the computer as a possible, but problematic, solution to her 11 year old son's lack of interest in reading:

> I'd quite like one for him because he doesn't read very much. I think he'd be more inclined to if we had the sort of encyclopedias that you can get on CD-ROM. I think he'd be more inclined to use that rather than go to a book and look things up... But again, they can be a bit of a disadvantage, because they just find what they want and print the whole page out and don't actually bother to read the thing.

Though parents cannot be sure of what makes for future success, and nor do they necessarily agree on what this would mean, it is clear that they share a wider anxiety about inequalities between the info-rich and info-poor, motivating more and more to buy first a PC and then a CD-ROM, Internet etc for their children (see also Chapter 11 on parents' attitudes to computers).

Interviewer: Do you think that technology will be important for him?
Mother: I think it will be very relevant and he will have to keep up with it. I think that in the coming 20 years there will be so much technology and so he needs to have a good knowledge of it. And err, personally I feel that I need to work with him in that field as well. With our busy lifestyle I feel that I don't spend as much time with him as I should do, and with his interests. That's something that's lacking I think.
(Working-class mother of a 7 year-old boy)

In this context it is interesting to note an association between acquiring a PC at home and how well parents feel their child is doing at school. About half (48%) of the PC-rich (and School+) have parents who feel they are doing above average at school, and for the Parent provision children this rises to 58%. This compares with only 33% of the School provision children and as few as 20% of the PC-poor. This finding suggests that those who have provided PC's at home are more confident of their children's academic success, while those who have not or cannot make such provision are less confident. (Among the children, all groups are fairly similar in how positive they are towards school

with the exception of a noticeably more negative attitude for the PC-poor[19]).

The parent survey allowed us to pursue statistically the question of what leads parents to provide a PC for their children. A logistic regression showed as expected that higher social grade parents, and parents of older children, are significantly more likely to provide a PC at home. Older parents are also more likely to get a PC at home. However, once these demographic variables are taken into account, we could not find any parental values adding significantly to the equation.

Thus, endorsement of such values as concern for the child's future job prospects or educational standards at schools made no difference when comparing those with and without a PC in the home. One could conclude that concerns for the child's future are not a primary motivation for acquiring a PC or, to put it another way, while those who acquire a PC often give an educational justification, those who have not or cannot acquire a PC are no less concerned about these educational matters.

Beyond the factors of social grade and child's age, what seems to make the difference is parents' own attitudes to computers. A second logistic regression, which again controlled first for demographic variables, showed that of a range of attitude three proved significant. Thus, those parents who have acquired a PC at home feel more comfortable with computers, they are more likely to believe that it is important for young people to know about computers and they are more likely to disagree that computers stop people thinking for themselves. Notwithstanding, then, parents' talk about educational support for their child, the following conversation is more revealing of what leads parents to buy a PC:

Father:	Well I find it exciting, this is why we are going to have a look at computers tomorrow. I think that it is a thing of the future and I think that in the future everyone is going to have one so I think that now is the right time to go and get one, it's no good us leaving it until <K> leaves school because we'd never get one. I think that it is exciting.
Mother:	I think that if we get the use out of it then we might even buy one for ourselves if <K> takes that one to university.
Father:	Yes, that's right, and there are those laptops which we could get. Yes, I think that we are in an exciting age.

(Middle-class parents of a 15 year-old girl)

7.5 SUMMARY

This chapter focuses on young people's access to and use of computer-related media (PC, CD-ROM, and Internet) at home and at school. The purpose is both to chart the extent to which such media are already available to young people and to inform the public debate over social inequalities of use.

As before, we begin with a more qualitative exploration of the meanings of new media, both for those who use them and others. This shows that new computer-based media are thought of with some ambivalence by young people. Within a broadly enthusiastic approach, they are regarded as exciting, accessible and relevant to young people's agenda of communication, learning and fun, yet they are also regarded as expensive, restricted, and often disappointing or frustrating on actual use.

When we examine the metaphors which reflect how new media, particularly the Internet, are understood, we find a mixture of images from the book, particularly the encyclopaedia, the telephone (and occasionally, writing letters) and other screen media (particularly in relation to computer game playing). The book is a barbed image, for it serves to put children off as much as to encourage confidence with new media. While boys are more often happy to think of new media as technologies *per se*, girls generally talk positively about new computer media only when they have found a way in through an interest in its particularly uses, most often communication, but also information functions and writing/word-processing.

The vast majority of 6-17 year olds describe themselves as comfortable with computers, and most find them exciting, though boys claim this more than girls, and the 15-17 year olds are rather more negative than younger children. The multimedia computer is seen as even more exciting, but reactions to the Internet are more ambivalent. This may be partly because while three quarters have

[19]Mean for all groups = 4.2 on a 9 point scale compared with a mean of 3.7 for the PC-poor.

heard of the Internet, only 1 in 5 has direct experience of using it. And many of these early experiences appear both to impress children with the great variety of uses and breadth of information available but also with the difficulty of getting what one wants from it. As we develop in the next chapter, pupils do not always find teachers helpful in guiding them through it, and generally parents (especially mothers) are even more sceptical than their children.

The next section of the chapter presents findings regarding access and use of computers at home and school. We find that both access and use of IT *at home* are much higher amongst middle-class children. Almost twice as many middle-class compared with working-class children use a PC at home, three times as many use a multi-media computer and eight times as many have personally used the Internet.

However, twice as many children use these technologies *at school*, where no such social grade differences are found. The main story for school use of the PC is about increasing use with age: most of the uses of the PC are only introduced into the curriculum by secondary school.

On the other hand, children who use PCs at home spend *more time* on average with them than those who use them at school (between 2-3 days a week compared with 1-2 days). This suggests that the school may not be as successful in redressing social inequalities as the figures for access and use suggest.

As we might expect, the PC is also used very differently at home and at school. At home the main use is for playing games (77%), while at school it is word-processing (74%). Interestingly there are no social-grade related differences in the numbers of children using their PCs at home to play games, although boys are more likely to do so than girls. Girls were not more likely to cite any of the uses we asked about and spent less time on their computers at home if they had them, reflecting either lack of interest or the absence of girl-friendly software. Overall almost half (46%) say they never or hardly ever use their PC at home to do homework, suggesting that there is much scope for teachers to draw further on this resource.

In order to address the thorny question of information-rich and information-poor directly, we combine the findings on computer use at home and school to construct 4 main categories: those who use a computer at home and school ('PC-rich' children - more middle-class, older, equally girls and boys), those who use it only at home ('Parent provision' - heavily middle-class), or only at school ('School provision' - all age groups, more working class), and those with no computer access ('PC-poor' only 5% of children, more DE's). While noting that the relation between computer access and being 'information-rich' is a problematic and indirect one, we characterise these groups so as to explore the inequalities which currently exist.

For example, the few PC-poor children stand out as particularly lacking in confidence regarding computers, but interestingly the PC-rich do not differ from those with access only at school in feeling comfortable with, or excited by computers. In terms of social support, the PC-rich tend to think their father knows most about computers in their family, while those with school access only consider they themselves know the most in their family. And predictably, the PC-rich are also more likely to know about and to have used multimedia and the Internet.

When we considered why some parents and not others provide a PC at home, Chapter 4 has already shown household income and parental (especially father's) education to be crucial. However, it is noteworthy that it is the PC-rich and those with parent provision (but no school access) who are considered by their parents to be doing well at school, compared with those with school access only, suggesting that those who have, or can, provide a PC at home are more confident of their children's educational success. It also appeared that parents' own confidence with computers and positive attitude towards them plays an important role in the decision to acquire one.

TABLE 7.1a

Children's attitudes to computers: percentage saying 'yes' by age (N=1302)

	ALL	AGE			
		6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17
Are you comfortable using a computer?	92	**92**	**96**	**94**	85***
Do you think that computers are exciting?	81	86	**93**	83	62***
Do you think computers stop people thinking for themselves?	34	29	**35**	**38**	33***
Do you think people will get left behind if they don't know about computers?	55	51	52	54	**62*****
Do you think that it's more important for young people to understand about computers than for their parents?	63	58	62	62	**72*****

*** $p<0.001$

TABLE 7.1b

Percentage of young people who have heard of Internet and email, by demographics

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boys	Girls	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
Internet (N=1303)									
Heard of it	78	**80**	76*	37	83	**95**	**96*****	**84**	73***
Used it personally	19	**23**	15***	5	14	25	**34*****	**24**	16***
Email (N=1286)						(336)			
Heard of it	73	75	71	38	75	**88**	**91*****	**82**	66***
Used it personally	6	7	4	1	2	8	**11*****	**8**	4*

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

TABLE 7.2a

Percentage who have used any PC/multimedia/Internet at home by demographics (N=1303)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boys	Girls	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
Use PC at home	42	40	43	36	41	43	45	**58**	30***
CD-ROM	21	22	21	13	**23**	**25**	**24***	**34**	11***
Use Internet at home	4	6	3	1	4	**6**	**7****	**8**	1**
Has used or seen used	6	7	5	4	5	8	7	**12**	2***
Use Email at home	2	2	1*	0	1	2	**4***	**4**	0***

***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

TABLE 7.2b

Percentage using IT at school by demographics (Base: all school pupils, N=1255)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boys	Girls	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
Use PC at school	88	90	87	86	89	94	84	88	89
Use CD-ROM at school	49	52	47	26	50	**62**	**60***	48	50
Use Internet at school	11	13	10	2	7	**15**	**23***	11	11
Has used, or seen used[20]	17	18	16	4	12	**24**	**30****	16	18
Use e-mail at school	2	2	2	0	1	2	5	2	2

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, ***p<0.001

[20]It is a moot point whether watching someone use a technology counts as 'use': clearly control over what appears on the screen is heavily reduced, but the effectiveness of the use may in fact be increased by watching a more experienced user.

TABLE 7.2c

Location of Internet use, for school pupils, by demographics (N=1255)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boys	Girls	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
Have used Internet	19	23	15***	5	13	25	37***	24	16**
Where used in school	11	12	9*	1	6	15	22***	11	11
at home	4	6	3*	1	4	6	7***	8	1***
friend/ relative's house	4	6	3*	2	2	6	7***	6	3**
parent's workplace	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0
cybercafé	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0
other	2	3	2	0	2	1	7***	3	2

Note: Respondents could choose multiple response options. ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

TABLE 7.2d

Percentage of pupils who use IT only at school[21] by gender and social grade

	ALL	GENDER		SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boys	Girls	ABC1	C2DE
% of PC users using *only* at school (N=1166)	55	57	52	38	**68*** **
% of CD-ROM users using *only* at school (N=740)	64	65	64	48	**79*** **
% of Internet users using *only* at school (N=243)	40	39	43	25	**57*** **

***p<0.001

[21]In the case of PC and CD-ROM use we have considered all who use these personally either at school or at home. In the case of Internet use we also had information about personal use in other locations (a friend's or relative's house, a parent's workplace, library or cybercafé).

TABLE 7.2e

IT use by region (Base: all pupils)

	IN SCHOOL		AT HOME	
	% using PC***	% using CD-ROM*	% using PC*	% using CD-ROM**
N. Ireland (40)	70	38	28	13
Scotland (109)	80	49	36	18
Wales (62)	**95**	**59**	39	16
England				
North (334)	**90**	56	40	19
Midlands (198)	86	53	37	16
South (512)	**91**	**61**	**48**	**28**
Total (1255)	88	57	42	22

***p<0.001, ** p<0.01, *p<0.05

TABLE 7.3a

Mean time (days and hours) users spend on PC at home and at school by demographics

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boys	Girls	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
At home (N=528) Days using PC	2.6	**3.1**	2.1***	2.4	2.8	2.7	2.5	2.6	2.7
Hours on average day	1.5	**1.7**	1.4*	n/a	1.1	1.6	**1.9***	1.5	1.7
At school (N=1098) Days using PC	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.2	1.3	**1.9***	1.4	1.5
(N=622) Days using CD-ROM	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.2	1.0	0.8	0.8*	0.8	**1.0***

***p<0.001 * p<0.05

TABLE 7.3b

Percentage using PC at home for different purposes by demographics (N=540)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boys	Girls	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
Playing games	77	**85**	69***	81	**88**	76	65***	77	76
Writing	65	62	67	46	62	63	**84*****	**71**	56***
Drawing/ design	39	42	36	40	44	42	31	40	37
Look up info/ CD-ROM	33	36	31	16	**35**	**44**	33***	**41**	22***
Database/spreadsheets	17	20	14	1	5	18	**40*****	**21**	11**
Maths/ number work	14	15	14	16	12	14	15	**17**	10*
Programming	7	**12**	3***	3	5	8	**12***	7	8
Internet	7	8	6	1	5	8	**11***	**10**	2***
Email	4	**6**	2*	0	2	5	**8****	**6**	1**

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

TABLE 7.3c

Percentage using PC at school for different purposes by demographics (N=1110)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boys	Girls	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
Writing	74	74	75	67	73	75	**84***	75	74
Drawing/ design	49	**52**	46*	46	47	**57**	44**	47	50
Playing games	34	35	34	**61**	40	21	15***	32	36
Database/spreadsheets	33	33	34	3	11	54	**67***	35	31
Maths/ number work	31	**33**	28*	**35**	**29**	**34**	22**	28	32
Look up info/ CD-ROM	30	31	28	9	**35**	**36**	**38***	**33**	26*
Programming	12	14	11	4	11	**17**	**19***	13	12
Internet	6	6	5	1	1	6	**16***	6	6
Email	3	4	3	1	1	3	**7*****	3	3

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

TABLE 7.3d

Time spent on games and homework, by demographics (Percentages, N=539)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boys	Girls	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
Playing games		***					***		
Most/all	31	**40**	22	**39**	**40**	25	22	29	34
About half	29	29	29	33	36	31	17	30	26
Less than half	22	20	25	15	18	29	25	23	20
Hardly any/none	19	12	**25**	14	7	16	**36**	18	19
Doing homework			**				***		
Most/all	14	8	**20**	2	3	16	**30**	16	10
About half	20	20	19	5	19	29	23	19	20
Less than half	21	21	21	12	21	25	23	22	18
Hardly any/none	46	**52**	41	**81**	57	30	24	42	51

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

TABLE 7.3e

Percentage of users who use Internet for different purposes by demographics (N=251)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE		SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boys	Girls	6-11	12-17	ABC1	C2DE
Looking up info./visiting websites	44	43	47	49	43	45	44
Surfing/ browsing	33	**39**	25*	21	**37****	37	28
Chat groups	18	16	21	11	20	**23**	12*
Games	8	9	6	14	6	8	9
Email	4	4	5	4	5	6	3
News groups	2	1	2	2	2	2	2
Downloading software	4	5	3	2	5	4	4
Making own webpage	2	2	1	0	2	1	3
Other	14	13	14	11	14	8	**20****

Note: **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

TABLE 7.4a

Classification of school pupils by access and use of PCs at school and at home (N=1200)

USE OF PC					
At school+home	At school only		At home only	Do not use	
	Home access	No home access		Home access	No home access
PC-rich (39%)	*School provision+* (9%)	*School provision* (41%)	*Home provision* (5%)	*PC-poor+* (2%)	*PC-poor* (5%)

TABLE 7.4b

Type of access to PCs by demographics (school pupils only, N=1200)

CATEGORY	ALL	GENDER*		AGE**				SOCIAL GRADE***	
	%	Boys %	Girls %	6-8 %	9-11 %	12-14 %	15-17 %	ABC1 %	C2DE %
PC-rich	39	38	40	37	36	**40**	**43**	**53**	27
School provision+	9	7	10	9	9	10	5	8	9
School provision	41	**45**	37	**40**	**44**	**43**	36	27	**53**
Home provision	5	4	5	6	5	3	6	6	4
PC-poor+	2	1	2	1	1	0	4	2	2
PC-poor	5	4	6	7	5	4	6	4	6

***p<0.001, *p<0.05

TABLE 7.4c

Pupils' attitudes to computers by type of computer access: percentage saying 'yes' (N=1200)

	ALL	TYPE OF ACCESS TO PC					
	(1200)	PC-Rich (469)	School + (103)	School (492)	Home (55)	PC-poor + (18)	PC-poor (63)
People get left behind if they don't know about computers**	55	**57**	49	**58**	38	28	46
Computers are exciting***	82	**83**	**83**	**85**	69	56	68
Computers stop people thinking for themselves	34	31	31	36	31	39	35
It is more important for young people to understand computers than parents	63	63	58	65	69	56	54

Note: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01

TABLE 7.4d

Knowledge and use of Internet and email amongst schoolchildren, by type of access

	ALL	CLASSIFICATION BY ACCESS TO AND USE OF PC					
		PC-Rich	School+	School	Home	PC-poor+	PC-poor
Have heard of Internet**	80	84	78	77	84	83	*65*
% having heard of Internet, who have used it*	25	**31**	26	20	20	13	24
% having heard of Internet, who have seen someone use it	24	28	25	23	11	20	15
Have heard of Email***	74	80	73	71	78	83	*56*
% having heard of email, who have used it**	8	**12**	4	4	**10**	7	6
% having heard of email, who have seen someone use it?**	15	**20**	16	10	10	**20**	9

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

CHAPTER 8

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we consider the provision of IT in schools primarily from the viewpoint of teachers, though at the end we bring in their pupils' views. There are several key social inequalities which are often discussed in relation to access and use of IT. But while the picture which emerges strongly from Chapter 7 is primarily that of social class differences in access to IT, these inequalities are clearly shown to be due to differences in access at home (Chapter 4) rather than at school. Indeed, school appears to act as an 'equalising force' in relation to social class. This remains true despite the concerns aired below by teachers about how IT is being introduced into schools and into the curriculum.

As shown in the previous chapter, age also makes a considerable difference to school IT use. For the purposes of the present chapter this may be translated into the difference - in curriculum, policy and resources - between primary and secondary school. The picture for gender is less clear than one might have expected, given the volume of both research and public concern about girls getting left out of the 'information revolution'. Thus we focus specifically on gender differences in relation to IT access and use in school in a later section.

We end by discussing how the teachers' viewpoints often stand in contrast to the views of the children they teach, not only because of longstanding factors which complicate communication between teachers and pupils but also because of the new problem that children increasingly have access to more up-to-date facilities at home than at school.

This chapter draws on a series of face-to-face interviews held with Information Technology teachers in each of 12 schools, 5 primary, 1 amalgamated primary and middle, and 6 secondary (labelled schools A to L; see Appendix 1.2, Table 1). Clearly, therefore, we must be cautious in interpreting findings, as our sample of schools is small. We also draw on observations made during our visits to the schools and our interviews with children and young people conducted at home and in school. These interviews with the IT teachers in a variety of schools offer a diverse picture of the use of computers within the classroom. Obviously, experiences differ according to the degree and nature of provision within the school. While we do not attempt a systematic survey of IT provision in schools here (Watson and Tinsky, 1995), some of the teachers' comments do need to be interpreted in the light of actual provision, so we offer some background in what follows.

8.2 RESOURCES FOR IT IN SCHOOLS

The most important aspect of IT provision in schools concerns neither software nor hardware but human resources.

8.2.1 IT teachers and technical support staff

When we arranged the group discussions with school pupils we also asked to interview 'whoever was responsible for IT in the school'. As a result, we interviewed a variety of teachers, from Head teachers or Heads of Department, to IT specialists or, particularly in primary schools, ordinary classroom teachers who had, for various reasons, taken on or been assigned this responsibility. However, if it was unclear to us, when approaching a school to interview, who would come forward to meet us, it seems even more unclear to schools who it is who should in fact be responsible for IT. Thus, different schools solve the problem in different ways, with very differing degrees of success. Resources, expertise, interest and serendipity all have a part to play.

Those put in charge are often chosen because they are willing rather than specifically trained for the role. One teacher, who has only been at the school for seven weeks, explains:

> I am going on courses to try and get to grips with the problem and I have done the best that I can but I do not have an inclination to sort of co-ordinate IT, but just a willingness to do it until they get someone else.

This teacher is also taking responsibility for Design and Technology and has her own class to teach:

> We all have about three or four hats (laughs).
> (Primary school D)

This is invariably the situation of the person in charge of IT in primary schools.

Teacher: [When] all the areas of responsibility were up in the air, I was asked what I was interested in. I am a Special Needs co-ordinator and I said that I was interested in IT as well.
Interviewer: Right, so you do both?
Teacher: Yes.
(Primary school E)

Interviewer: And are you doing all this [in charge of IT] as well as teaching a class of your own?
Teacher: Yes, I am responsible for that and PE and I do all the school sports after school and I teach 31 children.
(Primary school C)

In contrast, in secondary schools a member of staff is more likely to be specifically employed to be in charge of IT:

Interviewer: Are you the head of IT?
Teacher: Yes, and there are two of us who are full-time IT teachers and other departments are also supposed to help deliver IT. So we have other departments such as English, Geography, Modern Languages - either with our support or without our support. With our support I mean that we can sometimes be there with a class and a teacher, just looking after the technical side.
(Secondary school L).

Teacher: I started off teaching maths and then I went away and did something else and then came back as a computing teacher. So I actually run the Computing Department. There are four of us now and it has become one of the biggest, if not the biggest, non-compulsory subject.
(Secondary school K)

Human resources include not only hard-pressed teachers but also technical support staff. There is a substantial difference in the technical support available in primary and secondary schools. With the exception of primary school A, which is amalgamated with a middle school, none of the primary schools surveyed employ a technician. They rely mainly on telephone help-lines, manuals, or even calling on parents for help with technical problems.

Interviewer: Do you have sufficient back-up if things [computers] go wrong?
Teacher: That is a problem and I have spent most of my time on the phone to Panasonic. I don't know if it is a minor or major problem. I would like basic knowledge about how to fix minor problems. Also, when they do come they take ages to set up and when they are broken they are only returned after five weeks, but

> they promise one week. We have had three computers out of action because of that, one for almost half a term.
>
> (Primary school D)

It should be noted that the IT teacher of the primary school lucky enough to have a technician remarked that this provided vital reassurance for the less confident teachers:

> Basically we are very lucky in this school to have a technician who comes in each day and sets things up, loads what we need for the day and fixes computers. This really helps those teachers who are less confident, knowing that it is all done and that any problems can be sorted out. We are exceedingly lucky here.
>
> (Primary school A)

One school has access to help from a technology centre which appears to be the second best thing to a school technician. Teachers find this contact invaluable:

> We are very fortunate here because we have access to a technology centre. I don't know how much longer we can afford that though. It is brilliant because they can fix the computers and will set courses, all covered under the Gold Service. I wouldn't want to be in IT service without them. I would hate to think what it would be like without them.
>
> (Primary school C)

Half of the secondary schools surveyed have technicians based at the school. One school (secondary school K) has a full-time technician along with three other IT people. Not all the schools are so fortunate though. One secondary school without a technician relies on help from an IT centre and the use of information from computer magazines (secondary school H), whilst another clearly needs more support:

> We need help even to fine tune the system because the computers are new. We don't quite have the programmes on and they are not quite running as they ought to. We have got all sorts of problems with them that we need to sort out and get the system tuned.
>
> (Secondary school I)

8.2.2 Teachers' attitudes to and training in IT

Teachers seem divided in their attitudes towards computers. Each school has a mixture of teachers, ranging from those who are confident with computers, and are even buying their own for home use, through to technophobes who shy away from computer use in lessons. Although in favour of the use of IT some teachers are reluctant to use it, due to time pressures and the practicalities of organising computer use with a class of children. We asked each teacher responsible for IT how the other teachers in the school respond:

> It still happens that some teachers are not interested. I think it is because they don't have enough experience or time. Some can be so frightened about breaking a computer.
>
> (Primary school F)

> Some are resistant and some get on with it. Some are quietly resistant and some are really terrified which is crazy. In the main I think that most people are willing to take it on board but are concerned about the amount of time they have to do anything, let alone get to know computers.
>
> (Secondary school J)

> Some are reluctant to support them….I think it is clear to them how it would help in the presentation of student's work. I think they are well aware of the advantages of using IT but the hurdle can come when they are in an IT room with 20 computers and 25 pupils and you know, things don't always go as

smoothly as they would like them to go.
(Secondary school L)

The majority of schools have access to training courses via their local authority or technology centre. Despite this availability of courses, concern is expressed that many teachers are not taking up the offers of training as they are scared of feeling foolish, or do not want to give up their spare time. Even once teachers have got to the training course, this is not always effective. In-house training is offered in relatively few schools. The need for teacher training is recognised, and disappointment expressed that newly trained teachers are not equipped with IT skills.

> There are in-service courses and an Information Technology Support Unit. That is based in 'E' and they ran courses during the day, after school and in the evening. It was very difficult to get people to go, to travel there after work and having to stay.
>
> (Primary school F)

> When they hear things at a course then it is all put in a more complicated way and they feel inferior. People tend to show off on such courses and use jargon and put others off, and stop people asking questions because they feel too embarrassed. So either teachers go on these courses and feel put off, or they are just generally afraid to use computers…It was a bit disheartening actually to realise that the new teachers that we have out of teacher training college did not know how to use computers. I think the problem with those colleges is that they were perhaps too full and they don't have time for people to work on computers and things like that…The difficulty is finding the time to train teachers about IT once they start here.
>
> (Primary school B)

In addition to training in how to operate the equipment, teachers need to learn more about what IT can offer.

> We do need to know how we can get the most out of it [the Internet] for children. The departments are desperately keen to use it but they are not sure what for (laughs). That is of some concern. I would like to see a bit more money towards training the staff and then actually create the need for these resources, rather than just tag them on at the end…Politicians are all the same, they say that we should do this and that but they never provide adequate resources.
>
> (Secondary school K)

The school which appeared to be most on the ball in term of teacher training uses a combination of formal and informal training and employs a 'trickle down' system for IT knowledge within individual Departments.

> Interviewer: And how do the teachers get trained?
>
> Teacher: I teach them, and the technician teaches them and we have support from the county and we go on courses. We maintain that there will be one fully computer-literate person in each Department who will then cascade down to others. A lot of them, happily, say that they want their own now because they find them so useful. There is a surge of people here buying computers – it is phenomenal!
>
> (Secondary school G)

8.2.3 Hardware

All the schools surveyed are equipped with televisions, videos, radios and tape recorders and also have computers. However, there are large differences between schools in terms of both the number and quality of computers. Primary schools tend to have free-standing outdated hardware such as

Archimedes and *Acorns*. Where primary schools do have multimedia equipment they are likely to have few machines, typically located in the library, often for older children's use only. In the following quotations, the first is more typical than the second:

> Every class has its own computer, an *Archimedes*. There are surplus *BBCs* situated around the school. The library has two multimedia computers and a library computer catalogue.
>
> (Primary school A)

> Well we have one [computer] in every classroom and we have a range of models from basic ones to more sophisticated models with colour printers. The really sophisticated ones are multimedia and placed higher up the school.
>
> (Primary school B)

For most of the primary schools a major ambition is to replace outdated machines with new technology. This appears to be a slow and painful process for the majority, with finance being the main issue.

> Basically when we first started there were very few computers here and they were very old *Acorns* with a basic keyboard and not much memory. Since then we have had an update programme where we have two new computers each year…So we have a rolling process now where we can get rid of the old ones and replace them each year. We also have a thing with Tesco where we save the vouchers and so we have got some computers through that.
>
> (Primary school B)

In contrast, secondary schools are more likely to have networked multimedia PCs, CD-ROMs and Internet facilities. Finance appears to be much less of an issue.

> Everything that we buy in has been multimedia, all the new stuff, since I have had something to do with it.
>
> (Secondary school H)

On the other hand, the relation between school and Local Education Authority policy is more tricky, with some schools feeling either unsupported or inappropriately guided:

> We got rid of the *BBCs* and put them in the Maths Department and brought in PCs. That was a decision made by me in a way because we had three ways that we could go. We could go for PCs, which the county didn't support, we could go for *Acorn* or *Mac*. We went for PCs because we could see that they were getting in the market place. We ran the network for three years and then threw it out and brought a new one, which was more up-to-date. We refurbished some of the machines but for most of them the technology was too old and they had gone past it. We have been avidly looking for sponsorship from various places which, to a degree has been successful. This one is a sponsored room, this is £25,000 worth of 9X Cable Coms money. It is not finished yet. I mean we have still got money to spend on painting it and putting benches around...We have got further sponsorship to put an optic link in, with what is called a multiplex on the end so that we can get 50 odd people using the Internet and everything all at once, hopefully free.
>
> (Secondary school G)

As the above quotation illustrates, financial restrictions are rather less salient but there is clearly a significant task involved in obtaining sponsorship for commercial financing of school IT. Generally, secondary schools appear to be more confident and more successful than primary schools in terms of obtaining outside funding. Primary schools work with school funds, Tesco vouchers, the generosity of parents, their own fund-raising activities and luck to secure IT equipment.

> I sometimes wonder how we manage. With the technical equipment it started really when the government supplied the first *BBC*. I moved from a school which was closing down and so I was able to move equipment from there to here and we bought one other one and there was one already here, making it up to three. But for peripherals like printers and CD players, parents have helped. In some cases when you go on a course you can get a freebie.
>
> (Primary school F)

> I am tending now to base purchase on what happens at Tesco. We collect the vouchers and we have two computers from that. I am allowing replacement computers to come from there. There is a Parent/Teacher Association but it is a difficult area to raise money in, the last money went on the pond.
>
> (Primary school A)

> The CD machine came through a programme, the computer for the children with special needs is funded centrally from the county. We have also raised funds ourselves and we collect Tesco vouchers and we have had computers on a three way share. The infants and juniors and another school share them.
>
> (Primary school E)

Secondary schools came across as being under less financial pressure than primary schools. Having supportive school management seems to be key, as are sponsorship deals or other connections with outside sources.

> Computers are seen as very important and one of the features of the school is the IT initiative, so the whole school is now networked. We are still setting that up. We are connected to the local TV company who provided us with a link to the Internet.
>
> (Secondary school K)

> Yes, a certain amount of money comes from the [Name] Foundation, and the Parent/Teacher Association.
>
> (Secondary school L)

For one school, being equipped with hardware is not as difficult as keeping hold of it, as security is a major problem for them:

> Teacher: We are very well resourced in terms of hardware if we can keep our hands on it. I mean the last time it went was in the secure room, but they actually just went straight through the walls.
>
> Interviewer: Through the walls?
>
> Teacher: Yes, from the cavity walls, they broke down the wall, they sledge-hammered the walls down.
>
> (Primary school C)

8.2.4 Software

While finance appears to be a big issue in relation to hardware provision, particularly for primary school IT teachers, it is usually less of a problem in relation to software. Only the smallest primary school in our sample has difficulties:

> Interviewer: So what sort of software do you have?
>
> Teacher: Mostly we are using it for word processing, that is our major concern. We have the encyclopaedia CD and various talking books, but they are expensive for us to buy. We are waiting for the prices to go down.
>
> (Primary school F)

The priority for the majority of primary schools is to buy software which is specifically related to the four areas of IT as laid out in the National Curriculum requirements.

> The children have to basically cover four areas which are word processing, data handling, and I have lumped together control and sound and simulations, like adventure games. They have to cover these in the National Curriculum. I have software that covers all of those areas. Our basic data handling package is *Data Suite* and our basic word processing is *Pen Down* and our art packages are *Easel Four* and *Revolution*. We also have *Turtle* and *Pixie* for the control and then we have various programmes that tie into their topics, like houses and mapping programmes.
>
> (Primary school A)

> I suppose that it (Software) would fit into the categories of word processing, control, simulations, Victorian topic type things and quite a few CDs such as the encyclopaedia which is used quite a bit..
>
> (Primary school E).

It is noteworthy that a number of primary school IT teachers complain that many CDs, particularly *Encarta*, are unsuitable for the primary school age group.

> The encyclopaedia... is used quite a bit, though it is not particularly suitable, and I would prefer something more suitable... some of the entries are too difficult for the children to read and I have to interpret it for them. It is quite easy for them to search and they find the pictures quite easily but the actual entries are quite difficult.
>
> (Primary school E)

> Oh yes, we have got lots of CDs, we have got *Encarta*, *Dinosaurs*, *Ancient Lands*... *Encarta* is very much a secondary thing, the quantity of reading is too great, it is better as a tool for teachers to use and take ideas and graphics from. It is too advanced for our children. There are not enough CDs for primary children. I have to be very selective about the software due to the language problem and the amount of reading and effort needed to operate them. There was a *Dorling Kindersley* one that they did about visiting a museum. It was depressing and dark and difficult and looked like an old fashioned museum. There is a lovely one though called the *Seaside* and that is simple and is great.
>
> (Primary school C)

There are mixed reactions from primary school IT teachers regarding the Internet. Although none of the primary schools surveyed had the Internet, two plan to get it and spoke of its benefits (particularly in terms of e-mail).

> I would love to see something like that [Internet]. I think that every school should be linked up. We have e-mail in the region but it would be great if the schools were linked up and we could send messages to schools.
>
> (Primary school F)

> We intend to go on the Internet but we haven't got there yet. I think that the children should know about it because I think that things like the e-mail are going to be as big a thing - as when the telephone came in for communication. I do feel that the children should be able to access on-line information, as well as being familiar with it.
>
> (Primary school A)

However, two of the primary schools are not keen on acquiring the Internet, mainly due to practical and technical issues:

> There is a lot going on and at the moment I don't think that I could cope with it. I am only just trying to integrate the CD machines so I think that the Internet would be a bit difficult.
>
> (Primary school E)

> It [Internet] is not really viable for a primary school. You have to remember that even the highest children at 11 have only just got to grips with using a computer when they leave. What we want is for the computers that we do have to be networked so that the children can all work from the same thing. That would be more use to us than the Internet.
>
> (Primary school B)

In contrast to primary schools, secondary schools have a wider range of software packages, which are more likely to have been selected due to their manageability and use for different subject areas. Their main pressures appear to be related to time and organizational issues rather than finance – with modems left unpacked, and staff members unaware of the CD-ROM discs which are available.

> We have been running industry quality software for a long time.
>
> (Secondary school G)

> On the new system we went for *Windows 3.1* instead of *95*. The main package that we have is *Microsoft Works version 3*. Within that it has got a very useful cut down package version of a word processor, *Word 6*. It has a good version of a spreadsheet, *Excel*, and a database. It is serviceable and it does everything that we need.
>
> (Secondary school I)

> Everything that we buy in has been multimedia, all the new stuff, since I have had something to do with it. I suppose that we are not making as much use of it as we should be, but we are expanding. The library is expanding too and is filling every machine up with every CD that they can lay their hands on. Other departments are probably not aware of all the CD material that is available. Part of my job is to make sure that they get to hear about these and if possible get to see them.
>
> (Secondary school H)

> I have lots of cardboard boxes which I have not opened yet which will give us Internet facilities and I have got a modem which I need to get connected up. I just haven't had the time.
>
> (Secondary school I)

8.3 IT IN THE CLASSROOM

As we showed in Chapter 7, the modal use of the computer in school is about once per week, although this rises to two or more days per week for 15-17 year olds (i.e. GCSE pupils). By far the most common use of the school computer is for 'writing', with drawing/design, games, databases/spreadsheets, maths/number work, and looking up information on CD-ROMs also common for between one third and one half of all pupils. Apart from game playing, which falls off sharply with age, most other uses become increasingly common with age (see Chapter 7 for further details).

The interviews with teachers give us a better sense of how these uses of the school computer are integrated - or not - into the educational curriculum and hence into the school day.

8.3.1 The curriculum

Teachers wish to see IT integrated into lessons rather than being taught as a separate subject.

We try to teach the skills in the context of the subject area, instead of just teaching something for the sake of it.

(Primary school B)

The buzz phrase, particularly in the secondary schools, is that computers are a 'tool'.Use made of this 'tool' in different subject areas depends on the available software and, more importantly, varies according to the level of confidence of the teacher concerned.

Interviewer: Are there particular subject areas that make more use of computers than others?
Teacher: Yes, the history topics because of the CDs that we have.

(Primary school E)

I think some Departments use them more, for example the History Department and Maths. A lot actually depends on the confidence of the teacher who is going to use it. There might be somebody that is not happy to use computers and will shy away from the software that is offered to them, whereas others are happy to use it and will do so.

(Primary school B)

Time pressures are also seen as an important factor on whether or not computers are integrated into certain lessons. Sometimes good intentions are hard to put into practice.

Unfortunately people do not have the time to make the computer a tool in their discipline as it should be. It is just not practical from a time point of view - teachers' time.

(Secondary school I)

It is difficult to bring them into the classroom. I mean they are supposed to be part of the curriculum and they are supposed to be in use and children are supposed to have equal access to them, but I was talking to other teachers and it is difficult. I mean the management of the computers is really hard and we are all really busy.

(Primary school D)

The need for IT to be taught as a separate subject, with its own expertise is also appreciated, but such classes are not available in all secondary schools.

Interviewer: Is IT taught as a separate subject?
Teacher: No..I think it is a time constraint. We haven't got the resources to do that. In a way it would be very useful because then teachers could rely on a body of skills that they wouldn't have to spend time teaching the basics, the pupils would already know. That would be an advantage but it is very difficult to slot into a 25 period a week timetable.

(Secondary school H)

Typing skills are not explicitly taught in any of the schools surveyed. This issue is a subject of debate, particularly in secondary schools.[1]

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[1]Pupils do not necessarily agree with teachers here, for the keyboard skills are often precisely what they value about computers at school:

A: And the ability with the computers, you can go back and change it, so if you say, if you spell something wrong you can go back and change it, and you do the spell check.
J: If you were say using biro or something you have to cross it out, the writing, it looks all messy after a while and you have to re-do it again, with computer's it's very easy. Also now there's the new software about speaking and it comes up on the screen.

(15 year-old boys)

That [typing] has been an area of some controversy. The Business Studies Department have always felt that it is a really important area, and I agree. On the other hand we take the view in the computing panel anyway, that if they can type as fast as they can think then that is adequate. Keyboard skills as a copy typist are something separate and if they want to become a copy typist then that is different.

(Secondary school K)

We don't spend much time teaching keyboard skills here because there isn't really enough time on the course to do that. I mean we spend one lesson in Year 8 learning to type, not much time at all. But then again it is one of those things that we are thinking about, that it is a good thing because keyboards will be here for a while.

(Secondary school L)

We don't actually teach them typing skills. We went into this a number of years ago but felt that it was not really worthwhile.

(Primary school F)

IT teachers in the majority of schools spontaneously sing the praises of computer use for low ability or Special Needs pupils.

One of the greatest things that the computer does for our children who cannot present things nicely, who are very messy and untidy, is make things look nice. Well they can enter work on to the computer which makes it presentable and understandable to other people. Even the worst of the children in terms of ability have something that looks good at the other end and computers are very good for that.

(Primary school C)

The high ability pupil is able to sit back, look at the work and improve it. They are not really gobsmacked when they press a letter and it appears on the screen. The lower ability actually are. The computer is a very good thing for instant feedback. You know, pop a few letters in and they appear. It is fairly quick, fairly instant and very gratifying for people and it is perhaps that that holds the interest of the lower ability pupils, whereas the higher ability ones take that for granted anyway.

(Secondary school I)

Teacher: These six (computers) are for less able children. They all have CD programmes and so are targeted for them.
Interviewer: And does it work?
Teacher: Oh yes! It accelerates the learning curve like no-one's business!

(Secondary school G)

Computers for less able children are fantastic. It gives them instant gratification. If they can't draw, then the computer will do it for them and they can get something and put it on the wall.

(Secondary school G)

Apart from increasing confidence and providing instant gratification, in one school computers are used to diagnose Special Needs problems.

> It will diagnose exactly where they are going wrong and then target that one thing that it will find e.g. long division, reading.
>
> (Secondary school G)

Although it is clear that IT is very positively regarded for teaching Special Needs or low ability children, there is also a strong undercurrent of opinion that computers add to the pressures on teachers who already have a lot to cope with.

> The teachers are the ones who are usually hesitant about using the new resource, although most of them are highly computer-literate. I mean we have a high proportion of people who are happy to use computers and who own them. But when you have a whole class of them the situation is a bit different because they generate problems a whole lot faster. It is useful to have two people there to solve problems, so I help out.
>
> (Secondary school H)

> Access to computer time is always really hard if you have got twenty children. If you split them up into groups, say you have three people, then by the time you get round to all the groups it is an organisational nightmare really to try and do that. It is hard.
>
> (Primary school F)

Computers also present new challenges to teachers, in terms of what they now need to know. Many teachers are aware of the need to equip children with skills required in the workplace and this adds pressures to keep up-to-date with IT skills.

> I think it certainly gives a different slant, or should be putting a different slant, on the way that they approach the teaching. That is going to happen in time - it is not going to happen overnight. They are far more aware of the fact that children are more technology aware.
>
> (Secondary school K)

> The national curriculum is certainly putting emphasis on them learning computer skills. I think that in turn has perhaps changed what we teach, the fact that we have to teach children the skills that they will need in society ie. the ability to be able to use computers confidently and in a useful way. They have to be quick in the outside world.
>
> (Primary school B)

In one secondary school the IT teacher feels that things in IT teaching have gone too far.

> Interviewer: Do you think that the introduction of computers in school has altered your criteria of what is important for children to learn?
>
> Teacher: No, it is just another medium to deliver education through. If anything they have gone overboard. The computer should be used purely as a tool. They have got things on the syllabus that are really silly.
>
> Interviewer: Have you got an example?
>
> Teacher: Yes, some of the depth of computer logging. It is nice for the pupils to have an awareness of things, but they do not need to be able to use data logging equipment. And yet there it is in the national curriculum. Controlling external devices is nice but it is not essential and if you are doing that then it is at the expense of something else, as with feedback from sensors. But if you were to go into industry the first thing that they will say is "forget what you learnt at school". They completely replace it with what they want, their way.
>
> (Secondary school I)

8.3.2 Peer teaching

Many primary schools use older or more confident children to help out others with IT. This is either in the form of 'trouble shooting' groups to tackle problems in class, or computer monitors to load computers and turn them off at the end of each day.[2]

> Last year I had four or five people who were my trouble shooters and two of them were boys and three of them were girls, but it just happened that way. If another child had a problem then they would help out.
>
> (Primary school A)

> The plan is to get pupils who are experts so that they will be able to train the children and then that will free the children.
>
> (Primary school C)

In contrast to the primary schools, only one secondary school in our sample uses peer teaching in IT and it appears to be incidental rather than a planned strategy:

> The ones that feel confident will wander off and help the ones that are sitting there nervously, thinking that they will press the key that will self-destruct the machine.
>
> (Secondary school H)

8.3.3 Assessment

The majority of schools have a policy in place for the assessment of IT skills, and those that do not are about to initiate one. Targets are based on government guidelines regarding what a child should be able to do at each 'Key Stage'. Primary schools are particularly guided by the National Curriculum. Schools have written objectives with set activities.

> I have a written one [list of objectives], broken down into what they should achieve at each age group. It begins with basic machine management which is knowing how to turn the machine on and off and knowing what the machine can and can't do. Then on to using word processing, spreadsheets and graphics.
>
> (Primary school F)

> We have a development plan with specific aims for each year group and each stage in each year.
>
> (Secondary school K)

Problems with wholesale downloading and plagiarism do not appear to be considered an issue in any of the schools surveyed.

8.3.4 Access to school computers outside lessons

Where there are differences in access to computers outside lesson time, these arise in part from differences in teacher resources and in part from differences in the age and maturity of the children. In all the secondary schools surveyed children have more or less free access to computers outside lesson times. This is not the case in some primary schools, where a lack of teachers available to supervise prevents free access.

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[2] Occasionally, we met a pupil who helped not only peers but also the teacher. As this 14 year old boy explained when asked if there was Internet access at his school: 'Well at the moment I'm trying to get it so everyone can use it, pay to use it, but at the moment they're not too good on the idea... I'm kind of like the one, the teacher (the computer teacher) listens to, because funnily enough he doesn't know that much about computers, so he took my advice, he got a modem, and you have to get a teacher with you to [go to] on the Internet, which I'm trying to change, because he thinks we could get onto [ ] sites, and I said well there's many ways you can stop that by passwording...'

Our policy in school is that children are never left unattended, so if your child is going to do something at lunch time then it means that you must stay in your classroom in your lunch time. If I keep children in at playtime then I don't go out at playtime. You will find that working in the school you need the break not only to have lunch but also to prepare for the afternoon.

(Primary school C)

We can't supervise the children so they can't have free access.

(Primary school E)

There are also differences between primary and secondary schools in the provision of school computer clubs. In the majority of secondary schools there are after-school clubs where children are able to spend more time on computers, such as those with CD-ROMs. In one school children even worked on building computer-controlled robots (secondary school G). In contrast to this, none of the primary schools surveyed offer a school computer club. Again, the problem comes down to supervision. There is no-one available who has time to run clubs after school.

Interviewer: And you don't have after school computer clubs and things like that?

Teacher: No. I mean if somebody was willing to do that then it could happen, but then again you are up against security and so no-one has done that and I can't stay behind because I stay behind every night to do sport, netball, football and cross country and that kind of stuff.

(Primary school C)

There is overwhelming agreement in the schools surveyed that computer games have no place in school. While parents wonder if all games may have some educational potential, or debate how to draw the line between educational and purely entertaining games, there is little doubt among teachers. Arcade-type games especially are seen as a waste of time, not educational, and possibly damaging (by introducing viruses). However most schools have some educational games for use at wet break times or for use with younger or Special Needs children.

The other thing we would never do is play computer games. We don't let them get the notion that the equipment that they are using can be associated with *Sega Megadrive* or something like that.

(Secondary school K)

Interviewer: Do you have computer games in the school?

Teacher: No. That is a distinct policy, we do not have games as games.

(Primary school F)

I see no place for computer games on a tool that cost £1000 which a kid could be word-processing their essay on at lunch time.

(Secondary school G)

There are some educational games, for example *CAL* software, that is *Computer Assisted Learning*. This is educational but often treated as a game because of the pretty pictures and sounds. But in terms of games like shooting ones then we do not have that, that can be done at home.

(Secondary school L)

Interviewer: So you were saying that the games on the school computers are illegal so you can't play them?

B: Yes, Mr. G tells us to get rid of them, but we've still not got rid of them yet.

Interviewer: Where did they come from?

B: Well there's this boy at school and he knows like how to make them.

Interviewer: And are they the same sort of games that you might play on your *Nintendo?*

B: No, no, no.

Interviewer: What's different about them?

B: Well, they are just games, but Mr. G told us that they are illegal and that we had to get rid of them.

(10 year-old boy living in a working-class family)

8.3.5 The interactive future?

New "interactive" developments in television, such as Video-on-Demand, on-screen banking and tele-shopping have for some time been the subject of various trials around the country. Early in the project, we visited a school involved in an "interactive" television trial, but found little evidence of 'true' interactivity involving the children. The technology in question was then very much at the experimental stage. Despite some dedicated and enthusiastic liaison workers, it remained a tale of fragile technology, subject to constant breakdown, affording negligible opportunities for children themselves to interact with the computers.

In the demonstration we observed, children were ushered into the room and watched while a teacher, with the help of a company representative, operated the equipment. The theory was attractive: children in school and at home were to be able to access interactive books and educational television programmes for children. A bulletin board through which local schools could cooperate was also being set up and an Internet link planned. The idea was that each school should put together a school page using multimedia and add school videos.

The teachers were split between the enthusiastic and the sceptical. All however agreed the technology was at present inadequate. For example, although there was a pause button enabling the programme to be stopped and the teacher to get back to the class, the rewind and fast-forward facilities were not functional, making it hard to use the programmes in class to their maximum advantage. Teachers also seemed to consider the main advantages of the technology as time-saving for themselves (they would not need to record educational programmes or send away for them). They found it difficult to envisage truly interactive ways in which the children might be involved. And the children themselves seemed to have learned little, other than to expect technological breakdowns to be the norm.

8.4 GENDER INEQUALITIES

Chapter 7 reveals only small differences between girls and boys in access and use of IT at school. Boys are a little more likely to use computers, especially multimedia computers, at school, and they are more likely to do design and number work, though not other kinds of work, on the school computer. There are more noticeable differences in boys' degree of enthusiasm for computers - they feel more comfortable with computers and think them more exciting than girls do - though there are few differences in their beliefs about the growing importance of computers in society. On the other hand, there is a considerable body of research concerned with gender inequalities in computer use at schools (Brosman, 1996; Haddon, 1991; Todman, 1993). Our qualitative research provided us with the opportunity to explore some of the ways in which both teachers and their pupils actually think about and use computers at school. Here we explore first the teachers' views and then those of the children and young people we interviewed.

In all the schools surveyed considerable differences are apparent in teachers' views of teaching IT to girls and boys. These differences mainly relate to the approach that girls and boys take to computers, rather than their ability to use them. Particularly, boys are seen as being more confident and dominating to the point of pushing the girls out.

> Girls seem to be softer with them [computers]. You know, boys tend to go and push seven or eight keys in the hope that something funny comes up and it tends to be the boys that fiddle with the computers as they walk past them. But there is not really a difference in their actual use of it.
>
> (Primary school A)

> If you ask for computer monitors, that is someone to load computers and ensure that they are switched off at the end of the day, then the girls tend to shy

away and the boys want to do the job.
(Primary school B)

Teacher: Boys tend to dominate so I don't tend to mix the sexes. I let girls work together so that they can get a look in.
Interviewer: So, how are the boys dominant?
Teacher: They just seem to sort of bully and take over. They might not know more, but they are just much more sort of noticeable and they tend to sort of take over. They push the girls out. It is like Lego, the boys take over and the girls don't get a look in.
(Primary school D)

In the majority of schools this issue is being tackled by getting children to use computers in single sex groups, and by teachers actively encouraging girls' involvement.

> You have to be careful of the boys pushing themselves forward. I deliberately put girls with girls to stop the boys dominating, unless I have a forceful girl. I think it is a good idea to keep them separate. They are all as enthusiastic as each other, it is just a question of everyone having a fair go.
> (Primary school C)

> Boys like to be at the centre of it more than girls, the girls tend to hold back, so when you are working with computers it is not always a wise thing to have mixed groups because the boys tend to bomb in for some reason. So basically in the groups that I have, the girls tend to work separately from the boys. Then you get little difference. The boys tend to be better with computers because they tend to play with them at home and be more enthusiastic about them. Girls don't see them in quite the same way.
> (Secondary school J)

The solution of role models is also offered by some:

> We have had for sometime now a lady member of staff. I think that made a big difference to how many girls were doing computers. I don't know if we are 50/50 at the moment, but we are certainly not far away.
> (Secondary school K)

And perhaps the differences are gradually being eroded:

> I don't think that it is as bad as it was, now that the machines are more friendly, they are getting more girl-friendly. Boys will have a go whatever the system is but the girls are now only being brought alongside so that they are not seen so much as a technical thing. There have always been girls that are very good at computers, but also ones that have held back. Boys spend hours and hours on it, they explore and they want to know how it works, but the girls hold back. But I think that they are catching up. Because it is expected of them in the curriculum, they are catching up.
> (Secondary school H)

In one school a difference in word processing ability is noted between the sexes.

> Girls are much better word processors than boys ... I tried this year to make the girls load and turn on the machines but they shied away from it. I do not know why that it. But when they actually come to operating the computer then the girls are better, better listening, more dextrous and certainly better keyboard skills. I think to a certain extent it actually reflects society. Sorry if that sounds a bit horrid. (Primary school B)

In sum, it is clear from the interviews with the IT teachers that in the majority of schools gender differences in computer use have been observed, with boys tending to take over, being boisterous and crowding the girls out. If we look at the interviews with children we see that some of their comments exemplify the greater confidence of boys than girls when it comes to IT.

> I don't really like them [computers]. I don't really know much about them, so I'm scared I'm going to break them.
>
> (15-16 year old girl, working class)

The 15-16 year old girls in the extract below think they know why boys are more confident than girls in IT use:

Interviewer:	I've heard quite a lot of people saying that girls don't like computers, and that they are basically really anti-computers. Do you think that's true?
N:	No. Well, not with me.
H:	No.
T:	But sometimes you're sort of scared when you're in computing because you do something and it goes (funny noises) (laughter).
E:	Aye, sort of like boys are sort of like, it may sound sexist, but boys are more used to those sort of things (points to picture of *Gameboy*)....So it makes them a lot more like friendly with (points to picture of PC)
L:	But sometimes like you associate a typist with that, but I think boys are sort of more ready to just...
H:	Try it.
T:	Yes.
E:	Try everything, yes.
L:	I don't think they worry so much.
E:	Aye, they're not scared to get it wrong.
Interviewer:	What makes you scared to get it wrong?
H:	I don't know.
E:	Just scared in case it blows up (laughter). Just…I don't know.

(Secondary school K)

The idea that familiarity with games machines encourages confidence with 'serious' machines is interesting, albeit hard to test. But it does suggest that game playing - even though banned by most teachers and the subject of anxiety for some parents - may provide a valuable introduction to computers for children. And if there were more games for girls, they might have more confidence to start on the path towards computer proficiency.

Girls also feel that interesting/ fun material, which could help to build confidence in their abilities to use computers, is not as often made available to them.

J:	And when you have a chance to go on the computer it never really seems to be for girls.
Interviewer:	And the things on the computer aren't for girls?
J:	No, they are. It's just that you don't get told about them. The girls only get told about the boring stuff.
A:	Like knowing how to times table and stuff.
M:	My brother got a computer game for his birthday. But if it had been my birthday, I would have got a thing about learning and stuff. But he got a fun game.
Interviewer:	You were saying that boys get games on computers. Do you think that makes them feel good about computers?
M:	They get more confidence. They think they're better so they go on computers more and get more of a chance.

(10-11 year-old girls)

Yet there are some indications that younger girls in particular are potentially as interested as boys in

computers, but that somehow they are excluded from computer use:

> Girls use computers just as much but they don't do the same things. Boys do shoot-em-up games and stuff and not many girls do. They do other things and boys think of the computer as shoot-em-up games and girls don't do shoot-em-up games so they don't play on computers.
>
> (10 year-old girl)

This girl's classmates make the argument that girls are discriminated against both at home and in school *vis a vis* computers for a number of reasons. Some believe that boys are given preferential access to computers in the classroom by teachers:

Interviewer:	Some people have said girls don't like computers.
E:	That isn't true.
T:	You don't always get a chance, sort of thing.
J:	And boys get to know more about it.
E:	Girls need to get more control. 'Cos girls don't use it so much.
T:	Because at school like when you're on the word processor or something when we're doing our projects. Like Miss M. says 'Put up your hand if you want to use the word processor'. Many girls put their hands up, but some boys, and she just seems to choose the boys.

(10-11 year-old girls)

The teenage girls from secondary school K agree:

> He [teacher] doesn't exactly go through it step by step how it is. I think the boys sort of pick it up that sort of thing easily.

And a similar story is heard in the 'wired' school discussed in the last chapter:

> He's [IT teacher] a bit intimidating. Like he did this, before we started our second language, yes, our third language, and we had lessons on computing, yes, and we were in this sort of lecture room, science house, and he just [barrelled on] all this stuff about the computers and the arga-net and the ether-net and all this stuff, and it was like oh my God, and I didn't take any of it in because I didn't understand any of it, so I'd feel a bit like intimidated asking him what, you know, to do ...
>
> (13 year-old girl)

These primary school girls also feel that peer pressure encourages boys to become interested:

> And also most of the boys in our class they've all got computers and word processors and things and if people say - like other boys who've got all this stuff say 'Oh do you know about Internet?' and stuff and if they like say 'No' then they just sort of get put down a step. That's probably what they think.
>
> (Girl, aged 10)

8.5 IT AND THE RELATION BETWEEN SCHOOL AND HOME

From the interviews with IT teachers it is easy to come away with the impression that some schools, particularly the secondary schools, are well equipped with hi-tech computers, incorporate IT into as many lessons as they are able, and run computer clubs that are attended by many of their enthusiastic computer-boffin pupils. However, as we began to see in relation to the discussion of gender inequalities, from the children's perspective things seem less rosy. This section explores the possibility that one key reason why children and young people appear more dissatisfied with school computer facilities than their teachers is to do with the standards of IT equipment that children have access to at home.

The relation between computer use at home and school is vital for two reasons. The first is that use at home may facilitate, or undermine, use at school. The second is that use at home depends significantly, certainly at present, on social grade, so that in terms of young people's experiences with computers, schools may be said to represent an 'equalising force', as noted at the outset of this chapter, potentially evening out the inequalities which arise from social differentials in access. For both of these reasons, the link between use of computers at home and school is of concern to parents, teachers and policy makers.

The nature and perceived value of this link may affect both educational practice and leisure at home. For example, while less than half of all pupils have access to a computer at home, teachers tend to feel they cannot draw upon this resource, particularly given the inequitable distribution of such equipment by social grade. This reaction is based mainly on the problem of inequalities, but it seems in addition that teachers consider that their brief does not extend beyond the classroom.

Conversely, middle-class parents in particular are more likely to see education as unbounded by location, so that they see it as their responsibility to facilitate school learning at home, and to integrate - to some extent at least - these sites for learning:

> I would quite like a PC, but that's sort of quite down the list at the moment of things. I do think that it is important, the kids' school work, and to keep up with all this new technology because kids, they do leave us behind, so I think that it's important that they can come home and use it if they want to, I know they get the opportunities at school, but I mean it's not one computer to one person.
>
> (Middle-class mother of 10 year old girl)

8.5.1 Relation between home and school facilities

The general consensus from all the teachers interviewed is that having a home computer is usually of small advantage in the classroom, as the machines and packages used are often not the same as those used in school. Some benefits are recognised: children can print out their homework at home rather than staying behind after school and it can give a short-term advantage in terms of keyboard skills and confidence.

> Interviewer: And do you find that there is a difference between kids who have a computer at home and others who can't afford computers?
>
> Teacher: No, because the ones that have them at home nine times out of ten they are not similar systems to what we have here. They are probably very good computers that allow them to do a multitude of things including games, but they are not necessarily the type that you have here. They certainly don't word process the same as the machines that we have here. Inputting the data is possibly where they score because they are familiar with the layout of a standard keyboard, whether it is a cheap computer, a games computer or a very expensive one they have standard keyboards so that they can get their way around it a little bit quicker. But it isn't that much of a drawback not having one, it maybe makes a big difference for the first couple of weeks and that is all.
>
> (Secondary school I)

> Interviewer: Does it make a difference, the way that the kids use computers here, compared to whether they have got a computer at home or not?
>
> Teacher: No, I assume no prior knowledge. I would not discriminate against any child who hasn't got a computer. And they don't know their way around a computer because they use them as games machines basically.
>
> (Secondary school G)

> Interviewer: So do you generally know if a child has a computer at home or not?
>
> Teacher: You can usually tell, certainly in Year 7. It is not so clear later on. They do tend to be more confident, they need less encouragement than a child without a

computer at home.

(Secondary school J)

Interviewer:	Do kids with computers at home have an advantage?
Teacher:	Parents ask us that a lot. Again I think that it does make a difference though I couldn't really measure that either way. I know that it does mean that they can go home and do work rather than wait behind at school and do work, and of course they can print things off there. Within computing it is not an issue that I could measurably comment on, it is not immediately obvious. I don't usually ask them actually.

(Secondary school K)

Using the survey data, we pursued the question of whether using a PC at home makes for a different approach to, or use of, the PC at school. Using multiple regression analysis, controlling for the age and gender of the child and the social grade of family, we compared those with computer access both at home and in school (the 'PC rich'; see Chapter 7) with those with school access only (the 'School Provision' group) in terms of their attitudes to computers. Perhaps unexpectedly, if children use a PC at home as well as at school they are not any more likely to feel comfortable with computers or to think them exciting. Nor do they get to use computers at school for more days per week.

We also considered the relation between home and school access the other way around, comparing the two groups who use a computer at home - the 'PC rich' (who have access also at school) or the 'Parent provision' group (who have no additional access in school). How, if at all, do their attitudes to computers differ? Again, once we control for demographic variables through multiple regression, the groups do not differ in how comfortable they feel with computers. However, the 'Parent Provision' group appear less likely to consider computers exciting than the 'PC rich' (R-square change = 1.5%, $p<0.01$). Why should this be? Something about school access appears to make children consider the PC more exciting. Perhaps it is the teaching, or it may be the social context. In school there is the opportunity to share experiences with friends, to chat about using the technology, which may acquire pleasurable associations with something to do during rainy lunch times, etc).

Interviewer:	Do you like using them [School *Apple Macs*]?
B:	Well yes, when I have a chance, when I've done my work.

(10 year old boy, working class)

The implication here that teachers only allow use of the computers in school *after* work, rather than as *part of* work, provides a hint as to why some children see them as fun, despite the fact that, for many, access is only possible through the school.

8.5.2 Children's views of school computers

As we have suggested, while many parents find it problematic that they are not able to provide a computer at home to facilitate their child's computer use at school, more recently we see the emergence of a new problem, that which arises when children do have access to computers at both home and school. Particularly this creates a problem of competition. On the one hand, the home technology may fail to live up to the standards of the school:

Interviewer:	Do you prefer playing on your computer here [at home], or using the one in school?
B:	Using the one in school.
Interviewer:	Why's that?
B:	Because you can do better things on it, you can play on the CD-ROM on it and you can er...
Interviewer:	Have you ever printed anything out in school?
B:	Yes, well the latest thing that I printed was a story about the universe and stuff.
Interviewer:	Was it good seeing it come off the computer?
B:	Yeah, I didn't have to write it out in neat.
Interviewer:	Is there anything on these cards that you'd really like to have?
B:	If I could pick one of them I would pick that (points to CD-ROM).

Interviewer: The CD-ROM?
B: Yes, because I know how to use it from school.

(10 year old boy, working class)

However the viewpoint above is shared by only a tiny minority of the children we interviewed. Far more often computers at school are negatively evaluated by children when compared with facilities available to them at home. The middle-class 6-7 year-old girls in the following extract were interviewed in a very small rural school which scores above average results in the school leagues. Many of the girls in the group have their own computers (PCs with Windows) and some feel that the school computers are boring because they are old-fashioned and not equipped with fun games:

K: The computers at school are really boring because you can't do much on them.
Interviewer: Alright, what's the difference with the ones at home then?
K: You get more interesting games...like stories with pictures and sounds, but the one at school is just black and white....It's like we've played our two discs, we've only got two game disks. There's only sort of building bricks for Jenny and me that we like, but it's baby stuff.
Interviewer: And building bricks is that on the school computer or..
K: Yes the school computer.

(6-7 year-old girls in primary school F)

Middle-class pupils in particular are likely to feel that the school computers are outdated, even in apparently well-equipped secondary schools. For example, if we take secondary school L, a large city school with above average results in a middle-class area, we see that in terms of ownership the school seems well equipped (3 computer rooms with multimedia computers, *Acorns, Apple Macs* and PCs). The 12-13 year old girls speaking in the following extract were interviewed at school in one of these computer rooms. They seem far from impressed with the school's IT facilities, or its after-school computer club. A number of the girls being interviewed have their own computers at home:

Interviewer: Are there lots of computers? I see there are lots in this room, but are they used in the school?
S: Yeah.
E: These computers are crap.
A: There are about three good computers and that's about it.
S: They're all rubbish, like kiddies' computers…
F: I don't think they're used much. In Year 8 you have Technology of Computers, but I don't think in Year 9 you have one.
E: No you don't.
A: You can do computers GCSE or something like that.
Interviewer: Is anyone going to, thinking of doing it for GCSE?
S: No.
A: No way.
Interviewer: I see that the school's got a computer club, Saturday…is anyone a member of that?
F: No.
E: We used to come didn't we?
S: No we didn't. Computer club? No, no..
A: Yes we did, a couple of times..
Interviewer: You look like it would have been an embarrassing thing to be at..
A: No it wasn't...it's just like spending my time in there when like I've got enough computer stuff at home, it doesn't really seem the kind of thing to come to…I've like got better things to do with my time than come to type on the computers.

(12-13 year-old girls in secondary school L)

One interpretation, no doubt, is that these pupils are rather hard to please, and that perhaps they would have been equally critical whatever aspect of the school we had discussed with them. But certainly their comments are echoed by many others across a wide variety of circumstances.

In line with teachers' comments about needing more technical support, the girls in the following extract express their frustration with school computers when things go wrong.

Interviewer:	Is it different using a computer at school and at home or is it the same kind of thing?
N:	No, it's different.
F:	It's different because here you have to do what the teacher tells you.. My computer keeps going off, I have to start all over again.
F:	And it's like if something goes wrong he (the teacher)blames you, says you've done something to the computer.
P:	Like you've crashed it.
Interviewer:	Right, and things do go wrong?
F:	Yes.
P:	Yes, but we've not done it.
N:	At first it crashed and he (the teacher) got it fixed again, and then I saved it and then I come back on to it next week, it wasn't saved, and I did. It kept going off and I keep having to write it all again.

(12-13 year-old girls in secondary school G)

Interviewer:	What about sort of PC computers and multimedia computers and things like that? Have you come across those at all?
G:	I do at school but I don't like them. They are terrible things they are.
Interviewer:	Why don't you like them?
G:	They are boring, they are not fun at all. There is nothing that you can do on them. Well there is, but not for me there isn't.
Interviewer:	What sort of things do they use them for at school, or do you use them for at school?
G:	Oh we are only allowed to use them for typing up pieces of work or for doing some homework on, or the teacher taking the whole class will say that we can go in on them, that is about all.

(15 year old boy, working-class)

It is interesting that whilst IT teachers give the impression that computers are integrated into as many lessons as is possible, most children spoke of using them comparatively rarely - once or twice a week (see Chapter 7).

Interviewer:	Tell me about computing in school.
K:	We don't use it really.
H:	Don't use it that much.
K:	No.
B:	Sometimes in English, when they say like you can type your work up and that, but it depends. There's not that many computers really is there?
H:	Not really. They're always being used really aren't they?
Interviewer:	So who's always using them?
K:	The sixth form use them a lot don't they?

(15-16 year old girls at secondary school H)

Interviewer:	I mean do you actually do computing in school at the moment?
J:	Some of us do, some of us don't. I don't.
L:	I don't.
Interviewer:	Who does?
B:	Nobody in this group.
Interviewer:	Why not, what's wrong with it?
B:	Boring, loads of writing and things.

(15-16 year old boys at secondary school I)

Interviewer: What do you use the computer in school for?
T: Well we don't use it that much.
F: No, I haven't used it at all.
R: Me neither.
Interviewer: Have you used the computer at all in school?
T: Yes.
F: No.
T: We used it in class three.
R: I used it in class five.
Interviewer: So you did use it yesterday or last week?
F: No.
T: I used it last week.
F: It was last year I had a go on a computer.

(6-7 year old boys at primary school B)

Interviewer: Do you use computers at school?
M: Yes, but only Wednesday last lesson.

(12-13 year old girls at secondary school G)

On many occasions children speak of those who choose to spend a lot of time with PCs as being 'swots', 'boffs' or 'geeks'. Most children are only interested in PCs for certain purposes, such as typing essays, and do not want to be seen as boffins who take computing as an option.

Interviewer: I mean of your age, you know, who are the ones who really go for them?
H: The swots.
P: The computer whiz kids.
H: The swots.
Interviewer: So what's the difference between doing it in the computer class and doing it in other lessons?
P: Because when you're in a computer class and you're like doing it by yourself you feel like a geek... In English you can write what you want to write, not what the teacher tells you to write.
H: Yes, because in English if your handwriting's not good and you've got a good story you can type it onto a computer and it looks better.
P: You can spell check it.
H: Spell check it.
Interviewer: And you can spell check it, so it's got a purpose in English and that's better.

(15-16 year old boys from secondary school I)

Interviewer: Computer: what is the first thing that comes into your head? Just shout it out.
L: Typing.
F: Work.
R: Boff.
Interviewer: OK, and 'boff' means what?
R: Someone who enjoys computers.
F: Clever, enjoys doing work.
Interviewer: OK, anything else that comes into your head?
L: Boring.
Interviewer: Anything positive you want to say about computers?
F: It's useful.
R: Helps you with your work.
F: Future.

(15-16 year old girls in secondary school J)

Interviewer: So what's the first thing, what would you use it for?
R: Homework.

Interviewer: <B>, do you see this as basically a homework machine?
B: I see it as boring, pointless having one.
(15 year old boy at secondary school M)

Of course, there are some children who express how much they enjoy using computers at school, like the following 12-13 year old girls (secondary school M). These are exceptions however.

E: I love computers... I haven't physically got one, so on Open Evenings at the school. . . .
N: I would sometimes have to go in and show how to use the pictures and all those things.
A: Yes, I like them.
Interviewer: Tell me what you like about computers.
E: Drawing and...
A: I like getting information.
A: At my old school we had one and I liked it, it had like this girl who talked to you, wrote on the screen about history, the Second World War. Like you could go forward and she'd be in the garden, things like that, and you'd find out lots of things about her family and stuff.

8.6 TEACHERS' VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

Despite their general enthusiasm for IT in schools, IT teachers would probably find little of the above surprising. Their frustrations with the present situation were clearly revealed when we asked them about their hopes for the future. There are three overwhelming requests: better teacher training, more technical back-up, and more money.

Teacher: Staff would have the luxury of the time to be totally familiar with IT themselves. I have no time to get familiar with everything, we need to get familiar to get the confidence...it is important that it is a usable tool that teachers are very familiar with. Once this is done the children will be more familiar with it as a tool…
Interviewer: And if I had to say your worst case scenario..?
Teacher: To carry on with no support or money for developments. There are developments every year and the government thinks that the same money can cover everything and it can't.
(Primary school C)

Well my ideal situation would be that everyone would feel more proficient. We have to start there, we need to feel confident about teaching it. It would also be nice to have an extra pair of hands for some computer packages and to have more than one computer in the class. The most important thing is the training. There is no point having equipment around and it not being used.
(Primary school D)

Within the next twelve months I want this school to be fully networked and every department to have as many or as few (computers) as they want…the downside is the ability to manage it. It is very difficult for me to cope with all of it, I mean I am supposed to be a teacher. I can see me needing another technician.
(Secondary school G)

I would like to see a situation where every child has access to computers easily. I would like to see a situation where we had the number of technicians that we need to keep the computers in optimum condition. And obviously enough teachers who knew a sufficient amount about computers to be able to

> incorporate it fully in their subjects, in a confident way, that would be the best thing. I do not want to see computers just sitting in one place. Computers are a tool and should be used that way, integrated into all subjects, it should not be a separate subject.
>
> (Secondary school J)

> It comes down to money. I think the budgets are getting less and less all the time and we are expected to do more and more with it.

> I would rather see more qualified teachers in school, it is teachers that matter.
>
> (Primary school E)

8.7 SUMMARY

The previous chapters have shown how school provides pupils with broadly equivalent access to computers, with no differences by social class and few differences by gender, hence equalising those inequalities which exist in access at home.[3] In this chapter we draw on interviews with IT teachers and their pupils to explore the quality of that access and the difficulties which face teachers in introducing IT into the classroom.

What is most noticeable is that the resources in shortest supply are the teachers and technicians who can plan, research, teach and maintain IT in schools. In primary schools especially, teachers take on this responsibility alongside several others, usually because of their interest rather than prior expertise, and training is particularly difficult to find or arrange. Possibly as a result, teachers' attitudes towards IT vary from considerable enthusiasm through to a range of doubts about its educational value - particularly given the time it takes up - or even resistance to change. In relation to both training and equipment (to the extent that these are available), there are often difficulties - of time, money or motivation - which mean that resources are not always used effectively.

Primary schools tend to have rather out-of-date equipment in the classroom, with more up-to-date machines in specialised areas (e.g. library). Secondary schools are much better equipped, though they often feel unsupported in their decisions about what to buy. Some are working hard to get commercial sponsorship, which constrains the equipment they can then purchase. As for software, IT teachers seem to be working out for themselves, often through trial and error, which software is actually useful in the classroom. The key criterion is whether or not the software supports the national curriculum, but this can be hard to determine in advance, especially at primary school level.

While many schools are planning to get Internet access as 'the next thing', they are not always clear what value it will be or why it should take such high priority. If introducing computers into the classroom seems to add as many pressures as it provides advantages to already overworked teachers, this is likely to be even more true for the Internet. As those pupils with Internet experience explain, clear direction from teachers is needed (see also Chapter 7). If this is not forthcoming, the promise of independent research can lead to disappointment and frustration for both teachers and pupils.

Generally, more secondary pupils than primary pupils have access to the school computers outside class time and/or in after-school computer clubs. However, for the most part, computer games are banned in school, or at least heavily restricted, although game playing- in school or at home - may encourage confidence with computers.

Teachers observe clear gender differences: boys are more confident than girls with computers, though not necessarily always more skilful in using them. While teachers report various strategies to overcome such differences, their pupils often feel that teachers's own expectations are themselves part of the problem. Girls also stress the lack of computer games which appeal to them and the greater confidence with computers which boys gain simply by playing computer games.

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[3] An important qualification is that here we rely on accounts of access and use of 'computers', with no information about the quality, cost or specification of the computers available in different schools.

The advantage for school work of having a computer at home is disputed. While parents may have acquired, or hope to acquire a computer at home to support their child's school work, teachers tend to think that having a computer at home makes little difference to the child's school work. They also feel it is only fair to ignore the possibility that some children have a computer at home, considering that the home computer generates problems either of inequalities across pupils or of incompatability with school facilities. However, the survey data shows little difference in children's attitudes to computers according to whether or not they have a computer at home. Indeed, those who only have access to a computer at home hold rather less positive attitudes to computers than those who also have access at school.

There is a considerable discrepancy between IT teachers' enthusiasm for the introduction of computers into schools and their pupils' assessment of both the standard of equipment available and the uses made of it in the classroom. While in a few cases, home computers fail to live up to the standards of school computers, for the majority of pupils with a computer at home, the opposite is the case. By comparison with home machines, school computers are often seen as boring, out-of-date, lacking in options, and only useful or available for rather few classroom tasks.

Teachers are highly aware of the difficulties of introducing IT into classrooms, and their wish list for the future stresses the need for more teacher training, more technical back-up, and more money.

In the light of these findings, we end with some suggestions. First, efforts should be directed towards integrating IT into the curriculum. Pupils tend to see IT lessons as occasional events, separate from their other subjects, while IT teachers report difficulties in enthusing the subject specialists and in integrating IT into the rest of the curriculum.

In order to convince those teachers who are still sceptical, the educational benefits of IT need to be clarified. We note that teachers and parents are often not clear about the educational benefits (work-related skills, individually-paced work, special needs teaching). Without a clear justification, many teachers may remain unenthusiastic. For example, getting the Internet is widely expected to be 'the next thing' but accounts of the potential gain remain unconvincing.

There is also a case to be made for building on parental involvement. As PCs at home become more commonplace, we need to explore how teachers can respond positively to experiences gained at home and parental support. This is not to forget that in schools, there is a need to address inequalities earlier. Much IT teaching begins in secondary school, by which age girls are already turning away from 'technology' and middle-class children may have already gained several years' experience with computers at home. With such issues in mind, teachers may like to consider a modification of negative attitudes to computer game playing. If free play on computers develops confidence and skills in using computers for more 'serious' purposes, policies which restrict game playing even outside class may be counter-effective.

Finally, bearing in mind the already onerous responsibilities of teachers, it should be noted that there are other locations outside the home whose potential for redressing social inequalities in access should be welcomed. For example, a culture of IT provision in libraries can be created, which appeals to young people across divides of age, gender and social class.

CHAPTER 9

EXPERIENCES OF THE NEW MEDIA USERS

9.1 INTRODUCTION

What is the experience of going to cybercafés? What are the experiences of users in the small number of state and private schools which are 'wired' up for significant levels of Internet access? This chapter is devoted to a targeted investigation of young people at the forefront of what may become a more common use of new media in public places.

We have thus far focussed on the main two locations where children and young people are currently gaining access to new computer-based media - the home and the school. As Table 7.2c shows, other places for using computers, multimedia, email or Internet facilities are rare (in this respect, Britain stands in contrast to American and Scandinavia, for example, where public access through cybercafés and libraries is more common). Of course, libraries - currently identified by the Government as a locus for future Internet access - represent truly public places, while cybercafés are commercial sites, continuing the strong association in many young people's minds between the Internet and cost.

In this chapter the research is exploratory in nature, raising rather than resolving questions. As only one child in our entire sample had used the Internet in a library, and only seven had used it in a cybercafé, such locations are not easily explored through a sample survey and so we turn to more qualitative research (see Appendix 1.2). Moreover, as argued in Chapter 1, any investigation of Internet use by young people is, for the present, an investigation of the early adopters of these new media, making them an unrepresentative group. It is no accident, therefore, that London has more cybercafés than elsewhere, and that our wired schools included private as well as state schools. It is also no accident, though unfortunate, that all our interviewees in the cybercafé, bar two, were teenage boys.

9.2 GAME-PLAYING IN THE CYBERCAF_

We chose the cybercafés for our research carefully, for the culture of many of these excludes children and young people, and it is the minority which specifically welcome and thus contain children and young people. For some, but not all, of these young people, the cybercafé is the only place where they have Internet access, although many of these are hoping to get the Internet at home, now they know what it can do.

9.2.1 The culture of the cybercafé

> Just a kind of day out.
> (14 year-old boy in a cybercafé)

Such a prosaic description of a technologically new leisure location makes sense because primarily, the attraction of the cybercafé is not the technology itself, though the speed of the games is much appreciated and the fact that these facilities are rarely available at home is obviously the justification for going. But what young people stress as central to the experience is the social context - the cameraderie, the shared playing, the communicative dimension of the cybercafé. This supports our earlier argument (Chapter 4) that while children and young people are enthusiastic about the new media, they are even more enthusiastic about sharing new media with their friends. The image of the lone child playing computer games addictively is not one of their making.

J: At home playing computers you can have two players, but here it's 16 players, so it's a lot more fun.

D: It's a lot smoother than playing at home, and playing against other people and you can talk to them.

Interviewer: On line or off line?

D: On line.

(15 year-old boys in a cybercafé)

At home I've only got one computer, so playing against the computer is not much fun at all.

(14 year-old boy)

What is also important about the cybercafé is that it is an outdoors leisure activity, not 'staying at home':

Interviewer: What do you think you would be doing instead if you weren't here?

D: Just sitting at home I suppose.

Interviewer: Right, and that would be different in what way?

D: Well the fact I wouldn't be playing against other people, unless I used the phone line which costs quite a lot... I mean, when I play someone else we always have like little jokes, have little conversations while we're fighting, it's more fun.

(15 year-old boy in a cybercafé)

And if they couldn't go to the cybercafé any more, what would they miss?

F: The games against my friends probably.

Interviewer: And if it wasn't here what do you think you would be doing instead.

F: I think I'd go rollerblading because I do that quite a lot

(14 year-old boy)

A: Just socialising really in general, because I mean you wouldn't be able to come and say let's all play and kill each other for fun, I mean it just sounds stupid...

J: Also when you come here it's not only this and then you go home after 2 hours, you also go to the Trocadero, Piccadilly Circus, Leicester Square, see a movie or something as well... so it's a fun day out as well.

A: I mean, if this wasn't here I suppose I'd just be sitting at home just playing Quake on my own.

(15 year-old boys in a cybercafé)

As one boy quips, when asked what he'd do if the cybercafé were not there: 'I'd find another one, I'd go to that'.

What are these social contacts in the cybercafé? In the main, young people take their 'real' ie off-line friendships into the cybercafé, rather than forming new contacts or, even less common, wholly virtual friendships.

Interviewer: How do you know these friends?

J: They're in my class...Because we live quite a while away, we usually go with friends.

(15 year-old boy in a cybercafé)

M: You wouldn't come on your own, I wouldn't come on my own.

Interviewer: Because?

A: It's more fun to talk to each other and see what the other people are doing.

(14 year-old boys)

Interviewer: Tell me first about <this cybercafé>, how did you first hear about it?

A: Well I've been here once before, and my friend <D> over there, he just said do you want to go to an Internet café just to have a look what it's like before you go it, so I said yes and I came here, and I loved it, so I told my friends and we all came back today.

(14 year-old boy)

As another boy, 15, points out, after the cybercafé game-playing, the group of friends then talk about what they've done:

> Who won, who lost, things like that, how many times people missed each other and that, all stuff like that, and why people keep exiting.

Very often, then, the friendships come first, and the cybercafé provides a new location for socialising. As these two 14 year old boys, new to the cybercafé, comment:

> It's different from, you don't come here every week, whereas you play football every week so it's something different. It's been good so far.
>
> (14 year-old boy)

> I've only ever been here once so far anyway, but I'm sure I'll come back, but if I get it at home then there won't be the need to, but if my friends coming out and saying do you want to come with, I'll go with, yes. You can get a lot of stuff here which you can't get at my house, like games, and stuff like that, but our friend over there, he's actually got it at home and he comes here.
>
> (14 year-old boy)

9.2.2 Locally networked, multi-player games

The teenage boys we talked to - for it was they who were in the cybercafés - were far more likely to be playing locally networked games than games via the Internet. The point for them was that the games were familiar, fun and fast (certainly much faster than games on the Internet). They would plan a trip to the cybercafé together rather as on another occasion they might plan to go to the cinema.

Getting the social mix right can be tricky though, for while some are glad to have anyone come along - the more people, the more fun, for others having less skilled players can be tiresome as 'they keep asking you how to do stuff, it just gets on your nerves'. Nonetheless it is better playing with those you know that those you don't know, for the associated communication is more fun: 'you think, yes I killed someone, and you look up and it will tell you who you've just killed, you think, yes, and you type them a message'.

The experience of playing computer games they describe in terms of total immersion (Laurel, 1993). As Skirrow (1986:126) argues, interactivity involves a radical shift in the positioning of the subject or user from the third person to the first: 'the reader has become a performer'. In other words, unlike in the third person experience of spectatorship and identification in the cinema (or in much television also), in the video game 'the first and third person are almost totally identified' (p.130) and so 'we do not identify with someone else's satisfaction, we expect to experience it' (p.128). The shift is nicely captured by the questions commonly asked by the confused audience, a shift from the 'what's happening?' of the television viewer to the 'where am I?' of the participant and co-creator of the cyberworld.

When watching the children play these games, the interviewer sometimes became confused by the speed of action on the screen. But for the player, 'it's quite easy to follow the screen and everything and where you are, after you've been around the level once or twice you just know where you are all the time'.

J: It's first person perspective, so you look through the eyes of a player, and you run around all these like Gothic corridors and these very dark places, and there's

like little weapons that spin around when you're eaten, and you pick them up and you get things like things that fire nails at people or rockets, and you walk around trying to find someone, pick up armour or whatever, and then as soon as you see someone, you see them running across, they're usually wearing bright colours so, you basically fire at them, the thing is you can hide round corners, and sometimes you can, the problem is if you're running away they just stand there waiting to shoot.

Interviewer: And what's the best thing about this game?

J: Well the freedom of movement I suppose, other games are restricted, you couldn't jump, you couldn't jump up and down, in this one you can do almost anything.

(Boy, 15, cybercafé)

Nonetheless, the 'I' is itself up for definition and fragmentation. Watching one teenage boy playing the game, he comments:

B: One of my friends just calls himself God when he's playing.

Interviewer: So you're asking God to start a game? And who's Lesser Train?

B: That's me, I have a lot of names, I mean usually I have sort of, Inertia's my favourite.

Interviewer: Inertia?

B: Yes, everyone knows me by that, but I sometimes use difficult names so they don't know who I am.

Interviewer: Oh, you've created that look for yourself have you?

B: Yes, you can only change the colour a certain amount.

Interviewer: And who's Reaper?

B: That's another of my friends who's in it.

This boy describes himself offline as 'one of the geeks', someone who 'in real life is not very much the type to think about', but on-line he's skilled at computers: 'it's like you're a different person'.

His friend, 'Reaper', then explains:

I mean this sort of changes your character, I mean you act as, because I'm called Reaper in this, I'm actually playing Reaper, I'm not actually myself, I'm sort of someone else, it sounds weird but I sort of think of myself as someone else, it's in a different world, I'm somewhere else at the moment, I'm not actually in this room just, whatever, just playing a game.

(15 year-old boy)

While their talk is in terms of the boundaries of control - being in control provided they are on their toes, staying alert - there is no talk of challenging the parameters of the game. As LaFrance (1996:306) cautions, in jumping 'onto the stage, destroying the symbolic separation between the stage and the public...the individual takes command of the gameware and is himself subjected to its hold, just as the driver of a motor-race becomes a pilot constrained by the rules of the machine, the environment, the actions of others, and so forth'.

Young people are sometimes critical of the slowness or inflexibility of the games,[1] since such

[1]Here talking in the domestic context, this 13 year old girl also makes a common criticism when she notes the relative inflexibility of computer games compared with 'real life': "At home I've got a game of monopoly on the computer that we've had for ages, and because like me and my brother went through this phase where we had to play Monopoly, it was like we were basically obsessed with it when we were about 11 years old, and like so we got, our parent bought us this computer game, yes, but it gets a bit like, we had fun on it playing against the computer characters it's a bit like, and they all play by the rules as well. You can cheat in a real game, which is better."

deficiencies detract from the pleasure to be obtained from them, a pleasure which, as noted above, derives from the immersive experience. By comparison with other media, however, the cybercafé games offer relatively more flexibility:

> You're restricted in the cinema aren't you. You can only watch the cinema, you can't exactly go and say, oh let's, I don't like this film, let's switch it over, whereas with here you can change to another game and play that.
>
> (15 year-old boy in a cybercafé)

They invite the development of new skills:

> You can express your feelings in this, you can really like get into it and just sort of think, right, how can I be funny by typing something?
>
> (15 year-old boy)

And they offer considerable pleasures:

> Now I'm sort of more alive, more free to do what I want, and just generally, I don't know, I suppose I become more of a comedian, I don't know why. I just sort of get a chance to express my feelings more than, I don't know why but, it's just the way it goes...I sort of feel like, to be able to chuck out my anxiety and things, and all my stress that's built up over the past few weeks or whatever at school and things like that, so it's sort of a stress reducer, I don't know.
>
> (15 year-old boy)

However, as a social game, there are implicit rules to regulate play among participants.

Interviewer:	Do you mind who you're killing?
G:	Not really.
Interviewer:	Do you think, oh yes, I want to get him, or?
G:	No, it's not really, it's only if one person's getting really really far ahead of everyone else and killing everyone else, you think, you send a message saying everybody get this person.
Interviewer:	Oh I see, and then you all gang up do you?
G:	Yes, to make it slightly more fair.

(15 year-old boy in a cybercafé)

These rules also apply in on-line communication (see later):

> Because he was, I don't know what he did that time, but sometimes when people swear they get kicked straight away and stuff like that, and he's just set a ban now, he's banning his address so if he wants to come back on he's going to be banned which is going to be a bit difficult coming back on.
>
> (14 year-old boy)

9.2.3 Safe places for kids?

The cybercafés we visited manage 'inappropriate' content through a system of front and back rooms, with X-rated material available in the back rooms to which children have no access. Nonetheless, even in the main, front area, all screens are visible, there is little control over where children 'go' on the Internet; thus material judged unsuitable by adults may well be available to them. Moreover, many of the multiplayer action games (*Quake, Duke Nuk'em 3D, Doom*), contain images of nudity, bondage, and violence against women in particular.

The friendly, welcoming culture of the cybercafé which managers and users are trying to create mitigates against any idea of regulation or control over access. Young people may of course self-censor what they wish to see - some reported trying to avoid X-rated material, but we did not come

across anyone who admitted to being disturbed or distressed by what they had seen. Their main argument was that such material is available in some form or other in society, and thus there is nothing unique about the Internet. And as often found with other media (especially television and video), young people report more concern for younger children than for themselves.

> This murderer who murdered a husband and wife and chopped them up. It showed you how they did it. It shouldn't be allowed on the Internet, but it's quite good.
>
> (15 year-old boy in a cybercafé)

> It [pornography] doesn't bother anyone, not us anyway.
>
> (School sixth former)

> If I found something nasty or rude, I wouldn't really care. I've been exposed to that kind of thing. I think every teenager is. It doesn't really matter.
>
> (15 year-old boy in a cybercafé)

> News groups are uncensored, that's why I don't like them much. I've been to news groups, and they say quite rude things without getting stopped...mainly swearing and being really offensive to others.
>
> (14 year-old boy in a cybercafé)

> A lot of teenagers don't really care. I mean some people find it [adult material] but they don't tend to look for it, if they find it they'll sort of go, hum, they'll see it and they'll delete it or something. Sometimes they collect the things just because they're not supposed to.
>
> (15 year-old boy in a cybercafé)

We have to question, of course, how honest our respondents were, and in the interviews, we had to tread carefully for ethical reasons. However, some young people did admit seeing material not intended for them:

Interviewer:	What about things on the Internet that you shouldn't see, I mean have you come across like that?
A:	I won't lie, I'll say yes.
Interviewer:	So can you tell me what you've seen, and did you go out looking for it or did you just come across it?
A:	No, it's just there, I mean you'll be surprised, I mean it's just so easily accessible because-
J:	They make these advertisements.
A:	I mean there's advertisements with borders on the top of the screen that says click here to see like-
A:	Just to have fun and things, I mean it's just so easily accessible, I mean you might type in, I don't look for a name, Emma, just to look for something like a superstar or something, and it will come up with all this list, and it says hot pics of Emma, and it's just so easy.
Interviewer:	So both of you have actually seen pornography on the Internet then.
A:	Yes
J:	Yes.
Interviewer:	And would you say it's hard core, soft core...
A:	Everything.
J:	It's everything.

(15 year-old boys)

Interviewer: You hear things like people get recipes for building bombs and all sorts of things, do you ever come across anything like that?

F: They're like pirate sites, and unless someone tells you where they are then they're really hard to come across.

Interviewer: Right they're more hard to come across than perhaps the pornography sites.

F: Yes, the pornography sites are quite well, you can type into a search engine programme, pornography and it'll come up with tons of that. With building bombs you're going to get nothing.

(14 year-old boy)

Interestingly, the public nature of the cybercafé itself introduces a degree of self-censorship:

> Maybe if I was at home I would try to look up them ['adult sites'], but not in public. Like, when you've only got say 2 hours and you want to make the most of it.
>
> (14 year-old boy in a cybercafé)

The same boy also shows the effectiveness of parental supervision at home, for when asked what stops him searching out such material at home he says:

> Things like if you get the bill back it's got what sites you've been on.

The ratings for games, on the other hand, are known but not necessarily taken note of:

S: *Duke Nuk'em*, that's an 18.

Interviewer Is it? What's an 18 game?

S: You shoot all the naked women in it.

Interviewer: Is *Quake* an 18?

S: *Quake*'s a 15 because you see all the blood and everything.

Interviewer: And have you come across *Duke Nuk'em*?

S: I've played it...at my friend's house.

Interviewer: I see, and your friend is 18 or under 18?

S: No, that's the thing. It's a bit stupid putting ratings like that on it because you know if someone wants it the parents will just go out and buy it.

Interviewer: Tell me about *Duke Nukem*, what makes this an 18 game?

S: In one scene it's got a naked woman sort of like being chained all over the snakes and everything, and you have to shoot her or I can't remember...You've just got the guns like *Doom*, and you just go round shooting people, it's like really gruesome and blood goes all over the screen and stuff.

(14 year-old boy in a cybercafé)

Certainly these 14 and 15 year olds were talking about, and playing, these games in the cybercafé.

9.3 THE 'WIRED GENERATION' AT SCHOOL

9.3.1 The Internet at school

Of the various analogies used by children and young people to understand the Internet, only those of the computer and encyclopaedia already have a recognised role in the classroom. So, how is the Internet used in class? In the main, those we interviewed at school about the Internet do not have Internet access at home, though a few have used it at their father's workplace. Thus, this experience in the school is their primary experience, and much rests on the teachers, though the information thus available clearly has its own thrill.

> Mr B, who is our physics teacher, he looks up stuff that shows us, and then we look at it.

> You can use a telescope connected to the Internet and you can see the pictures of the stars in the galaxy.
>
> The information comes straight from NASA.

A year 10 group (aged 14-15) at a state comprehensive school with Internet access echoed many of the views described earlier. We pushed them rather further on how the Internet was used as part of the teaching. The main use was on school projects, where the story was one of time-consuming searches, errors and confusion:

> It's annoying, you spend ages and ages trying to look for something and then you don't get it in the end, like you spend a whole double lesson and you've got no work and you have to do it in your own spare time, you do it another way, like go to the library or something.

It is a moot point whether these frustrating experiences actually serve an educational advantage - teaching independent research skills - or not, but for the pupils, while the Internet sounds exciting, in practice there are a fair number who are put off by the experience.

Like those at the private school, these state school pupils have also made their own home pages, searched according to all their main interests, and researched their school projects.

> As we said, we did the drugs thing, and when we was trying to create our home page we had to visit other schools' home pages, and that was it. Films, we found lots of different kinds of, thought it might be interesting to have a look, but it didn't tell you anything about it.

But they talk little about specific guidance from teachers, and one gets the impression that this independent research is just a little too independent:

> When I was doing a project on drugs and I had to look up [ ], our science teacher, I told her I couldn't find nothing, our science teacher gave me addresses and things.. But even then she didn't
>
> know what was going on, she didn't know, she just said, well just copy someone else.

Moreover, the information eventually gained may be suspect (though again, perhaps the critical skills applied to the Internet are themselves worth acquiring):

> It can be more reliable to go to the library, because when you think about it anybody can write something on the Internet, and it could basically be a load of rubbish written by a 2 year old, and like with books they have to go through a publisher and everything, so what's actually written down is true.

Other pupils find the Internet much more satisfactory:

> It saves reading through all these books.
>
> It was very helpful in my science project.
>
> It's quite amazing how much information is on there.
>
> Sometimes it's a little above you, but you just have to read it through, edit it.
>
> It is a lot of help with homework.

> It's updated regularly...books will be printed last year and they won't have what you want.
>
> Anything that's on the screen is up for grabs..it's like if you've got a book with a pair of scissors.
>
> With the Internet you can always write to them and email them and say what you think about what they say and with books you can't do that.
>
> It feels like the world is actually at your fingertips really.
>
> In the recent research project, like normally you'd think where am I going to get all this from, now it's just so easy, you just type in the, you type it in and you've got at least 100, even more, normally you get about 1000's of pages that are 100% relevant and then it tails off all the way down.
>
> It's like the Microsoft advert, 'where do you want to go today?', you know, because you can go anywhere, be anywhere, and be whoever you want.[2]

In this school, teachers book the 'Internet' room for classes when appropriate, and pupils are free also to use it at lunch times and after school, though there is some teacher supervision. It is used mainly in science, in IT lessons, and also in geography and some other subjects to a lesser extent.

Part of the frustration is the actuality when set against the claims the Internet is seen to represent. As some of these boys comment, using the Internet makes them feel:

> Unexpected, you're expecting to find something...sort of heightened anticipation, you know, I'm going to find something...and just like quite a let down when you find out that what you was expecting to find isn't actually there.

This ambivalence was captured when the boys were asked to select from a wide variety of words written on cards, how the Internet made them feel. They chose:

> Flippant, low, futuristic, anxious, lost, angry, small, powerless, part of a community, underground, suspended, serious, closed, distracted, frustrated, boring, adventurous, active, lazy, draining, bored, privileged, mischievous, curious, independent, sociable.

9.3.2 Information explosion?

Part of the reason for such ambivalent reactions lies in the strong sense of information overload. Both the cybercafé visitors and the school pupils offered similar comments regarding the use of the Internet to search for information. One very common view was as follows:

> It's [the Internet] pretty good if you're looking for something, but just to browse around it's almost impossible. You have to know what you're actually looking for. If you say I want to find out something about films like this or made by that person, it's quite easy, you just type it in and wait for it. It's not always that accurate, I mean we tried to get something from Star Wars the other day, and it came up with 5000 entries.
>
> (15 year-old boy, cybercafé)

---

[2] There is something of an irony in the welcome this child offers to the Microsoft slogan, given our earlier arguments (Chapter 4) about the physical restriction applied to young people's freedom to go wherever they want to. The virtual world, thus far anyway, is relatively more available, given the necessary technology.

> The problem is there's too much on there. If you do a search over all the places in the world, over one thing, you normally come out with 3000 differentplaces where you can go to, so you have to try and limit it down and that's where most of your time is spent.
>
> (15 year-old boy, cybercafé)

Thus while some express the excitement popularly heard about the Internet, many are pragmatic. When asked to describe the Internet, this 15 year old boy said:

> A: A bunch of PCs hooked up with ... there's no way to describe it really, it's just not something you describe, it's just there.
>
> Interviewer: Can you describe to me your experience of using the Internet?
>
> A: Using the Internet is slow and boring, but there is a lot of stuff to be there if you persevere... I mean you find something good once in a while but that's about it.
>
> (15 year-old boy, cybercafé)

When searching for information on the Internet in the cybercafé, unlike the more teacher-directed uses in school, young people generally follow up their prior interests, and these in turn stem largely from popular culture. This does not make the frustrations any less, however.

> Personally I don't know what I'm doing that much, I'm just looking up some things like *Capital Radio, Sky Sports*, and I'm going to look up the *X Files* in a minute.
>
> (14 year-old boy, cybercafé)

> Basically I'm looking up my favourite football team Arsenal, looking at their web page. The problem is you like think at home you think of oh I'm going to look up all this and all this and then when you get to come here you forget what you were going to do, and then you can't think... The best thing is really talking to people.
>
> (14 year-old boy, cybercafé)

Not all sites are successful, and frustrations with the Internet are as common as satisfactions.

> It can take quite a while to down load the pictures and things like that, so that's why some people get rid of the pictures completely so that they can just look at the text, I just think that gets a bit boring after a while... You get so many things about like one, one topic you want to look up that you don't know which one to go into, and it might waste time for yourself if it's not the right one.
>
> (14 year-old boy, cybercafé)

> I think a lot of the pages on here are disappointingbecause the problem is there are so many of them and it takes quite a while to get into them, so most of them are a bit disappointing because you want to keep on going and looking up other stuff, and there's not really much to do on the actually web pages. But it's still alright though, if you want to look up something that you need to find out or something. Like if you haven't got an encyclopaedia at home you can use, look it up on here and then it'll give you like a load of stuff. Like if you wanted to find out about *The Beatles*, then they've got loads of stuff on here.
>
> (14 year-old boy, cybercafé)

As one 15 year old cynic, when asked 'in an ideal world what would the Internet be like?', quipped 'in an ideal world, you wouldn't need the Internet'. In this respect, the Internet is not unlike the slightly earlier medium of interactive teletext where, as we noted in Chapter 2, the variety of

information is attractive but not sustaining, and the user quickly moves on to something else - on the Internet, to communication with others, on teletext, to games.

However, the 'show-off' potential of the Internet for these early users is not lost on them:

> It probably makes me feel more grown up because, like I've read up about this quite a lot, I know quite a bit about it... It's just good because you can speak to people at school about it, other people, not your parents, not my parents, they don't know a thing about it.
>
> (14 year-old boy, cybercafé)

And a few young people make use of the more creative aspects of the Internet. Here a 14 year old boy shows the interviewer his home page:

> I look at dates for games up loads. First instalment of satellite news. Actually I am going to do this eventually, if you don't want to read any of these you could look at my index page which is where we've just been, and then you can put your comments on there and send them, then you could vote for, you just put D3D there and press send, you can return to the top of the page, and at the moment this is basically about making a big address book, that bit, so you could like find someone in there whose ready to play. I've already had about 300 emails to add into the address book, so next update I'm going to make a massive address book. People type in type of player, player game, *Quake*, and then they'll come up with a list of people who want to play *Quake* at that time and stuff.
>
> (14 year-old boy, cybercafé)

This privately educated boy has been on the Internet for about 3 years, and he tells the same kind of story about the shift from new uses to familiar uses that we saw earlier (Chapter 6) for other media:

> The first year I was browsing and the 2nd year was doing the designing web page, the last 2 years have just been chat.
>
> (14 year-old boy)

9.3.3 Experienced Internetters

We pursued the question of how young people experienced with the Internet made use of both informational and communicative opportunities further at the 'wired' up schools that we visited.

One group of 12 year old boys, at a private boarding school, proved to be experienced on the Internet and able to articulate for us its strengths and weaknesses. When asked what the Internet is, one says:

> It's a collection of computers which create a pool of information which anyone with a computer and a modem, can log into and gain information from that pool.

And as another adds:

> All the latest knowledge is all there instead of saying going to the post office to post your letter, going into Cybercafé to play games, going to a fax machine to fax, you just go on the Internet and do all that.

This group readily pour out a variety of uses of the Internet:

> If you know how to use it you can have your social life connected to it.

> You can look up information about things, but you do need to know where to look for it.
>
> Not necessarily using the Internet but using a modem you can play games down the line.
>
> It's like direct information, you just press the frame and you get it all out instead of getting books.
>
> If you were a company and you wanted to advertise what you sell then you can send less junk if you have the addresses.
>
> It's a bit like a virtual office, I mean you can find information, you can sort the information, and you can also meet people which is obviously important to any business.

This very competent account of the resources of the Internet is accompanied by a fair assessment of the costs:

> All the time it takes to download takes time.
>
> .
>
> Also you don't kind of get out so much.
>
> In some ways it can become addictive.
>
> Your social life on the computer is not the same.
>
> They're not doing constructive things, they're just using the information that is already there.
>
> Some people might not understand what they were given.
>
> If you download something that someone else has got then you get the virus.
>
> It's quite an expensive way of doing it.

As one sums up, speaking for many:

> You need to have a lot of time to actually do some work on the Internet. You need to know where to look. Once you've found the information, it's very easy to go back to it, but it takes time to narrow down what you're looking for. You can't just go straight to it.

Nonetheless, these are confident users who feel positive, if realistic, about the Internet. When asked how they feel using it they say:

> It's just a big world.
>
> You're in control.
>
> There's a lot of choice that you have.
>
> It's like an alternative life.

When we asked them to liken the Internet to 'anything else you do', they offer a variety of analogies:

It's like computers.

It's like teletext.

It's a mixture of an encyclopaedia and telephone.

Information machine, game playing.

Perhaps the most interesting comparison at present is with watching television, given uncertainty over the future of such innovations as web-TV. As one boy says, 'I don't watch telly that much now because I've got time to go on the computer. I don't use teletext at all'. His friend agrees:

> At home I've got this rule that I'm allowed 4 hours on television and computer and at the moment I tend to spend more hours on the computer and none on television. And I think if I got the Internet I'd probably not watch any television.

They then debate the difference between these two kinds of screen:

> I think I would probably disagree with that - that the computer will replace television because they're different things. You'd use the computer for information for a social life and playing games, but television is actually, it's something happening that doesn't involve you. You can sit down and relax and just watch it, you don't actually have to think about it. With a computer you've got to think about what you're doing because it's usually interactive, whereas a television you're actually just sitting there and watching it. There is a line between the two. You can't say that one will fully replace the other at the moment.

9.4 COMMUNICATING ON THE INTERNET

9.4.1 New kinds of communication?

As the following quote illustrates, the content of on-line conversation is prosaic, even banal, though the newness of the medium, and the possibilities of playing with the form of communication - especially with those far away - gives this prosaic conversation an exciting and new charm. As with the telephone (Chapter 2), protection from the difficulties of face-to-face communication is also attractive.

Interviewer:	So what sorts of things would you talk about on a chat line?
A:	Anything, anything at all.
M:	Like where you're from, what's the type of weather like, and things like that, how old and stuff like that.
Interviewer:	So basically you're telling them about yourself.
A:	Yes.
Interviewer:	And they're telling you about themselves.
A:	Yes.
Interviewer:	And then where does it go from there, once you know basic things about yourselves, what sort of subjects would you talk about?
M:	What are you doing today, stuff like that ... talk about films things like that, what's happening in that side of the world or something like that, things like that.
Interviewer:	And do you find that you talk about different things on a chat line compared to if you're with your mates at school or-
A:	Definitely.
Interviewer:	How are they different?

M: On the chat lines normally you can, like America, they're normally from America, so it's completely different, different words, different meanings, things like that, and there's also people that know more Internet jargon, things like that, or they don't know as much as you, things like that.

Interviewer: And is it a different feeling talking over the Internet to somebody in America compared to talking to your friend down the road?

M: I think it's more fun, like, I don't know, you don't actually know what they're going to say, because it takes a little while to get across, and you can write anything you like basically, whereas you couldn't like when you're just speaking to someone down the street, like your friends.

Interviewer: In what way?

M: Like you've got to be careful not to be too offensive... because you don't like really want to be out of order to them, but if they're like horrible to you, you normally respond back, and you can also exit whenever you want, like you just speak to someone else, you can't be bothered to speak to them.

(14 year-old boy)

As many have commented with some concern, this protection from the constraints and visibility of face-to-face conversation allows the virtual communicator to depart from honesty altogether:

M: Here you can lie, like you could ask someone their age, and if they said 18, you could say you're 18 as well and they wouldn't know any different.

Interviewer: So when you're on a chat line on the Internet do you ever put yourself across as being slightly different to the way you are in real life?

M: Yes.

A: Yes definitely.

Interviewer: In what ways?

A: Age, like if you're going on there for a laugh, like you'd lie, you'd just say something like you're a female something like that, because they wouldn't know.

(14 year-old boys)

Though for some, this lack of visibility has real advantages:

No, it has no racial boundaries, it has no character, well it does have a bit of a character boundary, but you can change it, you can be someone else, not that I'm someone else but...

(14 year-old boy)

When reflecting on on-line communication, these experienced young people tend to be realistic about the Internet, and it is too crude to divide them into users and rejectors. Rather they tend to be critical users, enjoying the new possibilities but aware of the limitations:

J: I'd rather just get a couple of friends and go some where, I'd rather meet people rather than talk to someone-

A: I mean I'm not that interested with talking to someone from America, I mean I think wow, I mean what's the point, I mean all I can find out is what the weather's like, but I mean talking in general over the Internet isn't-

J: You can talk to each other if you know who you're talking to and they live nearby.

A: And you know what they like.

J: And you might meet them up and then you can like joke about it the next day when you see them, but if it's just from someone in Australia you can't exactly go and meet them-

A: I mean they could be someone, they could be some psychotic-

J: Maniac yes.

A: Just typing on the computer saying he's a woman when he's actually a man.
(15 year-old boys)

For those who do make on-line friends, these relationships are not sealed off from the off-line world, for young people seek out connections:

Interviewer: So have you built up a feeling for what all these people are like?
F: Yes, well I know a few of them, F is a member of the Shotgun Posse, I don't know him yet because I haven't been in there yet, <C> I know, she's a bit, she's really uptight, when you say one thing bad about her she can blow a fuse quite easily.
Interviewer: Right.
F: S is quite nice, I've spoken to him for a long time, my best, I've got 2 friends on here, H, whose not on here at the moment, and one called A whose also not here. I'm meeting him next Sunday.
Interviewer: You're meeting him here next Sunday, so you get to, you do actually get to physically meet them too sometimes?
F: Yes.
(14 year-old boy)

9.4.2 Email, flirtation and the 'closed community'

In this last section, we pursue the communication potential of the new media. For while the above pursues the question of information availability on the Internet, most young people think of the Internet first in terms of communication. This is even more the case for email.

In the private boarding school we found a lively email community. These teenagers check their email daily, 'morning, break, lunchtime, after school ... it's sort of addictive in a way'. What's interesting is that face-to-face communication is almost impossible to avoid in the closed community of a boarding school. Yet instead of talking directly to each other,

> ... everybody just runs when our prep bell goes, everybody just runs to the computer room to see who can get there the first... at break time everybody is in the computer room.
> (14 year-old girl)

There would seem to be two reasons for this, and both relate to the comparison with older media. One is the continual chatting among the girls, which we can compare with traditional habits of letter writing (which as we showed in Chapter 5 is most common among teenage girls). Given its availability, these girls favour email for being 'more personal' and 'more immediate':

> It feels as though you're actually talking to them in a way, that's the way I feel, you get really excited, like quick, send it, waiting for them to write back.
> (14 year-old girl)

> At the bottom it says you have mail, which means you've already got mail but you've read it already, or it says you've got new mail, and that's quite like exciting thinking who's it from, you know.
> (13 year-old girl)

The second reason follows from our earlier discussion about the telephone, which commonly among this age group is discussed as a means of controlling difficult or embarrassing interactions, especially those between boys and girls. Even more than the telephone, which at least controls the face-work of an interaction, email allows for more careful management of difficult girl-boy conversations, although this applies to difficult relations among girls also:

> Every break, lunch, it's like quick we've got to get to the email, I want to see who's written to me, whatever. It's good if you want to express your emotions

> to someone you don't like or something, you can just write to them because it's private, no one else reads it. It's good....If you had an argument with a friend and you want to make up to them but you don't want to go up to her face or something, you can just write to her and say can we make up, and then she can't go round saying so and so told me this and that. Or if you want to go up to a boy...
>
> (14 year-old girl)

Having provided free access to email, this school would appear to have shifted the locus of teenage flirtation from face-to-face communication to on-line communication:

> Well you just get like... I don't know, people that kind of use it use it to like, they'd rather not say it to your face so they say it to you on a computer. Like I asked this bloke out, yes, and then, [giggles] and he said, he basically went on the computer saying no, so like ... I would have been deadly embarrassed if he'd actually come up to me and like...
>
> (13 year-old girl)

This 17 year old boy agrees:

> Email acts as a good sort of interface because there's often hang-ups, especially in the south. Now, I'm from the north. Especially in the south there's often hang-ups in communication between males and females, whereas that tends to disappear with the electronic mail, or as I perceive it anyway.

Though maybe the boys generally are not so good at the game:

> When you log in and you think, like say your boyfriend has written something, you think he has written something, and that's really annoying because like you sent him a really long letter, he didn't reply, it's annoying.
>
> (14 year-old girl)

When asked if the email replaces face-to-face contact, these girls say that it replaces 'embarrassment'. Indeed, if the email were not there, they feel they'd be 'really annoyed', and moreover, there would be 'nothing to do at break time. However, they anticipate 'growing out' of this game when in the sixth form:[3]

> We'll probably grow out of it by the time of the 6th form, [It'll be disturbing], we won't really have enough time for it.
>
> (14 year-old girl)

> It might be a bit different, because you might be a bit more like confident to go up to people and actually say it to their face.
>
> (13 year-old girl)

Given the supposed reluctance of girls especially to make use of computers, their enthusiasm for email is encouraging. Yet curiously, this enthusiasm for email contrasts with their response when asked about computers. For as these same girls say:

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[3]This sixth former would agree when he says, 'It's very often you end up writing E-mail to somebody who's not really in the know, because of the fact that it's through a computer interface one tends to think that it's okay if you send any mail to anyone. And that's only a view I've held for some time, but I think one ends up not knowing each other and there will be a number of misunderstandings because it is impossible to tell from the tone of the voice over the E-mail whilst you can do to it to a certain degree with paper mail.' (17 year-old boy)

> I don't know much about computers, I'm not really into them. I don't mind the email but I don't spend a lot of time writing.
>
> (14 year-old girl)

> I don't think that computers, like say you wanted to do your work on them I wouldn't find they'd be really useful unless you can like type properly which I can't do.
>
> (13 year-old girl)

It is almost as if, having anchored email to other media much valued by teenage girls, such as writing letters or, even more, the telephone, they do not see the computer on which they access it as a computer *per se*. As we noted in Chapter 2, well-assimilated media are somehow transparent as technologies, with young people focussing on their usefulness not their features as objects.

This may be especially true for girls, whose antipathy to computers *qua* technologies is often strong. Such apparent contradictions in their response to computers fit with our earlier finding (Chapter 6) that for boys, different uses of the computer are associated (the more game playing, for example, the more 'serious' uses also), while for girls these different uses are dissociated. Indeed for girls, perhaps, more email use would instead be associated with greater use of the telephone.

Forty years ago, Himmelweit et al (1958) suggested that 'functionally equivalent' media might substitute for each other. Yet today, given the intrinsic fascination particularly for boys which information technologies appear to offer, one might postulate that such substitutability may be more true for girls than boys. This remains a hypothesis for future research, as does the question of whether or not the above-expressed antipathy for computers holds when these girls have to use computers in the classroom, or whether instead their competence with email stands them in good stead in a more educational context. Yet before we polarise the genders too far, we end with the comment from a 17 year old middle-class boy who himself makes exactly our point about transparency (Chapter 2):

> It's kind of transparent really. I don't think of E-mail being E-mail, it's just another method of communication. There is the guy I knew from my old school... he can never remember how he got this piece of information because if he was to confront me with a piece of information and I said where did you hear that, and he would say on the grapevine. He wouldn't know because he's got E-mail, he's got fax, he's got phone, he's chatting face-to-face at school and he's got all other methods of communication, letters whatever and it's difficult to pin it down to where it came from. So I think [this is] more or less my approach with my communication, it's pretty modular, and I just think of E-mail as being another additional module.

9.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter we look forward to future developments with an investigation of those youthful early adopters of new media who frequent cybercafés or whose school is connected to the Internet. While the experiences of those now familiar with the Internet and cybercafés represent a very small segment of the young population, they provide an indication of how this segment may be expected to grow in the future.

For those teenage boys who frequent cybercafés, this location represents an enjoyable and welcoming space which primarily serves as a good day out, a space for socialising with friends. In the main, they do not use the Internet here but rather play the locally-networked multiplayer games, usually with friends from school though also, less often, with those they meet - face-to-face or virtually - for the duration of the game. They provided us with a graphic sense of the pace, excitement and vibrancy of the gaming environment, where the social 'contact' is easily as important to them as winning the game, and where the immersive nature of the experience is seen as far more overwhelming than they can find elsewhere with other media.

The experiences of these young people provide them with a balanced assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of these new media: such experience is producing a generation who are critically enthusiastic rather than composed of either acceptors or rejectors. They are both excited and confident about new forms of communication, playing with their self-presentation through the choice of names, for example, yet generally conducting rather banal on-line conversations on everyday matters. And just as they go in groups to play the games, so too if they meet someone on-line, they are likely to arrange a face-to-face meeting subsequently.

Most of those we talked to in the cybercafés had encountered - deliberately or unwittingly - material which they knew to be 'adult', inappropriate or pornographic. Yet generally they claimed to be undisturbed by this, making the point first that they also encounter similar materials in older media and second, that restricting their use merely serves to make this material all the more attractive.

By contrast, much of the material intended for them - the information and educational materials which their teachers direct them towards, for example - are often seen as boring or annoying. Such disappointments with the Internet stem more from limitations of the interfaces (speed, difficulty of searching, locating appropriate sites) than from dissatisfactions with the information *per se*.

While we found few highly creative Internet users, we nevertheless found a sizeable number of lively, realistic and keen users, particularly in those schools which were 'wired up'. And in one private boarding school we found an email-based flirtation culture which, because of its nature, succeeded in getting girls as well as boys to participate in regular computer use, showing that if the communication-potential rather than the technological basis of new media is foregrounded, girls may become as computer-literate as boys.

CHAPTER 10

MEDIA, FAMILY AND FRIENDS

10.1 FAMILY COMPOSITION AND MEDIA USE

How does media use relate to family composition and family dynamics? In this chapter we explore how media are used with family or alone, filling out our understanding of the social contexts within which old and new media are being used by children and young people. We first map the kinds of families the children in the survey live in, according to key dimensions of family and household structure. We then identify the links between these dimensions and patterns of media use.

10.1.1 Family composition and household structure

The majority (83%) of children in the survey, as in the population as a whole, live in two-parent families (see Appendix 10.1). Seven percent are living in 'reconstituted families' where one or other parent is not the child's biological parent (94% of these live with their mother and a stepfather). In one-parent families almost all children (90%) live with their mothers. Only 13% of children in the sample have no brothers or sisters - slightly below average for the population as a whole (as we would expect, since children below the age of 6 are not represented).

Twenty two percent of mothers are in full-time paid work and 42% are in part-time work.[1] Overall, mothers who have stayed in full-time education for longer are more likely to work outside the home and their families are better off,[2] and twice as many of the most highly-educated mothers are in *full-time* work.[3] Interestingly, however, although single mothers are more likely to have low incomes and to be either full-time housewives, unemployed or a student, they are not less educated than mothers living with a partner.

10.1.2 Family composition and media in the home

Different family situations are associated with different kinds of domestic media provision and, in consequence, different types of media-use styles among children. While financial constraints are important, these do not entirely determine media possessions: family structure also matters (see Table 10.1a).

INSERT TABLE 10.1a HERE

For example, children and young people whose mothers are not working are more likely to be living in a 'media-poor' home (as defined in Chapter 4) and to have a 'media-poor' bedroom, as we might expect from their relatively low incomes. They are also somewhat more likely to be low media users.

Similarly, only children are more likely to have 'media-rich' bedrooms while children with siblings are more likely to live in homes that are 'media-rich' elsewhere, rather than in the child's own room. Despite their well-equipped bedrooms, however, only children are somewhat more likely to be readers

[1] This compares closely with national statistics. Mothers of older children more often work full-time, and, interestingly, children with no siblings are twice as likely to have a mother who works full-time.

[2] Only 11% of mothers who work outside the home live in households where the gross income is less than £9,500 (compared with 45% of mothers who do not work).

[3] 37% of mothers whose terminal age of education (TAE) is 20+ years, but only 18% of those whose TAE is under 16 work full-time. Similarly, 18% of those who left full-time education at age 20+, compared with 40% of those who left school under the age of 16 are full-time housewives.

or music fans and less likely than those with brothers and sisters to be ‘screen entertainment fans’.

Perhaps surprisingly, around a quarter of children living in single-parent households have a 'media-rich' bedroom - as many are found in two-parent homes, although elsewhere in the home there are fewer media possessions. This suggests that single parents make special efforts to prioritise the needs of their children, possibly over their own.

This conclusion is supported by those cases where media are located solely in the child’s bedroom (i.e. not also elsewhere in the house). Here we find that children in single-parent or reconstituted families are more likely to have such a unique item in their bedrooms (see Table 10.1b).

INSERT TABLE 10.1b HERE

Children in reconstituted families are particularly likely to have screen entertainment media (TV-linked games machines, gameboys, PCs and television sets) that are not to be found elsewhere in the house. Children from one-parent families are more likely to have less expensive items such as books, walkmans and radios.

Interviews with single mothers showed how they spent their meagre resources equipping their children’s rooms as generously as they could, often at the expense of provision for themselves.

Mother: She has got the video in her room.
Interviewer: She has it. Oh really?
Mother: She drives me mad with it, that’s why. I chose to let her have it up there. That’s the TV, the video recorder, the stereo CD player, radio, telephone. She’s got a gameboy. Books magazines, comics and daily newspapers. Most of these.
(Divorced working-class mother of 16 year-old girl)

Well, look at the videos! I mean you’ve only got to go in there and see the toys (Laughs) Yes, I do over-compensate and I always have. I very often do with material things. I know that I am over-compensating and I know why. But I still can’t compensate for what other people can do. My children haven’t got a proper computer. All their friends have. We have had one given to us to use second hand by a neighbour. Now the screen has gone down on it, so the children haven’t got a computer at the moment but their friends have, and their friends have got printers and they have got this that and the other. But they haven’t. My kids haven’t.
(Widowed middle-class mother of girl, 12 and boy, 10)

10.2 FITTING MEDIA INTO FAMILY LIFE

10.2.1 Sharing activities with children

How then do the media fit into family life? Before the main survey we asked parents on the Television Opinion panel how often they did a variety of activities with their child.

The dominance of television in British home life emerged once again: watching television or a video together is the activity most often named by parents of all social grades, regardless of the child’s age (see Table 10.2a). Almost nine in every ten (87%) parents say they do this at least once a week with their child. This can be compared with 77% who say they have a good talk with their child as often, or help them with their homework (71%). Far fewer (61%) listen to music with their child, the next most common media-related activity, while just over half (56%) discuss books as frequently.

Only a minority of parents say they share with their child at least once a week outdoor activities such as playing or watching live sport (27%) or taking the child out to the park or countryside (18%). Other activities - going to the cinema, going to museums, and going to the theatre, concerts or ballet - are so rarely shared that we did not include them in Table 10.2a. The percentages saying they never do these activities are more informative (see Table 10.2b).

Most striking is the falling-off of almost all shared parent-child activities with age. Only watching or playing a live sport together, spending time with a computer and going to the theatre, a concert or ballet together show no significant differences.

Social grade differences are in evidence for fewer activities: middle-class parents are more likely to spend time with their child discussing books, using a computer and taking them to the park or countryside (see Table 10.2a). They are also more likely to go to museums, the cinema, theatre, concerts or ballet with their child (see Table 10.2b). Working-class parents on the other hand are more likely to listen to music regularly with their children.

INSERT TABLE 10.2a HERE

INSERT TABLE 10.2b HERE

The dominance of television in the shared life of the family was confirmed in our main survey where we asked *children* to tell us how often they did five kinds of things with their parents (see Table 10.2c).

Watching television with their parents is a near daily activity for the majority (68% say that they do so), comparable with, and we may surmise often done at the same time as, eating a main meal together (75%).[4] Amongst working-class children watching television as a family is as common as eating together, and both peak between the ages of 9-14.

Watching television or a video is twice as common as "talking about something that matters" to the child (only 36% of parents and children do this together most days).[5] And it is six times as common a daily shared activity as "playing a game or making something".

Interestingly, there are no differences between boys' and girls' accounts of the frequency of these different kinds of family contacts. There are, on the other hand, differences between middle-class and working-class children, not only for time spent watching television together, but also for talk about things that matter, talk about things that happen on the news and playing a game or making something together. Working-class children tend to use the extremes of the scale, suggesting that while a few more working-class than middle-class families may do these things "most days", a comparably larger proportion also "never do them at all".

INSERT TABLE 10.2c HERE

10.2.2 Watching television alone or as a family

We gained further insight into the most common of shared activities, watching television together, when we asked children on the broadcasters' YoungView panel to draw themselves watching television and to include "any other people who normally watch with you". Children were also asked to describe their picture in their own words.

Replies revealed a great diversity of social contexts: about half the children drew themselves watching alone (often with the family dog or cat for company), while others drew themselves watching in the midst of an uproarious family.

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[4]Reconstituted families tend to eat together less often - two thirds (62%) do so every day compared with 78% in one-parent families and 76% in families headed by both biological parents. They are also less likely to watch TV with children in the household (64% do so compared with 72% of single parent families and 67% of families with both biological parents).

[5]Single parents are more likely to play a game or make something with their child most days (16% compared with 10% of couples and 7% of parents in reconstituted families). Non-working mothers are also more likely to play a game or make something with their children most days (16% compared with 9% of working mothers)

I am sitting watching tele after I come home from school. I am on my own because mum isn't home yet. I watch children's TV programmes in the living room.
(12 year-old girl)

This is me watching my favourite programme when I get home from school with a drink and a biscuit. Mummy is getting dinner ready.
(7 year-old girl)

Me and my brothers are watching Man. United and they've just scored (P. Parker), so we're celebrating, whereas Stuart is mad (He's not a Man. United fan).
(14 year-old boy)

A sizeable proportion of replies showed how several media are often in use simultaneously.

Me and my friends are sitting in the armchairs. My mum and dad are sitting on the settee. My mum is playing on the gameboy and the rest of us are watching *Neighbours*.
(7 year-old girl)

I'm lying on the floor watching TV on my own and listening to my walkman.
(12 year-old girl)

I am sitting down with a laptop computer on my lap and one eye on the computer and one eye on the TV.
(12 year-old boy)

As we discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, children can and do mix watching television with listening to music, reading, squabbling with siblings, doing homework or even playing computer games. These replies serve as a timely reminder that although we will go on to examine what children and their parents have told us about individual media, in real life things are not so tidy or compartmentalised. Families fit media into their lives as the mood and the company prompts:

Father: We all like music so we play a lot of music. We could easily sit in that room and go through the whole CD rack and they'd dance to it. We can all sit and enjoy it, all of us, even the littl' un. We all love it. So we do that a lot.

Mother: Well it will all depend what day it is as well, I mean on a Sunday there's nothing on the telly and there's nowhere to go out, everything's closed. So to keep them occupied they'll either play on the Sega or play some music or whatever.

(Working class family with girl, 9, and two younger children)

However television has a special place: it takes up the most time, dwarfing the amount spent by all the other media with the exception of listening to music for some teenagers. And as we noted in Chapter 5, for many families television is built into the structure of the day from early morning to late at night.

One fifth of children aged 6-17 wake up to find television already on, a third say it is on when they come home from school and nearly two thirds say it is still on when they go to bed (see Table 10.2d). This is particularly likely to be the case if the children come from a household in the lowest social grade.

INSERT TABLE 10.2d HERE

The relationship with age differs according to the time of day. The youngest children are more likely to say television is on in the morning and when they go to bed. Those aged 12-14 are most likely to say it is on when they come home from school. Children whose mothers do not work are also more likely to say that television is on when they come home from school. Having brothers or sisters increases the likelihood of having the set switched on when children wake up and when they go to

bed.

The majority of children either rely on knowing what is likely to be on, or switch on in the hope of finding something to their taste: only two in every five children say they usually read the TV guide to decide what to watch (more often older than younger children). On the other hand, very few children see themselves as passively accepting what the rest of the family wish to view. Only a minority (9%) say they watch television "just because the family is watching", although children whose mothers don't work and working-class children (whose parents view more) are more likely to say that they do (see Table 10.2e).

INSERT TABLE 10.2e HERE

How do children watch their favourite programme? Once again answers show that television viewing is still very much a social activity within most families. The majority of children of all ages watch their favourite television programme in company (68%), usually with a member of their family (see Table 10.2f).

INSERT TABLE 10.2f HERE

However, children with their own television set are almost twice as likely to watch on their own (28% compared with 15%), although the majority still watch with their family (see Table 10.2g).

Having their own television seems to liberate children and young people to make particular choices of whom to watch with. First, those with their own television, especially boys, more often say they usually watch with friends (though this is still a minority of 9%). Secondly, fewer boys and girls are likely to watch with their siblings, particularly if they are of the opposite gender.[6]

INSERT TABLE 10.2g HERE

Young people of all ages find younger siblings an unwelcome distraction when viewing. Of course, having one's own television set does not necessarily solve the problem if the bedroom is shared with a sibling, as is the case for 28% of children:

Interviewer:	Can you tell me how it is when you're watching your favourite programme?
J:	I'm just watching it, never playing with toys, just watching it.
Interviewer:	And what about your little brother?
J:	He's like one moment he's watching TV, he's straight to the toy box, getting his favourite toys, back to the bed, to the TV, getting his toys playing with them, back to the bed, to the TV.
Interviewer:	And how do you feel about that?
James:	I feel, I can't hardly see the TV, he goes zoom, zoom, zoom, he's whizzing around, I can't even hear what it's saying.
Interviewer:	Right so does that annoy you a bit?
James:	Yes, and then when I get really angry I have to, what I have to do is climb down - this makes me really mad - switch it off. I have to get, say to him "Get in your bed or I'll tell mum". He doesn't do what I say, so I tell mum, and she says "Tell him to". He doesn't listen to a word I say, so I get him, pat him on the back and get him to go in his bed and I switch the TV off and go straight to bed.
Interviewer:	So you miss your programme?
James:	Yes, because of him.

(7 year-old boy with 5 year-old brother)

Interestingly, boys, whether or not they have their own set, are more likely than girls to watch their favourite programme alone. This may be because of an association between the genre of the favourite

[6] 16% of boys with their own set usually watch with a sister compared with 27% without their own set. The figures for girls are in the same direction, but less extreme (21% compared with 29%).

programme and the context of viewing. Soaps, more favoured by girls (41% of girls, compared with only 11% of boys), appear to invite more sociable viewing while sports, more favoured by boys, is more often watched alone.

INSERT TABLE 10.2h HERE

10.2.3 Playing computer games alone or with family

When it comes to computer games, things are rather different. Playing alone is as common as playing with someone else, and when it is a social activity the most likely partner is a friend, not a member of the family (see Table 10.2i). It is also a more gendered activity. More boys play, as we know; and both girls and boys who do play are more likely to play with a brother than a sister.

INSERT TABLE 10.2i HERE

> I've got a game where there has to be two people. I don't play with that until one of my cousins comes because if both of them come and I'm there and me sister's there, there'll be too much. Everyone'll start crying. And me cousin will start crying and me sister. So I just wait and if all of them come I will switch it off and I will tell me mam just to put it away somewhere. And then when one comes...
>
> (7 year-old working class boy)

So far children have been telling us about how they watch television and play computer games, but there is a difference between practice and preference. Earlier, we had also asked children how they actually *enjoyed* watching television and playing computer games most (see Table 10.2j).

The largest single proportion of children in each age group say they prefer to watch television and play computer games alone. The second most preferred option overall in both cases is watching or playing with a friend.

The age trajectory is very different in the case of the two activities. The proportion preferring to watch television with friends almost doubles between the ages of 11 to 15, while there is a decrease in the popularity of playing computer games with a friend after the age of 14, by which age it has generally become much less popular.

Interestingly, almost as many boys say they enjoy watching television with friends as prefer to watch alone: those girls who do not want to watch alone are equally likely to say they prefer to watch with friends or siblings. On the other hand boys are more likely than girls to want play computer games alone, while girls once again are keener on playing with their siblings.

INSERT TABLE 10.2j HERE

In sum, while watching television has typically been thought of as a social medium for the family to gather around, the implication of these findings is that television is something that a sizeable proportion of children and young people would rather use individually, even though at present this is not always possible.

On the other hand, reality matches preferences much more closely for computer games. Just under half play alone and around the same proportion say that is how they like it. Yet, more than for television, children are finding ways of playing computer games with friends, issuing instructions to the one(s) with the mouse/joystick, negotiating turn-taking, and so forth. Emerging domestic practices suggest that the computer, particularly for boys, is becoming the focus in the home for gatherings of friends.[7]

[7] Pasquier et al (1998) also suggest that the PC (playing it, talking about it, advising on use) may provide a new opportunity for father-son discussions.

10.3 CHILDREN'S VIEWS OF PARENTAL ATTITUDES TO MEDIA

Children and young people feel that their parents' attitudes to time spent with different types of media varies.

.

Interviewer: Is there anything your parents really disapprove of you spending time with?
D: The phone. Playstation.
J: The TV.

(Interview with middle-class city boys aged 12-13)

INSERT TABLE 10.3a HERE

Children and young people express overwhelming agreement about parental approval of books (65%) and, to a lesser extent, of 'serious' computer use (39%) (see Table 10.3a). However screen entertainment media - which children spend most time with- meet with far less parental approval, according to children. Only a fifth (20%) think their parents are keen for them to watch television and even fewer think they approve of playing computer games (13%) or watching videos (12%). Nor does the other most popular media activity (listening to music) fare much better, and a negligible number (8%) are believed to approve of their child using the telephone. This is in keeping with the qualitative interviews, where children ruefully acknowledged that it was the things they themselves enjoyed most and did most often which parents were least likely to approve of.

Working-class and middle-class children's perceptions of their parents' attitudes differ significantly, with more middle-class children thinking their parents are keen for them to read books or use the PC. In the case of watching television and playing computer games, the social grade differences are reversed: thus working-class parents are seen as keener on screen entertainment media in general and middle-class parents on print media and IT. The views of working mothers, as opposed to those who do not work, at least in their children's eyes mirror those of middle-class parents.

There are also differences in the responses of children of different ages. Children aged 9-11 are the most likely to think their parents are keen for them to read books and the youngest children are more likely to see their parents as keen for them to watch television and videos and to play computer games.

10.4 PATTERNS OF FAMILY INTERACTION

Whether or not watching television or playing computer games is a shared or a solitary activity within a particular family is likely to be related to more general patterns of family interaction. Previous research has shown that differing styles of family interaction may explain a variety of social activities including characteristic styles of television viewing (Goodman, 1983; Lull, 1980; Morley, 1986; Palmer, 1986).

Although family interaction was not a major focus of our research, we had asked six questions about the way in which children and their parents interacted. As we have already noted, children in the survey told us: how often they ate a main meal or played a game or made something together, and about how often they talked about the news, or about something that mattered to the child. And parents added information on: how big decisions (such as going on holiday or having someone to come and live in the household for a while) were made in the family[8] and on how many things caused arguments between them and their children[9].

[8] Answers could be scaled from the parent-centred (the parents decide) through the more democratic options (the parents consult the children and then decide/ the family decides) to the child-centred (the children have the final say). The last option was however endorsed by only one parent, allowing the question to be considered as a measure of "autocratic/democratic interaction".

[9] Parents were asked to identify, from a list of 11 possibilities, which subjects lead to arguments with their child. Answers were summed giving an "argumentativeness" score.

In addition we had asked all children (9+) about their relationship with their parents.[10] Such questions can only allow us a limited insight into actual patterns of family interaction, particularly given the likely discrepancy between what is claimed or perceived and what actually happens. But they do provide an opportunity to explore how different kinds of interaction relate to each other and to media use. For example, do families who talk a lot together also play together? Is high media use amongst children associated with families who spend a lot of time together or with families where parent-child interaction is low?

Answers to these six questions were used to cluster children and young people to identify patterns or types of family interaction (see Table 10.4a).[11]

INSERT TABLE 10.4a HERE

_ *'distanced': low interaction*
Hardly any of the *distanced* families do the things we asked about most days; they are also less democratic than all the other types except the conventional family.

_ *'conventional': families who eat together*
The *conventional* family is the least democratic: parents are more likely to say they alone make big decisions. In the child's view such families play and talk together less often: none say they do these things most days.

_ *'all-round': families who eat, play and talk together*
The *all-round* family has the most frequent and varied types of interaction. Not only are they much more likely than the other family types to play or make something together, almost all say they eat together and three quarters say they talk about things that matter most days.[12]

_ *'intimate': families who talk about things that matter to the child*
Almost all *intimate* families talk about something that matters to the child most days and over two thirds eat together every day.

_ *'outward-looking': families who discuss the news*
Outward-looking families are most likely to discuss things that happen in the news, but they are also likely to eat together and nearly half talk about things that matter to the child most days.

_ *'democratic': families who make big decisions together*
These are most likely to make big decisions together, and the great majority of *democratic* families also eat together most days, though they are less likely to play or talk about things as often.

Family interaction types vary by the age of the child (see Table 10.4b).

INSERT TABLE 10.4b HERE

'All-round' families, with high levels of interaction, are most common amongst the youngest and

[10]Children were asked how often 1) they got fed up with their parents telling them what to do, 2) they got on well with their parents, 3) their parents expressed strong views about their appearance and the clothes they wore, 4) their parents knew when they were upset or worried and 5) they wanted them to do well. However, these questions proved to be of little value as the great majority of children report favourable attitudes towards their parents.

[11] A Ward's Cluster Analysis was conducted separately for each age band. A similar six-cluster solution emerged for each age group, allowing us to classify parent/child interaction across all age groups. Six styles of family interaction emerged (see Table10.4a).

[12]In *'all-round'* families there is a shift in the balance of shared activities after the age of 11, for playing/making something with parents drops off sharply while talking about things that matter to them with their parents increases.

oldest age groups. 'Intimate' interaction (focussed around talking about things that matter) is much more common in the adolescent years between 12-14.[13] As we would expect, 'outward-looking' interaction (focussed round discussion of news) is most common amongst the oldest children.

No other demographic characteristics distinguish among family interaction types. Nor, interestingly, is there any significant association between the type of family interaction and the percentage of children saying that they spend most of their leisure time with their families.

However, the family interaction groups differed in what they fed up with parents telling them to do. Children from 'all-round' and 'democratic' families were the least "fed up" and those from the 'intimate' families were the most: talking about things that matter to the child seems to produce some unwanted advice. Children from 'distant' families were less favourable in their attitudes towards their parents, being more likely to say they did not "get on well with their parents" and less likely to agree that their "parents know when they were upset or worried" or that they "want them to do well".

Family interaction styles relate to children's media use in several ways (see Table 10.4c). For example, being a 'screen entertainment' fan is associated with the family interaction pattern labelled 'intimate'. There is also a tendency for children from families where the interaction is 'distanced' to be low media users.

INSERT TABLE 10.4c HERE

Children from families where the interaction is 'intimate' are more likely, and children from 'distanced' families less likely, to say they watch television most days with their parents. The number of media which mothers talk about to their children also differs (see Table 10.4c). Mothers are least likely to talk about media in 'distanced' families and most likely to do so in 'all-round' families.

We have seen earlier that the majority of children (63%) say they watch television with someone else - most usually a mother or a sibling and only very rarely a friend (see Table 10.2f). Computer game playing on the other hand is more often a solitary pastime - 45% say they usually play alone (see Table 10.2i). However when they play with someone else, a friend is named more often as the most often-mentioned family member, a brother.

INSERT TABLE 10.4d HERE

In order to see whether family interaction type was associated with solitary or social use of these media, we selected those children who have their own television set and their own PC or TV-linked games machine, and therefore *have the choice* of whether to watch their favourite programme or play computer games on their own or with someone else. We then looked to see whether or not children from different family types behaved differently.

We found a significant difference between the numbers of children in each family type claiming to play computer games on their own, though there were no differences involving watching television (see Table 10.4d).

Children from 'distanced' families and 'all-round' families are more likely to say they play computer games with someone else; in the 'distanced' families, this is most likely to be a friend, while in the 'all-round' families (where interaction with parents was high), more name the father and a brother or sister as co-players. By contrast, in families where the interaction is 'conventional' (centred mainly around eating together) more children say they play alone.

10.5 MEDIA, FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Although our main focus is media use in the home, both qualitative and quantitative interviews included questions about the relation between friendship, peer networks and media use. Thus we were interested to see how the media fitted into the shifting balance, over age particularly, between family

[13] Interestingly, children from families where the interaction is intimate are more likely to class themselves as worrying about things at least sometimes (81%, compared with from other families).

and friends as leisure companions. First, to discover the relative importance of family and friends in the social life of children and young people, we asked "who do you spend most of your free time with?" (see Table 10.5a).

INSERT TABLE 10.5a HERE

Only a tiny proportion (4%) are loners. The largest single proportion of children (40%) spend most of their free time with a group of friends. Roughly equal numbers spend it with one best friend (29%) or with their family (30%).

The data support the well known trend in which, as children grow older, the focus of their social life shifts from the family to friends (Corsaro, 1997; Hendry, Shucksmith, Love & Glendinning, 1993). While just over a quarter of children aged 6-8 spend most of their free time with a group of friends, the numbers steadily increase with age, until 15-17 when over half say they do so. The numbers saying that they spend the majority of their time with their family drop correspondingly from 42% to 15%.

There are also differences between boys and girls, with boys being significantly more likely to spend most of their time with a group of friends and girls either with their families or one best friend. Interestingly the numbers of loners (5% or fewer) and those spending most time with one best friend (around a quarter) remains consistent across gender and all age groups. There are no significant differences related to social grade. How then do such changes in children's social lives affect their use of media?

10.5.1 Sociality and media use

Grouping together those who spent their time mainly with one, or with a group of friends we drew on a variety of demographic, personal and leisure characteristics[14] to compare the 'family', 'friends', or 'alone' groups in turn with the average characteristics of the other two groups. First we focus on the uses and gratifications which children and young people derive from different media.

Loners differ significantly from the rest of the children and young people we interviewed only in being less likely to have siblings. Perhaps as a result, they are also more likely than all other groups to turn to television, books and videos when they are in need of excitement.

Those who spend most of their leisure time with either a *group of friends or one best friend* differ from the other children we interviewed in a variety of ways, First, they are more likely to be older, to be boys and to be living in a single parent or reconstituted family. They also say they find it easier to make new friends and they are more inclined to get fed up with their parents telling them what to do. In turn, this seems to have consequences for their media use. These children are less likely to turn to books for excitement, learning, boredom or relaxation. They are also less likely to use television not to feel left out or radio to relieve boredom. Instead they turn to music for relaxation, the telephone or computer games to relieve boredom, and both music and the telephone not to feel left out.

Lastly, those who spend most of their free time with their *family* are younger, more likely to be girls, to have siblings, to have a non-employed mother, and to live with both parents. They are also more likely to say that while they find it harder to make new friends, they get on well with their parents and do not get fed up with them telling them what to do. These children are more likely to turn to books for relaxation, to relieve boredom and for learning, and may also listen to the radio to relieve

[14] Thus we compared the three groups (those who spent most of their time alone, those who spent it with friends and those who spent it with their family) and compared each with all children not in that group in respect of demographic characteristics (age, gender, social grade), family type (did they have siblings, have a working mother or come from a one or two parent family), personal characteristics (did they like themselves, were they often bored, did they find it easy to make new friends, did they worry about things; all these asked only of 9+), their attitudes to their parents(did they get on well with them, get fed up with being told what to do by them, feel they wanted them to do well, feel they knew when they were upset or worried; again asked only of 9+) and the uses and gratifications they attached to the media (which chosen for relaxation, to learn about things, for excitement, to combat boredom).

boredom. They are less likely to use the telephone when bored or feeling left out, or to read newspapers to learn things.

What consequences do these motivations for using media have for the time actually spent with media? Time spent listening to music and reading books and time spent with media overall, *but not time spent watching television and video*, are significantly associated with the different forms of sociality.

INSERT TABLE 10.5b HERE

Table 10.5b shows that those who spend most of their leisure time with the family also spend least time overall with media: in particular, they spend least time listening to music. Those with access to books who spend most of their time alone (46 individuals) read for around twice as long per day as those who mostly spend their time in the company of family or friends[15]. Although sample size is small and results are not significant, it is also worth noting that those few loners (6 individuals) who have access to the Internet at home spend on average seven times as long using it as children who have access but spend most of their leisure time with friends or family.[16]

10.6 MEDIA AND FRIENDS

In this section, we focus on several ways in which the media, especially the new media, have found their way into children and young people's relations with their friends, thereby becoming integral to the nature of contemporary peer culture. We consider in turn the importance of media in conversations among friends, the way in which media goods are swapped among friends and the extent to which friends visit each other for the purpose of using media they themselves do not possess. Towards the end of this section we focus on two media which are particularly important for relations with friends compared with those with family, namely the telephone and music.

10.6.1 Talking about media with friends

Not only does young people's social life frame their actual use of media, but it is also, in part, constituted through their talk about media. The great majority of children and young people (93%) said they talked about media at least sometimes to their friends (see Table 10.6a).

In our YoungView pilot survey we had asked children to tell us in their own words what they talked about to their friends. Over half of the children (54%) spontaneously mentioned television: only talking about what had happened at school (41%) and talk about music (40%) came close. Only 9% mentioned computers.

Following this up in the main survey, we asked which of 11 media, if any, they ever talked about to friends (see Table 10.6a). Answers confirmed the role of television and music in everyday talk amongst friends and pointed up the lack of interest in serious PC use or book reading as subjects of conversation.[17]

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[15] There was also a non-significant tendency for them to spend longer using a PC at home.

[16] As spending time with the family is more common amongst younger children and spending time alone amongst the oldest, so that time spent with the media is related to age (and to gender), one may wonder if demographic variables alone account for these associations. To discover whether types of sociality made an independent contribution to time spent with media, we used multiple regression analyses for time spent on each of the media, using the child's age and gender and the social grade of the family as initial predictors, and then adding the four types of sociality as dummy variables. Results showed that although the predicted variance was small, whether or not the child is a loner doubled the variance explained for reading, and whether or not the child spends most of his or her time with one best friend adds significantly to the variance explained for time spent playing computer games. Finally, for those with Internet access, knowing whether or not they were a loner increased the variance explained in time spent on the Internet from 6% to 26%.

[17] While very few name PCs as a subject they talk about with friends, twice as many AB children as DE children do so, though if we consider only those children with access to a computer at home, then middle-class and working-class children do not differ.

Television dominates the picture, with two thirds (64%) talking about it overall, increasing steadily with age from around half at 6-8 to nearly three-quarters at 15-17. Surprisingly, even though they watch rather less television, children from middle-class families are more likely to talk about it than those from working-class families, who watch more.

Only talk about *playing music* comes near to challenging television as a subject of conversation amongst friends. However while television dominates the talk of all age groups and both boys and girls, music is significantly more popular amongst girls, and shares second place with reading for the younger age groups.

However, the main gender difference is in talk about *playing computer games* - for boys, the second most popular topic after television (50% talk about them), but hardly discussed by girls (only 10% talk about them). Interest in computer games peaks at around 9-14, when around a third of children say they talk about them to their friends.

INSERT TABLE 10.6a HERE

Once again we find indications of the comparative lack of interest in *books* (only 13% talk about them with friends), although there is a sizeable minority (30%) who are interested enough in *magazines* to choose them as a subject of conversation. Girls are particularly keen on magazines: 41% told us they talked about magazines to friends compared with only 15% who said they talked about books. Interestingly, while girls generally read books (not for school) for longer than boys, they are no more likely to talk about books to their friends; once again, book reading would seem to be something of a solitary pleasure.

Talk about *newspapers* is more common amongst boys and increases markedly with age: by the age of 15-17, 1 in 3 boys talks about newspapers with their friends, compared with 1 in 5 who talk about magazines and only 1 in 16 who talk about books. Talk about *comics* is cited by around 1 in 10 of primary school children, but is mentioned by practically no one who is older.

Only 10% of children and young people say they talk about serious PC use with their friends. Such talk is only a little more common amongst boys and middle-class or older children. Even if we consider only those with access to a PC at home the figure only rises to 14%.

Talk about the telephone is, as we might expect, cited by very few (7% overall). The telephone is after all the medium through which friends communicate, rather than the subject of conversation per se.

10.6.2 Swapping media amongst friends

There are many small but important ways in which media may form a part of friendship activities and peer networks. After listening to children talk about media use among friends in the group interviews, we decided to explore the practice of swapping media goods among themselves. How common is swapping, as a means of bypassing the financial limitations of a budget based on pocket money? And are far have new media goods, from videos to computer games become part of these practices already?

We asked children to tell us which out of a list of things, they ever swapped with friends (see Table 10.6b). In order to understand how important, if at all, media goods are in this respect we included clothes, toys and things they collected in the list as well as books, magazines, comics, videos, computer games and music tapes, CDS or records.

INSERT TABLE 10.6b HERE

The newer media goods we asked about are all more commonly swapped than older media and non-media goods. Once again music and screen entertainment items top the list. Around a third swap music tapes, CDs or records (37%) and videos (33%). Computer games comes third overall, for although it is the most common item swapped by boys (43% do so) hardly any girls (9%) are involved. Books and magazines, on the other hand, are exchanged by only around one in every five (19% and 21% respectively). Swapping of clothes (16%) and toys (11%) is less common than the swapping of any media items with the exception of comics (5%).

As with all other dimensions of both media use and friendship practices, there are marked age and gender differences shown in Table 10.6b. Music tapes and videos owe their position at the top of the list largely to the numbers of 15-17 year-olds choosing these options. Up to the age of 11, swapping things they collect is the most common activity, while amongst the youngest children swapping toys vies for first place.

In contrast to girls, boys are most likely to swap computer games, and they are also more likely to swap things they collect. Girls on the other hand are most likely to say they swap music tapes, and they are far more likely than boys to swap clothes, magazines and books.

Interestingly there are few social grade differences, although middle-class children are somewhat more likely to swap books and things they collect.

10.6.3 Visiting friends to use new media

Media also play a role in friendship by acting as a spur to visit friends who own media which children themselves do not have at home. Our conversations with children in the qualitative phase of the research showed that new media can be so desirable that they actually initiate social contacts with those who own them, thus potentially at least instigating new friendship networks. Like swapping media goods, this represents another way in which children circumvent their lack of finances and broaden the variety of media they have access to. As we saw in Chapter 7, this represents a major means by which those currently without access are gaining experience of the newest media, such as the Internet.

In the survey we asked specifically whether children and young people ever go round to a friend's house to use media that they themselves do not have access to at home. In this case we limited our questions to screen entertainment media (cable television, computer games, videos) and IT (PCs, CD-ROMs and the Internet). As Table 10.6c shows, a sizeable minority of children visit friends specifically to have access to these media.

INSERT TABLE 10.6c HERE

Once again screen entertainment media attract most: almost two thirds of boys sometimes go round to a friend's house to play a computer game they don't have at home and 2 in 5 boys and girls sometimes go to watch a video. Only around a quarter go to a friend's house to watch cable television or to use the PC (not for games). At present, few visit friends to use CD-ROMs (16%) or the Internet (8%). Of course only a minority will have friends with multimedia or Internet facilities: in the future, one might well expect such practices to become more commonplace.

Significantly more boys are involved in both computer game playing in friend's houses and in serious computer use. Significant age-related differences exist for watching videos and using the Internet. However, only in the case of watching cable television are there significant social-grade differences, this being almost twice as common among children from DE families as among those from AB families.

Discussions in the qualitative phase of the research confirmed that watching television with friends was not considered as desirable as playing computer games or watching videos together. For many of the younger children their own videos are familiar enough for interruptions to be welcome: they enjoy sharing their favourite scenes with friends and the status that comes with providing a social occasion. If they want to watch television, which can't be back-tracked and replayed, then friends can be a distraction. Here is a class of 6-7 year-olds discussing this:

Interviewer:	Why do you want to watch videos with friends and television by yourself?
E:	'Cos all the films are good and all your friends might like them and your friends might like the films that's on telly and the cartoons. And they might like to play computers.
G:	I like watching me videos with friends because I don't really like videos but when - but I like watching the telly by myself because I'll get peace from it so I can hear it.

Interviewer: Right, that's very well explained.

G: And if someone comes in I just switch it off and put the video on.

Interviewer: Alright. <H>, why do you want to watch videos with friends and television by yourself?

H: I like to watch videos because, because when I watch videos - when I watch videos with my friends I (emphasised) don't like watching videos because I get bored, but when my friends come and say "Let's watch *Hong Kong Fui*" I just say OK because, because they're all guests. I try to make them happy at my house.

(Class of 6-7 year-olds in working class-city school)

Watching videos with friends was appreciated by older children for rather different reasons. For young teenagers, watching scary films or adult horror videos added zest to sleep-overs and had the excitement of an illicit, adult pleasure:

> When ever we go to the video shop I'll go for the new releases, we always get a new release out. I'll look for a comedy one usually, I prefer the comedy ones, but I like the adventure ones as well, and I like the horror ones, but the horror ones are a higher rating, like 18 and dad, I mean dad will let me watch anything except for 18's, and he will let me watch them, but he prefers if I don't watch the 18 ones, but he'll let me watch the 15 ones... I watch lots of horror ones but I can't really remember their titles. I like *Silence of the Lambs*, that's a good one. I've watched that quite a few times round my mate's house because she's got that on video. I love the *X Files*. I mean I've got a whole eight-hour tape there of *X Files*.
>
> (Middle-class girl, aged 13)

Friends, therefore, represent a key means by which the variety of new media becomes available to young people, and conversely the media have an important role in routine contacts between friends. As we have seen, this includes talking about media, swapping media goods and visiting each other's homes to use media together. Overall these findings show the important connection between new media and friendship culture.[18]

10.6.4 The role of the telephone

For children and young people of all ages the main use of the telephone is to keep in touch with friends (see Table 10.6d). Other uses (such as discussing homework or letting parents know their whereabouts) are cited by very few.

INSERT TABLE 10.6d HERE

As both children and their parents see it, boys use the telephone more functionally, to make arrangements while girls chat.[19]

> <My daughter> is in trouble over my last telephone bill, um, <my son> isn't. He's very, just to the point. He just rings up and says what he wants and puts the phone down. He doesn't, I mean, he's not at all worried about using the phone, um, but he's not a chatterer on the phone, whereas normally you can't stop him talking ...(laughs) I used to do the same thing. And she will come home from school, walk home with a friend that she's been at school with all day, although they might not have been in the same classes all day... but they'll have met at breaktime and lunchtime and then walk home from school together,

[18] If we consider only those children who have access at home to the relevant hardware (books, video recorders. PCs or TV-linked games machines) we find that the significant differences are the same in each case.

[19] Other research has shown that this gender difference for the telephone is widespread among adults (Livingstone, 1992).

> and she'll be in fifteen minutes and she'll ring the same friend up and be on the phone for half an hour.
>
> (Working-class mother of an 11 year-old boy)

A love affair with the telephone, as one example from the family group research illustrates, can blossom early. While this mother "loves the phone and couldn't do without it, phones friends even neighbours daily", her daughter has a clear memory of when she was first allowed to do so - to invite her friends to her birthday party aged three. Asked what she talks about on the telephone, the words just tumbled out:

> We talk about school, we talk about maths and we talk about if we like each other, we talk about if we're still going to see each other, talk about if we're going to die before the other one does and all that. We talk about when do you want to come over to my house, what time do you want to stay, when do you want to have lunch, when do you want to have tea and dinner and when do you want to do some drawing. Oh yes - and when do you want to play out the front on the bikes and when you want to watch a video and when you want to watch TV or when you want to play a maths game, when you want to read.
>
> (7 year-old girl living in a working-class family)

However, a substantial proportion of children do not use the telephone even when it is available in the house (see Table 10.6e).

INSERT TABLE 10.6e HERE

This is particularly true of primary school-age children, boys and children in working-class families. Over 2 in 5 boys and working-class children and around half of children under the age of 12 with a telephone available in the home do not use it. The greater use of the medium made by girls seems likely to be due at least in part to their greater interest in this type of communication, while that of older children doubtless reflects the increased importance of keeping in touch with the peer group in the teenage years. In the case of working-class children in particular, cost is likely to be an important factor. Interviews with parents showed that many actively discourage their children from using the telephone, or at least attempt to curtail the amount of time they spend on it, both because of the costs of telephone calls and the annoyance of having in-coming calls blocked.

> <My daughter> uses the telephone far more than what she used to... I don't know what it is going to be like in a couple of years time... I dare say that I will have screaming fits telling her to get off that telephone because I can't get a telephone call coming through...Crikey I'm panicking about what she will be like when she's older now. (Laughs). I'll have to get a mobile (Laughs)
>
> (Middle-class widow of girl, 12 , and boy, 10)

> I sail pretty close to the wind every month of balancing the books, so having a telephone is to me quite a luxury. We managed for 8 years without it and I suppose if it came to it that would be one of the first things to go ... But it's also becoming an expensive commodity since <my son> learnt to use it. Occasionally he, he never touched it when we first had it, never wanted to phone anybody, then a couple of times "Can I just phone so and so round the corner?" "No you go round." But then he went on holiday to Yorkshire this year with school, ran out of money, and some bright spark has told him how to reverse charges... so I put my foot down at that... But again that's down to finances again, I have a very tight budget to live on, and he has to understand that as well.
>
> (Single mother of a 12 year-old boy)

On the other hand, there was some evidence that parents also regarded familiarity with the technology and a good telephone manner as a necessary social skill to be encouraged.

I mean it is a good thing for them to able to do things like that, in case they're away anywhere and they're having to use a phone.

(Working class mother of a 10 year-old boy)

Multiple regression analysis confirmed that use of the telephone is significantly predicted by gender, age and social grade (with girls, older children and those from middle-class families using it more often). Beyond this, the role of family and friends in the child's social life also plays a part, for children who spend most of their free time with their families make less use of the telephone.[20]

10.6.5 Music

E: One of my mates round, like <G> comes up quite often and we just go into my room and just sit there, look through my big pile of magazines that I've got, because I buy two a month, I buy *Bliss* and *Sugar* that come out monthly and I'll buy those every month, and then we just sit in my room and listen to music.

Interviewer: So your room really is a social place for you?

E: Yes.

Interviewer: And for you?

B: It depends.

E: He lives in it.

B: Yes I spend a lot of time in there, put music on, listen to that, do some more homework whatever, put the music on, put the computer on as well.

(Middle-class 13 year-old girl and 16 year-old brother)

We have already noted the importance of music for friends, particularly for teenagers. Any description of the role of media in friendship must give central importance to music and thus we end this chapter by pulling together what we have learned. W have seen, for example, that only music comes near to challenging television as a subject of conversation amongst friends (see Table 10.6a), more than doubling from 27% at age 6-8 to 65% at age 15-17. Or again, music tapes, CDs or records are most often cited as the things children swap with friends (see Table 10.6b): 3 in 4 15-17 year-olds do so. Even poorer families provide walkmans, radios or sound systems of some sort and young people themselves can generally afford tapes or CDs. We have also noted that even taking age and gender into account, spending time listening to music is especially common among those who do not spend most of their free time with their family (see Table 10.5a).

As we noted in Chapter 2, music is portable, affordable, youth-orienting and youth-oriented; hence taste in music can be both an indicator of individuality and a way of belonging.

I don't like the music in the charts or Indie music, I like the MCs and hardcore rappers and things like that...Most of the people I like don't like it at all, but we all have different tastes in music anyway...Well, <G> is a kind of a classical person, but I think that he gets that off his parents. <J> is into *Oasis* and things like that and <E> likes people like *Manic Street Preachers* and other stuff I suppose (laughs)...They try and listen to what I like and I try and listen to what they like but erm sometimes it just gets a bit too much (laughs).

(16 year-old girl living in a working-class family)

Music is also company when alone, much valued as a pleasant backdrop for daily routines and dull tasks, a few make or mix their own music:

Interviewer: So what is there to do down there <named place>?

M: Well some of my friends live down there and I play on my friend's computer,

[20]While demographic variables explain 24% of the variance in frequency of using the phone, a further 25% of the variance is explained by whether or not they spend most of their leisure time with the family.

or one of my other friends has got some music mixing decks where you can mix music.

(Middle-class boy aged 13).

Interviewer: Do you like music?

B: Yeah. I love it. I listen to rap - not that often, on our radio stations. Like *Heart, Capital, Kiss* and erm I listen... I play my guitar.

Interviewer: What kind of music do you play on the guitar?

B: I play Yellow Submarine, er I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles... I play we made up a song which is quite long. Three pages and...

Interviewer: You wrote it down as well?

B: Yeah... I play chords like A, E, D7, G, C.

(10 year-old boy living in a working-class family)

Music can also be a social occasion, a way of overcoming social inhibition and a total physical and emotional experience:

> I go to quite a lot of gigs and stuff. I have been to a couple of the large festivals and stuff like that really... when we go to gigs we have nosh and jumping up and down and I suppose that I can really be myself sort of thing.
>
> (16 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

> <R>'s my best friend for twelve years. Then there's <H> who's my cousin, but she's more like kinda one of my best friends. Um, we're all kinda obsessed with Buddy Holly. And <N>, who lives down the same road as <C>, and <L> who just lives across the road. And I have my TV and video system, like Buddy stuff and things. And me and <C> have like evenings of dance and boring things. (Laughter)
>
> (16 year-old girls living in working-class families)

The Buddy Holly fans quoted above were, however, not typical. The majority of young people we spoke to, while devoted to their music in general, maintained a critical distance. There was a strong undercurrent of resistance amongst the more thoughtful to being bracketed as a "fan" of any one band or musician in particular:

> Well you get that sort of typical teeny boppers dancing to *Take That* and sort of all that and I like a band because their music is good and they can play their instruments, they are not there just because they are good looking... I suppose it all goes hand in hand because whatever music you like you tend to associate some band with that. I think that music is definitely the most important, I can't be bothered with these people who like a band, I mean I am sure they are really good live [said sarcastically]. No, I think all that sort of dancing around is terrible. There is a girl who has just moved here and she is *Boyzone* mad and she thinks they are wonderful and really gorgeous and all this sort of stuff. I don't like it at all.
>
> (16 year-old girl living in a middle-class family)

> Girls' magazines, they're all about this bloke Peter André and oh, he always stands there and he says that "I don't show off my body". It just suddenly comes out - I mean what is it? An opening T-shirt? Does the T-shirt open at random?
>
> (12 year-old boy living in a middle-class family)

Others, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, presented their musical allegiance as a matter of fashion, not to be taken over seriously:

> I like all sorts of music. I haven't got a favourite band really. Like at the moment because *Boyzone* are Number One and I've been to see them last night, and I can say that I've been there and seen them. I like *Boyzone* though. Yes, I like loads of different sorts of music and it's like if I'm doing my homework it is just on as background and I know that it is there. I mean it is something, like if I'm going out and I am putting on my make-up on then I will have it on while I am getting ready, because it is better than watching telly because you can't put your make-up on when you are watching telly. (Laugh)
>
> (15 year-old girl living in a working-class family)

Establishing ones' musical allegiance can be something of a rite of passage, marking off the young person's world from that of the parent:

> My brothers have got like music, and I like that sort of music and it's got sort of swearing in it and so on, so it's kind of iffy for Ma.
>
> (12 year-old boy living in a middle-class family)

> L: Me mam like turns the volume down when it gets to them bits and then when all the swear words and that are over, she turns it back up. The song *Alice* me mam doesn't like that so, because of the swear words in it.[21]
>
> A: But you see L does like that sort of thing (Little laugh).
>
> (9 year-old girls living in working-class families)

Yet, although music establishes difference and independence from the adult world, at the same time it provides a way of entering that world. Lyrics explore and give expression to troubling adult emotions: the grand scale of pop stars' lives and lifestyles provide contemporary narratives of success and disaster, cautionary fables and some fairytales which can, on occasion, even be aspirational.

10.7 SUMMARY

In this chapter we explored the place of media in relations with family and friends as well more solitary uses of media, in order to fill out our understanding of the social contexts within which old and new media are being used by children and young people.

Family composition has various consequences for media access and use. Some are predictable: for example, only children are more likely to have 'media rich' bedrooms. Yet there are also some unexpected findings. Although single parents are more likely to be living on very low incomes and to have 'media-poor' environments elsewhere in the home, a sizeable minority (as many as in families with two parents at home) are managing to provide their children with a 'media-rich' bedroom.

The evidence in this chapter confirms the importance of screen entertainment media in British children's lives, showing its central, if evolving, role in family life and in friendship circles. Despite the considerable variety of leisure activities now available to families, watching television remains at the heart of contemporary family life. Thus 1 in 5 children wake up to find the television already on, 1 in 3 find it on when they come home from school, and 2 in 3 say it is still on when they go to bed. When we ask which activities, media and non-media related, parents do most often with their child, watching television together is the top of everyone's list.

However, increasing numbers of children now have a television set in their own room and therefore have a choice about whom to watch with. As one might expect, having one's own set makes a difference to viewing habits. Overall two in three watch their favourite programme together with their parents, but those with their own set are twice as likely as others to watch it alone. Interestingly, those with their own set are also more likely to watch with friends, rather than siblings.

While television habits are changing slowly towards more individualised use and even (for a small

[21] Song by Chubby Brown. "Alice, Alice who the fuck is Alice?" is the chorus.

minority) towards social use with friends, this is already a common pattern for computer games players. They play alone as often as they play with someone else, and the most common partner is a friend, not a member of the family.

We found some evidence to suggest that such individualised media use and social use with friends is what many children and young people would prefer. Thus when we asked them how they actually enjoy watching television or playing computer games most, the most common answer was 'alone', and the second most preferred option was watching/playing with a friend.

Children are clear, however, that their parents' priorities are different. Parents, they think, would prefer them to read more and spend more time with PCs and are not so enthusiastic about their spending time with screen entertainment media. Two in three think their parents are keen for them to read books and two in five think them keen to encourage 'serious' computer use. Only one in five believe their parents are keen for them to watch television or listen to music, and even fewer feel they approve of computer games, videos or telephone use. Working-class parents, however, are seen as keener on screen entertainment media and middle-class parents on print media and IT.

A tentative grouping of families into six interaction types showed that family dynamics could be meaningfully related to media use. For example, the social context of media use can be related to different styles of family interaction. Thus children from 'distanced' families (who don't eat, talk or do things together on a daily basis) also tend not to watch television with their parents and more often play computer games with friends compared with any other family interaction type. On the other hand, in 'all-round' families (where non-media-related interaction with parents is high) computer games are also more often played with family members. In more 'conventional' families (who eat together most days but don't play or make things together or talk as often), more children play computer games alone. Such findings suggest that more detailed study of the impact of family interaction patterns on media use would repay further study.

Alternatively, whether a child spends his or her leisure time mostly with family, friends or alone is also linked to how children see and use media[22] The handful of 'loners' in the sample are less likely to have siblings, and so turn to media for excitement. They read more and, if they have the Internet, make much more use of it. Those who spend most of their time with friends are more likely to be older, and to be boys. They are more likely to turn to music for relaxation, the telephone or computer games to relieve boredom, and both music and the telephone not to feel left out. Family-oriented children, who are younger and more often girls living in traditional nuclear families with good relations with their parents, tend to read books for relaxation, to relieve boredom and for learning, are less likely to use the telephone when bored or feeling left out, and spend less time listening to music.

In this chapter we also mapped the extent to which, for different categories of children, the media have become integrated into peer group networks.[23] Television is the most common topic of conversation among friends, with music and - for boys - computer games, following on behind. New media goods especially (CDs, videos, computer games) are frequently swapped among friends, more so than older media and non-media goods. And using computer games and videos that the child does not have at home figure prominently as reasons to visit a friend's house.

Finally we considered further the importance of both the telephone and music, which provide key leisure activities among friends and, for music especially, a resource for constructing teenage identities.

[22]Four in 10 children said they spend most of their free time with a group of friends, 1 in 3 spend it with one best friend, 1 in 3 spend it with their family, and almost none spend most of their free time alone.

[23]See also Chapters 2 and 3, for discussion of how the media have found their way into children and young people's relations with their friends.

TABLE 10.1a

Media environment in child's bedroom and elsewhere in the home by family composition

	FAMILY TYPE (N=1275)			SIBLINGS (N=1302)		MOTHER WORKS[24] (N=939)	
	Single parent %	Couple %	Reconst couple %	Yes %	No %	Yes %	No %
Media elsewhere in home	***			*		***	
poor	**43**	25	38	29	33	23	**31**
traditional	30	25	20	24	32	25	29
rich	27	**50**	42	**47**	36	**52**	39
Media in bedroom				***		***	
poor	28	23	25	25	20	20	**28**
book/PC	11	14	8	12	18	14	10
book/music	17	21	19	21	14	**23**	19
screen entertainment	21	19	26	20	16	**22**	15
rich	24	24	22	23	**32**	22	**28**
Media-use style	***			**		***	
low	**23**	17	11	18	18	16	**24**
traditionalist	23	19	15	20	20	20	22
screen entertainment	28	27	**39**	**29**	21	26	31
reader	10	13	19	12	**18**	**15**	7
PC fan	6	16	8	14	11	16	10
music fan	11	8	9	8	**13**	7	6

Note: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

[24]The category 'yes' refers to those mothers who work either full-time or part-time. The category 'no' refers to those mothers who are either at home, unemployed or students.

TABLE 10.1b

Percentage with medium in bedroom and NOT ELSEWHERE in house by family type

	FAMILY TYPE (N=1199)		
	Single parent	Couple	Reconstituted couple
TV-linked games machine	28	21	**38**
Shelf of books	**22**	19	11
Walkman	**22**	18	19
Gameboy	21	19	**28**
Radio	**19**	14	16
Hi-fi	**13**	10	10
PC without CD-ROM	6	7	**9**
Video recorder	**4**	2	3
Television	3	1	**6**
Teletext	2	2	2
Cable/Satellite	1	1	**2**
PC with CD-ROM	1	2	**3**

TABLE 10.2a

Percentage of parents doing activities at least once a week with child by demographics (N=830)

	ALL	AGE OF CHILD						SOCIAL GRADE			
		6-7 %	8-9 %	10-11 %	12-13 %	14-15 %	16-17 %	AB %	C1 %	C2 %	DE %
Watch TV/video together	87	**92**	**90**	**97**	90	84	*** 70	85	91	91	83
Have a good talk	77	**84**	**83**	78	74	73	*** 59	78	75	**81**	* 73
Help with homework	71	**84**	77	81	76	60	*** 28	73	74	70	68
Listen to tapes/ records/CDs	61	**70**	62	63	58	53	*** 44	55	**64**	**60**	* **61**
Discuss books	56	88	69	52	38	32	*** 22	**60**	**61**	55	* 50
Help make some thing/ spend time on hobby	54	**70**	61	62	50	40	*** 16	52	56	59	51
Listen to radio	52	57	54	**61**	50	45	** 37	50	54	53	50
Read to child	40	**83**	58	27	12	6	*** 2	38	42	42	40
Play cards/ board games	32	**51**	42	26	23	11	*** 8	35	31	31	29
Play a computer game	29	**40**	34	30	22	19	*** 11	31	31	27	28
Play or watch live sport	27	28	27	23	32	26	19	28	29	27	23
Play let's pretend games	21	**51**	42	26	23	11	*** 8	21	23	20	18
Spend time with a computer (not games)	19	26	19	17	17	14	11	**28**	20	16	*** 14
Take to park/ countryside	18	**27**	**24**	18	9	6	*** 3	**20**	16	16	* 17

Note: *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

TABLE 10.2b

Percentage of parents saying they NEVER go to theatre/concerts/ballet, museums, the cinema with their child by age of child and social grade of family (N=830)

	ALL	AGE OF CHILD						SOCIAL GRADE			
		6-7 %	8-9 %	10-11 %	12-13 %	14-15 %	16-17 %	AB %	C1 %	C2 %	DE %
Go to theatre/ concerts/ballet	56	57	51	48	55	56	70	*** 37	43	**7 2**	**7 2**
Go to museums	39	*** 34	25	33	37	44	**7 2**	*** 21	33	46	**5 4**
Go to the cinema	30	*** 24	14	23	29	34	**6 7**	*** 18	28	31	**3 9**

Note: *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

TABLE 10.2c

How often children eat a main meal, watch TV etc together with parents by demographics (N=c.1296)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boy	Girl	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
Eat a main meal									
Most days	**75**	77	74	71	77	79	74	74	76
Once or twice a week	18	18	18	23	17	15	17	20	17
Less than once a week	5	4	6	6	4	4	5	5	5
Never	2	1	3	1	2	2	4	2	2
Watch TV							**		***
Most days	**68**	67	69	65	**70**	**74**	61	61	**73**
Once or twice a week	23	24	22	28	23	16	26	30	18
Less than once a week	7	6	8	5	5	7	10	7	7
Never	2	3	2	2	1	3	3	2	3
Talk about something that matters									***
Most days	36	33	44	44	33	31	35	33	**38**
Once or twice a week	34	34	29	29	36	35	33	**37**	30
Less than once a week	24	26	20	20	24	25	26	25	22
Never	7	7	7	7	6	9	7	4	9
Talk about something on the news							***		***
Most days	17	18	16	11	16	18	**23**	14	**19**
Once or twice a week	26	27	25	16	24	31	**31**	**31**	22
Less than once a week	26	25	27	23	28	29	24	**28**	25
Never	31	30	32	**50**	32	22	22	27	**34**
Play game/make something							***		*
Most days	11	13	9	**23**	11	5	5	9	**12**
Once or twice a week	24	24	24	38	31	18	9	22	25
Less than once a week	39	39	40	28	46	43	40	**44**	35
Never	26	25	28	12	12	34	**47**	25	**28**

TABLE 10.2d

Percentage of children saying that TV is usually on at different times of day by age of child, social grade of family, presence of siblings and working status of mother

	ALL (N=1233)	**AGE OF CHILD** (N=1231)				**SOCIAL GRADE** (N=1224)		**HAS SIBLINGS** (N=1207)		**MOTHER WORKS** (N=888)	
		6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE	Yes	No	Yes	No
TV on when . . .											
wake up	21	**21**	**24**	19	18***	16	**24****	**21**	17**	19	20
get home from school	35	32	34	**42**	32***	27	**42*****	36	31	31	**39****
go to bed	62	**67**	**70**	63	50***	58	**66****	**64**	52*	64	61

Note: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

TABLE 10.2e

Percentage of children saying they usually watch because family is watching, and read TV guide to decide what to watch, by age of child, social grade of family, family type and working status of mother (N=1233)

	ALL	AGE				SOCIAL GRADE		FAMILY TYPE (N=1209)			MOTHER WORKS (N=889)	
		6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	AB C1	C2 DE	One par	Cple	Rec. cple	Yes	No
Usually watch because family is watching	9	**14**	6	7	*** 9	7	** **11**	**14**	9	** 5	6	*** 14
Usually read TV guide to decide what to watch	42	14	40	**53**	** * **58**	41	42	41	42	37	**45**	*** 40

Note: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

TABLE 10.2f

How favourite TV programme is watched by demographics (N=1194)

	ALL	AGE***				SOCIAL GRADE		FAMILY TYPE (N=1170)			MOTHER WORKS (N=862)	
		6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	AB C1	C2 DE	One par	Cple	Rec. cple	Yes	No
Usually watch												
by self	23	19	16	**27**	**30**	23	23	24	22	33	23	25
with someone	68	70	76	66	59	69	67	65	69	60	69	65
it depends	9	11	8	7	11	8	11	11	9	7	8	10
If not alone												
with mother	34	26	**39**	**34**	**36**	30	**37**	36	33	5	33	37
with father	25	16	**31**	24	**31**	25	26	9	29	20	24	24
with sister	28	**34**	31	27	18	28	27	22	29	23	30	25
with brother	28	**36**	27	28	20	26	29	26	28	26	26	27
with friend	8	6	4	7	**13**	8	8	15	6	3	6	4
with other	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	**4**	1	-	2	2

Note:***p<0.001. Percentages if not alone are based on the whole sample. Children could name more than one person, so percentages add up to more than 100.

TABLE 10.2g

How favourite TV programme is watched, by boys and girls with and without their own TV set (N=1194)

	ALL		GENDER			
			GIRLS		BOYS	
	OWN TV?		OWN TV?		OWN TV?	
	Yes %	No %	Yes %	No %	Yes %	No %
Usually watch						
alone	**28**	15	**24**	10	**31**	24
with someone else	63	**77**	68	**81**	58	**68**
it depends	10	9	11	9	11	9
If not alone . . .						
with mother	**36**	31	**45**	35	**28**	25
with father	**27**	24	**23**	17	30	**33**
with sister	23	**36**	32	**42**	16	**27**
with brother	26	**31**	21	**29**	30	**35**
with friend	**9**	5	10	7	**9**	3
with other	2	2	1	2	3	1

Note: Percentages if not alone based on whole sample. Children named more than one person.

TABLE 10.2h

How favourite TV programme is watched by genre of programme

	Soap %	Cartoons %	Sport %	Other series or serials %	Sci-fi %	Comedy %
Alone	12	25	30	31	35	35
Boy	11	28	31	33	39	40
Girl	12	19	20	30	21	32
With someone else	**80**	63	61	63	50	55
Boy	79	58	60	56	54	53
Girl	80	75	80	66	36	57
It depends	8	12	9	6	15	7
Boy	11	14	9	10	7	8
Girl	8	7	0	4	43	11

TABLE 10.2i

How usually play computer/video games, by demographics (N= 623)

	ALL WHO PLAY AGE 9+	GENDER*		AGE			SOCIAL GRADE		FAMILY TYPE* (N=613)			MOTHER WORKS** (N=456)	
		Boy	Girl	9-11	12-14	15-17	AB C1	C2 DE	One par	Cpl	Rec. cpl	Yes	No
Usually play cmp. game													
by self	45	**47**	42	49	43	43	48	43	33	**49**	43	**51**	43
with someone	41	37	**48**	38	40	45	37	44	**50**	37	**49**	34	**48**
it depends	14	16	11	13	17	12	15	14	17	14	8	15	8
If not alone with													
mother	3	1	4	**4**	2	0	3	3	4	2	3	2	2
father	6	6	5	**10**	3	3	5	7	4	6	6	7	6
sister	9	4	**15**	9	9	5	10	8	8	8	11	8	8
brother	20	19	21	17	22	18	19	20	21	19	20	18	21
friend	30	21	**38**	23	33	**35**	29	31	44	27	26	27	26
other	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	5	0	2	0	1

Note: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05. Percentages for those not alone based on whole sample. Children could name more than one person.

TABLE 10.2j

How most enjoy watching television (N=507) and playing computer games (N=403), by gender and age[25]

	TELEVISION						COMPUTER GAMES					
		GENDER		AGE				GENDER		AGE		
	ALL %	Boy %	Girl %	10-11 %	12-14 %	15-16 %	**ALL** %	Boy %	Girl %	10-11 %	12-14 %	15-16 %
Alone	**40**	42	46	31	**45**	**44**	**44**	**48**	32	43	42	**51**
With friends	19	**36**	18	16	19	12	28	19	20	25	**31**	19
With siblings	15	11	19	**19**	12	13	15	9	**20**	16	13	20
With mother	11	1	2	**16**	9	6	1	9	12	3	1	0
With father	3	2	5	5	4	0	4	4	2	5	4	0
With other	5	2	6	5	5	1	4	2	7	5	3	4
N/A	7	7	3	8	8	3	5	7	7	3	6	7

[25]From the broadcasters YoungView panel, children aged 10-16.

TABLE 10.3a

Percentage of children thinking parents keen for them to use particular media, by demographics (Based on those with access at home)

	ALL	AGE OF CHILD				SOCIAL GRADE		MOTHER WORKS	
		6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE	Yes	No
Print									
Books (N=1122)	**65**	64	**72**	67	59**	**72**	60**	**69**	62*
I.T.									
PC - not games (N=661)	**39**	24	40	**47**	42***	**44**	33**	**44**	28***
Screen entert.									
TV (N=1292)	**20**	**26**	22	17	17**	14	**25*****	17	**24***
Video (N=1219)	**12**	**20**	13	8	10**	9	**16*****	12	13
Comp. games (N=971)	**13**	**28**	14	10	* 7***	9	**16*****	11	15
Audio									
Radio (N=1209)	**13**	11	13	12	15	10	**15****	12	11
Playing music (N=1286)	**17**	14	15	19	20	15	19	18	15
Communication									
Phone (N=1169)	**8**	9	8	7	7	8	8	9	6

Note: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

TABLE 10.4a

Children's and parents' views about shared family activities, by family interaction type (N=925)

	FAMILY INTERACTION TYPE					
	'Distanced' %	'Conven-tional' %	'All-round' %	'Intimate' %	'Outward-looking' %	'Democratic' %
Child says most days						
***Eat together	2	**98**	94	69	80	85
***Play a game/ make something	5	0	**58**	0	16	0
***Talk about something that matters	11	0	77	**97**	43	25
***Talk about things in the news	1	0	18	3	**100**	0
Parent says						
***Everyone discusses decisions/ family decide	12	4	29	26	28	**80**
**Mean number of subjects triggering arguments	4	4	3	4	3	3

Note: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01

TABLE 10.4b

Age of child by family interaction type (N= 925) and for whole sample (N=1303)

	FAMILY INTERACTION TYPE						ALL
	'Dis-tanced' %	'Conven-tional' %	'All-round' %	'In-timate' %	'Outward-looking' %	'Demo-cratic' %	%
AGE OF CHILD							
6-8	27	22	**3 3**	13	20	25	25
9-11	29	28	13	33	31	22	24
12-14	23	30	17	**4 5**	14	**3 4**	26
15-17	21	21	**3 7**	9	**3 5**	20	25

Note: *** p<0.001

TABLE 10.4c

Media use, media talk and incidence of watching TV with parents by family interaction type

	FAMILY INTERACTION TYPE					
	'Dis-tanced' %	'Conven-tional' %	'All-round' %	'In-timate' %	'Outward-looking' %	'Demo-cratic' %
Media use*** (N=788)						
Low users	26	17	25	12	22	13
Traditionalist	19	22	25	19	*10*	26
Screen ent fans	24	28	*19*	**3 7**	29	26
Book fans	*9*	11	*8*	15	**1 8**	15
PC fans	14	15	*8*	16	15	15
Music lovers	7	6	**1 6**	*2*	7	6
Media talk (N=784)						
***No. of media mother talks about	1.2	1.4	1.6	1.3	**1 . 9**	1.4
Watch TV most days with parent(s)** (N=921)	*60*	63	70	**7 6**	72	67

Note: *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01

TABLE 10.4d

Social contexts for watching television (N=544) and playing computer games (N=462), by family interaction type

	FAMILY INTERACTION TYPE					
	'Distanced' %	'Con-ventional' %	'All-round' %	'Intimate' %	'Outward-looking' %	'Democratic' %
Usually watch fav. TV prog. . [26]	28	32	21	33	30	31
alone	63	63	64	60	63	67
with someone else	9	6	15	8	7	2
it depends						
If with someone	18	28	29	24	32	24
with father	31	41	32	34	37	34
with mother	24	31	23	19	24	31
with brother	31	22	23	19	13	18
with sister	10	4	8	8	6	6
with friend						
***Usually play fav comp. game**						
alone	34	**6 6**	45	50	37	54
with someone else	**5 6**	25	**4 8**	33	37	33
it depends	9	9	7	17	**2 6**	13
If with someone						
with father	6	4	**1 4**	4	5	3
with mother	6	1	0	2	7	0
with brother	9	11	**2 4**	19	21	13
with sister	9	4	**1 7**	0	9	3
with friend	**5 0**	18	21	29	**4 4**	28
***Go to friend's house to play computer games**	*34*	45	*32*	37	**5 1**	46

Note: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05. If with someone, figures based on whole sample.

[26]Only those who have their own television set, and therefore the choice about whether or not to watch alone, have been entered into the analysis. Similarly only those with their own TV-linked games machine have been considered in the question about who they play their favourite computer game with.

TABLE 10.5a

Who most of free time is spent with by demographics (N=1296)

	ALL	GENDER ***		AGE OF CHILD***				SOCIAL GRADE	
	%	Boy %	Girl %	6-8 %	9-11 %	12-14 %	15-17 %	ABC1	C2DE
Alone	4	5	4	3	5	4	5	5	3
With a group of friends	40	**4 5**	35	27	31	48	**5 4**	40	40
With one best friend	26	24	**2 8**	28	25	25	26	24	28
With family	30	27	**3 3**	**4 2**	**4 0**	24	15	31	30

Note: *** p<0.001

TABLE 10.5b

Average time spent per day by all with access to hardware at home

	AVERAGE MINUTES PER DAY
Reading books (not for school) (N=1060)***	
Alone	**25**
With group of friends	13
With one best friend	14
With family	17
Listening to music (N=1203)***	
Alone	78
With group of friends	77
With one best friend	67
With family	*44*
Using a PC at home (any use) (N=530)	
Alone	42
With group of friends	33
With one best friend	31
With family	21
Using the Internet (N=84)	
Alone	34
With group of friends	5
With one best friend	3
With family	3
Total media use (N=1198)***	
Alone	331
With group of friends	325
With one best friend	304
With family	*274*

***p<0.001

TABLE 10.6a

Percentages saying they talk to their friends about media by demographics (N=1303)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE OF CHILD				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boy	Girl	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
SCREEN MEDIA									
TV	64	62	67	53	59	**71**	**73*****	**69**	61**
Video	34	36	32	27	29	**43**	37***	31	36
Computer game	30	**50**	10***	26	**36**	**35**	24***	32	29
AUDIO MEDIA									
Music tapes/CD	46	38	**53****	27	39	51	**65*****	45	46
Radio	13	12	* 14	10	10	13	**19*****	14	12
PRINT MEDIA									
Magazine	30	19	**41****	10	32	**44**	34***	32	29
Book	13	11	*	**20**	14	9	8***	14	12
Newspaper	9	**12**	15	2	4	8	**24*****	9	10
Comic	6	**8**	7*** 3***	**11**	**9**	1	2***	5	6
IT									
Using PC not for games	10	**12**	8*	7	11	12	10	12	8
COMMUNICATION									
Telephone	7	4	9	3	4	9	11**	8	6
NONE OF THESE	7	7	7	**15**	6	2	4***	7	7

Note: *** p<0.001

TABLE 10.6b

Percentages saying they swap media goods, clothes, toys and things they collect with friends by demographics (N= 1303)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boy	Girl	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
Music tapes/ CDs/ records	37	32	**42****	8	17	48	**75****	36	39
Videos	33	33	33	25	20	39	**48****	32	34
Computer games	26	**43**	9***	13	25	**39**	26***	24	27
Other things collected	24	**29**	19***	**32**	**34**	21	10***	**27**	22*
Magazines	21	12	**30****	5	13	**33**	**31****	23	19
Books	19	13	**26****	19	23	18	17	**23**	17**
Clothes	16	5	**28****	8	5	17	**35****	17	16
Toys	11	12	11	**31**	13	2	1***	11	12
Comics	5	5	4	6	**9**	3	2***	4	5
None of these	14	12	15	**24**	15	7	9***	12	15

Note: *** p<0.001

TABLE 10.6c

Percentage visiting a friend to use media they lack at home, by demographics (N=970)

	ALL AGE 9 +	GENDER		AGE OF CHILD			SOCIAL GRADE			
		Boy	Girl	9-11	12-14	15-17	AB	C1	C2	DE
Play computer game	43	**61**	24***	47	44	37	36	41	45	46
Watch a video	43	42	44	35	44	**50*** **	35	42	45	46
Watch cable TV	26	28	23	25	23	29	18	22	27	**31****
Use PC (not for games)	23	**28**	19***	21	25	24	16	25	23	27
Use CD-ROM	16	**19**	13*	14	18	16	14	18	15	16
Use Internet	8	**10**	5**	5	**9**	**9***	9	11	6	5

Note: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

TABLE 10.6d

What the telephone is used most often for, by demographics (N=760)

	ALL	GENDER***		AGE ***				SOCIAL GRADE ***	
		Boy	Girl	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
Chat to friends	**47**	35	**59**	48	42	45	53	44	**51**
Make arrangements with friends	36	**48**	26	30	38	35	40	38	35
Discuss homework	6	5	7	1	6	12	4	**10**	2
Let your parents know where you are	5	5	5	8	7	5	3	4	7
Find out times for things like the cinema	1	2	1	0	3	2	1	2	1
None of these/DK	4	5	2	**13**	3	1	0	3	4

Note: *** p<0.001

TABLE 10.6e

How often those with telephone in home use it, by demographics (N=1169)

	ALL	GENDER ***		AGE ***				SOCIAL GRADE ***	
		Boy	Girl	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
Don't use phone	39	**43**	32	**53**	**48**	30	20	32	**42**
Use phone									
6-7 days a week	18	13	**23**	3	6	22	**39**	19	18
4-5 days a week	9	10	9	3	9	11	14	9	9
2-3 days a week	15	15	15	9	13	21	16	18	13
Once a week	14	13	14	20	17	9	10	16	11
Once a month or less	6	6	7	13	6	6	2	6	7

Note: *** $p<0.001$

CHAPTER 11

PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES

11.1 CONTEXTUALISING PARENTAL VIEWS OF THE MEDIA

What are parents' views regarding their children's leisure opportunities and media use?[1] As parents' views and experiences are presented throughout this report, we do not attempt to be comprehensive here, but rather focus on their views of television and computers, and how this may translate into attempts to mediate or regulate their children's media use.

Since concerns about young people's media use *in general* attract a fair amount of public attention, it is useful to place such concerns in context. We gave parents in the survey a check list of concerns and asked them, while thinking "about YOUR CHILD and what is affecting his or her life nowadays" to name the three things which were worrying them the most.

Table 11.1a shows that the media are not the most salient of parents' concerns *for their own children*. Overall, twice as many parents are concerned about the availability of illegal drugs and/or job prospects for their child as are concerned about violence, sex or bad language their child may see on television. Violence, sex and bad language on videos and/or addictive computer games worry very few. Only 6% of parents overall identify them as one of their top three concerns.

The nature of parents' concerns, as one would expect, are affected by the age of the child. Thus around twice as many parents of 15-17 year-olds compared with parents of 6-8 year-olds are concerned about their child's job prospects and the availability of good social facilities. Parents of older children are also significantly more likely to be concerned about the availability of illegal drugs and/or violence, sex and bad language on videos. On the other hand, it is the parents of primary school children who are concerned about good childcare facilities. Three times as many parents of the youngest children are concerned about safety on the roads and/or having enough time to spend with their child, and they are also more concerned about educational standards in schools.

Social grade also has an influence on the prevalence of two concerns: working-class parents are significantly more likely to worry about the availability of good social facilities for their children and their job prospects. Interestingly, however, the only issue where the views of parents are influenced by the gender of the child is that of television content. Concern about violence, sex and bad language on television is more likely to be identified as a cause for concern amongst the parents of girls (29% of girls' parents concerned compared with 19% of boys' parents).

INSERT TABLE 11.1a HERE

Across the board, concerns about the media lag far behind the same top four concerns - the availability of drugs, the child's job prospects, the child being a victim of crime and educational standards in schools. However, family type has some effect on the less frequent concerns. Single parents are more than twice as likely to be concerned about the availability of good child care[2] and parents in reconstituted families are more likely to be worried about having enough time to spend with their child.[3] Further, mothers who work full-time are twice as likely as those who do not work

[1]Parents whose children took part in the main survey were asked to complete a questionnaire to complement the interview with their children: 74% returned the questionnaire, giving us information from one parent in each family (see Appendix 1.2). This was usually the mother (79% of cases), but the sample of 202 fathers is sufficiently sizeable to be reported.

[2]Single parent, 11%: couples, 4%.

[3]Single parent, 16%: Couple, 12%: Reconstituted couple 24%: $p<0.02$.

to be concerned about having enough time to spend with their child.[4]

Nor are the media top of the list when it comes to causes of family friction (see Table 11.1b). Asked to say which subjects regularly cause arguments with their children, parents name helping in the house almost twice as often as they name watching television or using the telephone. Both homework and going to bed are also more contentious than any media use.

INSERT TABLE 11.1b HERE

Watching television and using the telephone, however, are on a par with going out and money as a source of family disputes - 3 in 10 parents say they cause regular arguments with their children. Only around half that number of families quarrel about watching videos, playing computer games and even fewer about listening to music.

The causes of arguments change as children get older. Watching television or videos and playing computer games cause arguments most often when the children are very young, while arguments about use of the telephone and playing music increase as children grow older. There are also more arguments in families in straightened financial circumstances: arguments about money and going out and about all media except television are most common amongst the poorest DE families.

11.2 PARENTS' CONCERNS ABOUT TELEVISION

Parents have a variety of anxieties about what they allow their younger children especially to watch on television and they are particularly concerned that their children may be wasting time in front of the screen (see Chapter 5).

> Well I like them to be involved in things like activities, I mean I would just die if they wanted to sit in front of that box all day, I would really. So I like them to be in things, I don't make them, but they like it too, I mean I don't say you will, you know, but <D> has his rugby, <L>'s got Brownies and they swim and, you know, I mean I do like them out in groups and all that, and I take them to everything they want to go to, and I involve myself with them in the school 100%.
>
> (Working-class father with boy, 10, and two younger daughters)

In our survey of parents on the Television Opinion Panel, 23% said they had specific worries about their children and their viewing of television. Asked to say what these were, the familiar concerns about violence, sex and bad language predominated.[5] These issues were also frequently touched upon by parents we interviewed.

> Interviewer: Is there any particular channel that you prefer her to watch or not to watch?
> Mother: Errm Channel 4 I don't like her to see because you see things advertised and it comes on and it's not what you'd expected. You know, sort of the language and stuff like this.
> Interviewer: Mmm, and what do you think you'd object to more, swearing, violence or sex?
> Mother: Errm, I think mostly sex and language and I suppose violence as well. I mean you've got to watch what kids are watching on the telly because they re-enact them. I mean the little'un, he watches *Power Rangers* and he tries to do *Power Rangers* martial arts on other kids and he's lashing out and kicking them. He does, he thinks he's a Power Ranger.
>
> (Working class mother of four including a 9 year-old girl and a younger brother, living in the city)

[4]Non-working mothers, 9%: working part-time 14%: working full-time 20%.

[5]The figure of 23% compares with that of 24% in the main survey naming concern about violence, sex and bad language on television (see Table 11.1a).

Mother: I do like to watch a film, but you have to be careful of what film because of the language.

Interviewer: You mean that you would have to be careful for yourself? Or for the children?

Mother: For the children. If it starts at 8 o'clock then they have got one hour of it. And yet I know that they all hear bad language because I know that all the children use bad language... Well there is a gun down there just by your foot. My son is into guns, where does he get it from? Television! If I didn't give him a gun and I denied him having one then he would still make a gun out of a piece of cardboard, a stick from out of the garden. He wants a gun because his imagination wants a gun. Now that gun has come off the television because I don't wave guns around, and I ain't seen anybody up the street as yet (laughs).

(Widowed mother, bringing up girl, 13, and boy, 10)

11.2.1 Parental beliefs about media effects

More generally, the worries of parents on the Television Opinion Panel were about:

- the blurring of the fantasy/reality distinction.
- television's power to establish deviant behaviour as normative
- the possibility of children imitating bad/ violent behaviour
- the undermining of parental authority
- the lowering of cultural standards
- consumerism
- television encouraging passivity/laziness
- displacement of reading and other "healthier" activities
- the end of childhood/exposure of children to "adult" material.

Drawing on this material we included in our main survey a number of statements related to the possible effect of viewing on the target child and asked parents in how far they agreed or disagreed that watching television had had any of these effects on their child. We also gave parents the opportunity to offer positive views of television (see Table 11.1c). Had their child learned a lot from television, or been encouraged to read some good books? Were they able to distinguish between what they saw and real life?

INSERT TABLE 11.1c HERE

There is almost unanimous agreement that children know the difference between television characters and real life and more than half of parents (57%) agree that their child has learned a lot from television.

Father: Well I mean when we got television we only knew Newcastle, that's it.

Mother : Well yes, I mean TV makes your world get bigger.

Father: Yeah, it's an educational thing. And it lets you see what the rest of the world is like.

Mother : We could never do that. I mean when I was a child you got pictures in books and you got pictures in magazines.

Father: Well I mean the sight of Kennedy being shot in America, y'know. I mean we knew very little about Kennedy until we'd seen the murder.

Mother: I mean even now I am amazed when I see things like animals in their natural environment and all that, but <C> seems to think it's.

Father: Well yeah, he knows that, he knows all about that doesn't he?

Mother: But we didn't.

(Working class parents with son aged 13)

On a less positive note, the balance of opinion among parents is that watching television can have a deleterious effect on reading. Almost twice as many agree that their child would read more if they didn't watch so much (49%), compared with the numbers agreeing that their child has been encouraged to read some good books (26%). The effect on consumerism also drew majority agreement: 61% of parents agree their own child "often wants to buy things" they have seen on

television. Fewer (22%) feel their child has often been upset by violence on fictional television programmes, made to grow up too quickly (16%) or made to think violence is part of everyday life (15%).

Interesting differences emerged in parents' beliefs about the effects of television on boys and girls, with parents being significantly more likely to think that their daughters have been:

- encouraged to read some good books
- upset by things they have seen on the news
- upset by violence on fictional television programmes.

The last finding may go some way towards explaining why parents of girls are more likely to say they are concerned about violence, sex and bad language on television (see Table 11.1a). On the other hand, parents are significantly more likely to think that their sons have:

- learned a lot from television
- copied violent behaviour they have seen on television.

11.2.2 Parental satisfaction with television programmes

Parents' beliefs about the effects of watching television are linked to their satisfaction with programmes available for their child, and the associations are both different and stronger for working-class than middle-class parents.[6] For middle-class parents, only the belief that the child had learned a lot by watching television predicted satisfaction, while for working-class parents, belief in the educational value of viewing and effects on reading were key factors associated with levels of satisfaction with television programmes. So too were beliefs about the effects on the child of watching violence on news or fictional programmes and television making children grow up too soon.[7]

There is also some evidence that parental concerns translate into action. We found small but significant relationships between the amount children viewed and some of their parents' beliefs about the effect of television. For example, parents who think their child is often upset by violence on news reports[8] or fictional television programmes[9] or who think it is a bad idea for their child to have a television set in their bedroom[10] tend to have children who watch less often. However, tellingly, the strongest relationship with the child's viewing times involves none of these beliefs, but rather the amount of time the parent him or herself views.[11]

11.2.3 Television in the child's bedroom

It is parents who have to finance costly purchases, and we might therefore presume that a child's ownership of a television set reflects not only their wishes, but also a degree of parental approval. However, although 63% of 6-17 year-olds have a TV set in their bedroom (see Table 4.3b) only 19% of parents think it mainly a good thing for a young person of their child's age to have a television set in their own room, while 31% think it mainly a bad thing (see Table 11.2a).

INSERT TABLE 11.2a HERE

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[6]Using multiple regression to predict how satisfied parents were with what is currently available for their child to watch on television, we first entered the age and gender of the child and the social grade of the family, and then added eleven beliefs about the effects of viewing on the target child.

[7]Interestingly, parents' satisfaction with available programmes is related to *more* agreement that the child has been influenced by advertising. Clearly this relationship cannot be explained in terms of causality: perhaps wanting to buy things often is simply associated with more exposure.

[8]Pearson correlation -0.08, $p<0.02$.

[9]Pearson correlation -0.10, $p<0.01$.

[10]Pearson correlation - 0.18, $p<0.001$.

[11]Pearson correlation 0.28, $p<0.001$.

The parents of children under the age of 9 are the most likely to think it a bad thing. Opinions are also strongly class-related: 43% of middle-class parents think it mainly a bad thing for a child to have a television set in the bedroom compared with only 20% of working-class parents. Similarly, 38% of middle-class parents are dissatisfied with the programmes available for their child to view compared with 28% of working-class parents (see Table 11.2a).

Interestingly, 20% of parents (drawn equally from working-class and middle-class backgrounds) who think it mainly a bad thing nevertheless allow their child to have a set in their bedroom. Similarly, 30% of those who are dissatisfied with what is available for their child to view on television, nevertheless allow their child to have a personal set.

How then, if at all, do parental beliefs about the effects of watching television relate to the decision to allow that child to have their own television? Using discriminant function analysis, we found a variety of variables which, taken together, predict whether or not children have their own television set:

- age of child (more older children had a set)
- gender of child (more boys had a set)
- social grade of family (more low grade households had a set)[12]
- parents' belief that child often wants to buy things seen on television (more whose child has a set agree with this)
- parents' satisfaction with available programmes for child to view (higher satisfaction is associated with having a set)

The general lack of an association between parents' views about the effects of television on their child and the decision to provide that child with a set suggests that other factors are at work.[13] Certainly our interviews with families suggest that parents' own need for privacy, as well as pressure from their children, are the critical factors in the decision to provide a child with a set of their own.

Interviewer:	Do you think that there are any advantages or disadvantages to <C> having TV in his bedroom?
Mother:	Advantages are that we can watch programmes in here when <C> wants to watch something else and ...
Father:	Disadvantages are that it err disencourages family life because it separates people. Errm, maybe not so much <C>, but I do think that in general in encourages children to stay in their room. And it breaks off the contact.
Interviewer:	So is spending time together as a family important to you?
Father :	Yes, of course, the family is the most important thing.
Interviewer:	How long has <C> had a television in his room for?
Mother:	Errm, since he was about 10.

(Working-class family with 12 year-old boy)

11.3 PARENTS' ATTITUDES TO COMPUTERS

The personal computer has a very positive image amongst British parents. Our interviews showed many parents anxious to provide their children with access at home to a PC and some who have already made considerable sacrifices to do so.

[12]Moreover, compared with middle-class parents, working-class parents whose child has a television set are more likely to think their child learns a lot from watching, less likely to agree that television has made their child think violence is part of normal everyday life, yet more likely to think that their child has grown up too quickly because of their viewing.

[13]That parents' beliefs about television encouraging consumerism in their child is a significant predictor reminds us that this analysis cannot demonstrate causality: it is more likely that having a set of their own encourages them to want to be consumers, rather than the other way around.

Interviewer:	Can you remember how things changed when you got the computer?
Father:	Well...
Mother:	(interrupts) It's a sore subject in this house.
Interviewer:	Why?
Mother:	Because he (husband) sold my necklace to buy it for the kids (laughs).

(Working-class family with boy, 10, and older brother)

In our survey using the broadcasters' Television Opinion Panel we asked parents if they had any worries about their child and computers in general. Whereas 27% say they have worries about television, only 9% have worries about their child and computers. In this case the worries are about:

- the child spending too much time playing games
- the violent nature of many computer games
- concerns about the Internet and the child's access to pornography and other kinds of unsuitable information
- possible effects on health (headaches, disturbed vision)
- computers stopping the child from thinking for him or herself.

Some parents are also concerned that computer skills are not being well taught in school (see Chapter 8). The family interviews confirmed that parents are very aware of the importance of IT skills in the job market and anxious for their children to learn as much as they can about computer technology.

Interviewer:	Do you think it's important for kids, or do you think too much is made of computers these days?
Mother:	I think it's quite important now, nowadays, because it seems to be the boom-
Father:	The whole way the way of life is going to go-
Mother:	The way of life aye, so I mean I feel it's really important for everybody to be able to master a computer now.
Interviewer:	So have you any plans for yourself or ...
Mother:	Well I think we all have in the future when they get sort of older [xxxxx] worthwhile then it would be. I think it would be a good asset for the family.

(Working-class parents with 10 year-old boy and two younger sisters)

However, although PCs are bought by parents because of their educational potential, the majority ruefully agree that their children mostly use them for playing games (see Chapter 5). On the other hand, as we have seen (see Table 11.1a), only a tiny minority (6%) of parents in the survey, as in the earlier Television Opinion Panel research, identify addictive computer games as a cause for concern *about their own child*. Those few children whose parents are concerned about addictive computer games are more likely to come from poorer, working-class families (see Table 11.1a).

Interviewer:	Does having the games console ever cause arguments?
Mother :	Yes, constantly!
Father :	Yes, they want it on all the time but I won't let them.
Interviewer:	And why's that?
Father :	Well, one, it's not good for your eyes, and two, I get a headache if I play too much.
Mother :	I'm totally anti-computer games, I'd rather that they sat and read a book, or sat and drew or something.
Father:	But they can do all that as well.
Mother:	No, they can't if they're sitting behind the computer!
Interviewer:	So you'd want <S> to read more books rather than play on the computer?
Mother:	Yes, definitely!
Interviewer:	How do you try and encourage her to do that?
Father:	Well, they've got the reading club at school, they get through three books a week. And <S> even reads the newspaper now (laughs).
Mother:	Or if I'm really in a mood I just unplug the computer.
Interviewer:	And does it work?
Father:	Yeah

Mother: Well, she gets a lip on and that, but then again they know that anything that I say is final and they don't argue with that.

(Working-class parents of a girl aged 9)

In contrast with what we found when considering the viewing habits of children whose parents are concerned about violence, sex and bad language on television, the children whose parents are concerned about addictive computer games do in fact play for longer than the children of parents who are not concerned (see Table 11.3a).

INSERT TABLE 11.3a HERE

In our main survey we asked parents about their attitudes towards computers. Table 11.3b shows that parents are well aware of the importance of computing skills, but that only a minority are themselves confident about using computers.

INSERT TABLE 11.3b HERE

Almost all parents (95%) think it is more important for their children to know about computers than it is for themselves to know about them. The great majority (79%) are keen for their child to know more about computers, agreeing that people get left behind if they don't know about them (71%).[14] Interestingly, the parents of daughters, compared with the parents of sons, are less likely to say that they think it more important for children to know about computers than for parents,[15] suggesting that some gender differences in society stem from parental beliefs.

On the other hand, only 51% of parents think that computers are exciting, compared with 81% of their children and only 69% say they are very or fairly comfortable using a computer, compared with 92% of their children (see Table 7.1a).

Although there are few or no differences between the attitudes to computers of *children* from different social grades (see Chapter 7) there are such differences between *parents* from different social backgrounds. Thus working-class parents are less likely to say they are very or fairly comfortable using computers.[16] They are also more likely to agree that computers stop people thinking for themselves.[17] On the other hand they are even more likely to say that they are keen for their children to know more about computers.[18]

Around half (48%) of the parents we interviewed do not use a computer themselves either at home or at work and amongst those who *do* personally use a computer, just over a third (36%) are "very comfortable" with the technology. Interestingly, there is a small but significant correlation between a parent using a PC at home (though not at work) and the child in that home feeling comfortable using a PC. This suggests that what makes a difference to children feeling comfortable using a PC is not so much parents' experience with computers as the direct visibility of that experience to their children. However, having a mother in paid employment also has some effect: although the differences involved are small, children with employed mothers are significantly more likely to be comfortable using a computer.[19]

When we look at the relationship between parents' attitudes and those of their children, we find that there are very small but significant correlations between parents thinking that computers are exciting or stop people thinking for themselves and their children having similar views (see Table 11.3c).

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[14]These percentages indicate greater parental concern compared with their children: only 64% of children think it is more important for children to understand computers than for their parents and only 55% think you get left behind if you don't know about computers.

[15]Parents of sons, 46% strongly agree, parents of daughters 37%; $p<0.01$.

[16]AB 68%: C1 59%: C2 54%: DE 52% ; $p<0.01$.

[17]AB 11%: C1 20%: C2 27%: DE 32%; $p<0.001$.

[18]AB 70%: C1 80%: C2 81%: DE 84% ; $p<0.03$.

[19]Mother in paid work, 93%: mother not in paid work 91%; $p<0.03$.

INSERT TABLE 11.3c HERE

Parents were also asked who they thought was most knowledgeable about computers in the family (see Table 11.3d). Fathers and the child themselves, particularly if this is a boy, are most often named.

There are, however, striking differences between working-class and middle-class families: in middle-class families the father is much more likely to be named and the child is no more likely to be named than the mother; in working-class families the child is the most often named and there is little difference between the numbers naming the mother or father.

INSERT TABLE 11.3d HERE

Interviewer:	So who would you say knows more about them you or <D>?
Father:	<D>. Definitely.
Interviewer:	And do you know much about that he's doing on computers in school, does he talk about it?
Father:	He doesn't talk about it but the headmaster, at one parents' night he did point out that on - it's an Apple Mac they've got - and he asked <D> to do something, and I didn't think for a minute he would be able to, and he was "Look at this wow, look at this". Well, that would be double Dutch to me. You know, like I didn't want to look stupid in front of the headmaster, you know, and I was saying "Oh right". So he must obviously be able to work it you know, do something with it, but it really is double Dutch to me. I just never took an interest in them at all.

(Working-class parents with 10 year-old boy and two younger sisters)

We also asked *children* who in the family knew most about computers (see Table 11.3e). Overall there is very close agreement: 31% of both parents and children name the father and 29% of children and 27% of parents name the child. Slightly more parents name the mother (16% compared with 12% of children) and slightly fewer a brother (14% compared with 17% of children).

Boys are twice as likely as girls to name themselves as the experts at home. There are also significant age and social grade effects. Younger children and those from middle-class families are most likely to name the father, while older children and working-class children are more likely to name themselves, with fathers and brothers next most likely to be named. The employment status of the mother also influences views: children in homes where the mother works are twice as likely to name the mother as the one who knows most:[20] 20% of mothers who work full-time, compared with only 12% of those who work part-time, are named as the most knowledgeable by their children. (Interestingly, working mothers are not any more likely to name themselves than non-working mothers.)

INSERT TABLE 11.3e HERE

Family type also has an effect on children's answers: 41% of children in one-parent families (where 90% of parents were female) name themselves, compared with only 25% living with their fathers and mothers and 31% living in reconstituted families. Children living with both parents, as we might expect, are much more likely to name their fathers or stepfathers (36% compared with only 10% of those living in single-parent families).

By and large, parents and children agree on this question of IT expertise: in 70% of the cases where a child names themselves as the most knowledgeable, the parent does so also. Similarly in 72% of cases there is agreement that the father is the most knowledgeable and in 65% that it is the mother.

Does it matter who knows most about information technologies in the family? It has been suggested that the pace of technological change is such that children now encounter innovations before their parents, reversing traditional status hierarchies. And indeed we find that parents who say that their child is the most knowledgeable in the family about computers are also more likely to say that

[20]Mother not working 8%: mother working, 15%; $p<0.001$.

important decisions are arrived at democratically in the family. This is especially true for the youngest children, although this does not, according to the children's reports, result in their having greater self esteem.

11.4 PARENTAL MEDIATION OF MEDIA USE

11.4.1 Parents' views on regulation

There have been many debates, and much research on parental regulation (or mediation) of children and young people's media use (e.g. Abelman, 1991; Austin, 1993; Lin, 1989). It has been pointed out that parents regulate their child's use of media and other activities in a number of ways. They may try to influence their child's reactions through discussion, or by simply sharing media time with the child. More straight-forwardly they may seek to control access to media and hence time spent on that activity. Focussing on this last form of regulation, we asked whether parents ever tell the child when they can and cannot:

- watch television/ videos
- use/ play on a computer
- listen to music
- make television calls
- read books.

To place the regulation of media use in context, we also asked about parents' strategies to manage the child's going out, for as we have seen this is more likely to concern parents than media use (see Chapter 4).[21]

The proportions of fathers and mothers saying that they controlled access to each of the media we asked about is very similar (see Table 11.4a). Only in the case of the telephone are mothers more likely to say they tell their child when they can or can't use it.

In support of our argument about the importance of regulation of indoors/outdoors, for both mothers and fathers, regulation of when the child can go out tops the list, with only regulation of viewing hours on television or video being reported as frequently.

As we might expect, regulation of all activities falls off as children get older. After the age of 14, only going out and making telephone calls are sometimes restricted by the majority of parents. On the other hand only 15% of parents of children at that age say they never restrict any of the activities we listed.

Middle-class parents are more likely than working-class parents to control when their child watches television and when he or he goes out; otherwise there are no significant differences.

INSERT TABLE 11.4a HERE

11.4.2 Child's views on regulation

We also asked the child in each family if their mother and father[22] sometimes told them when they

[21]We also asked parents which of these six things they "sometimes chatted about" with their child. Overall, for both fathers (71%) and mothers (77%) watching television or videos is most often named as a subject of conversation. However reading books and listening to music (activities which children are only rarely told when they can or can't do) are also mentioned as subjects of conversation by the majority of parents. Mothers are more likely to talk about reading books (65% of mothers compared with 55% of fathers). There is no difference in the numbers talking about music (54% of fathers and 53% of mothers). As we might expect, however, fathers are more likely to talk about computers (53% compared with 45% of mothers). Children were also asked about parents chatting about media and going out. Like their parents, children claim that significantly more mothers chat about reading and fathers about computers.

[22]Answers are based on those who have a father or a mother living with them.

could or could not do any of these activities. If we compare answers (see Table 11.4b) with those in the previous table we see immediately that, although the rank ordering of interventions is very similar (with the exception of making telephone calls which figures second on the list rather than third), far fewer children think their parents, and their fathers in particular, tell them when they can or can't do any of these things.

As regards television in particular, far fewer children note any attempt on their parent's part to control viewing: 75% of mothers and 73% of fathers say they do so, compared with only 41% of children saying their mothers, and 35% saying their fathers, do so.

There are also some significant differences in the story told by boys and girls. More girls claim that both their fathers and their mothers tell them when they can and cannot use the telephone. Similarly more boys say their mothers tell them when they can or cannot use or play on the computer. More fathers, according to their daughters, tell them when they can listen to music. These differences make intuitive sense, as we know that girls are more likely to use the telephone and listen to music and boys to play computer games (see Table 5.2a and Table 10.6e).

INSERT TABLE 11.4b HERE

If we consider the answers of children who live with a father and mother (and who therefore answered about both parents in the family) we find that the majority say neither parent ever controls when they read books (88%) or listen to music (75%) or use a computer (60%). Even in the case of television, 50% claim that their access is never restricted. Only in the case of going out and making telephone calls do the majority claim to be told when they can or can't do these things (see Table 11.4c). Moreover *both* parents are most likely to be seen as controlling the child's behaviour in these two instances.

INSERT TABLE 11.4c HERE

So, how far do children and their parents agree about whether or not parents regulate use of media and going out? If we select those for whom we have data from both parent and child, we find that the majority of parents and children agree. However, there are sizeable minorities of parents - particularly fathers - who claim to regulate access while their children are apparently unaware of these attempts.

Our interviews with children, and their parents, confirmed that "going out" is heavily defined by parent-imposed rules of access which often restrict where children can go and with whom. These rules are highly salient to children, and include spatial restrictions (e.g. only visit this street, only cross certain roads, only cycle a certain distance), temporal restrictions (e.g. be back by 7 pm, only go out after homework is completed, only go somewhere at the weekend), financial restrictions (going out often requires entrance fees, transport costs; children tend to prefer organised places to hanging around parks, town centres etc), and social restrictions (e.g. only visit certain known children, you can't go to certain public places, etc).

On the other hand, rules about the media, with the exception of the telephone, are not particularly salient to children:

Interviewer:	I'm interested in what rules there are in your house. What rules your mum makes about watching TV, playing on the computer, using the phone. What does she say that you are allowed to do, and what does she say you are not allowed to do?
A:	I'm not allowed to swear. I am allowed to phone my friends up, except that if I am on it for about an hour then I have to pay for it.
Interviewer:	Right. And do you always have to ask for permission before you phone, or can you just phone whenever you like?
A:	I sometimes phone when I like, but most of the time I ask for permission. The TV I switch on when I like, and computer games I switch on when I like and that's about it.

(Middle-class boy, aged 12)

In another family, the father says: 'We censor television. We draw the line usually at the 9 o'clock watershed', while in another room talking to another interviewer, his sons claim the following:

Interviewer:	I mean do they have lots of rules that you go along with or do they not have rules?
M:	No, not really rules.
Interviewer:	Rules about what time you have got to go to bed?
S:	Yes, well.
M:	They tell us to go up at about 9.30 or 10 or something, and then we just watch TV until they come up and tell us to switch it off.
S:	They shout at you and tell you to turn it off.
Interviewer:	When do they tell you to do that?
M :	At about 11, 11.30.

(Middle-class boys, 13 and 10)

Although parents remain concerned about media content, particularly for new forms of media, in practice this is increasingly difficult for them to regulate, not least because of the proliferation of equipment. This is particularly true for television.

Interviewer:	But you don't have rules that say you're not allowed to watch TV after a certain time? There's no rules that you could spell out about what time you watch?
Mother:	No because I don't think - we've never come across it being a problem... <J> occasionally will watch TV in her bedroom without <E> knowing because she's a bit older. *The Bill* from 8.00 until 8.30. But no, I'm not worried about her watching that on her own in her bedroom. I mean we'd probably be watching it down here anyway.
Father:	Yes, I mean you can shelter them up to a point but you can't shelter them.

(Working-class parents of girls aged 10 and 8)

Father:	They would just disappear and the next thing you know you hear a TV come on in another room... We can kick them into their bedrooms and tell them to get an early night because they're worn out from some other activity... We don't actually know the TV's going on in another room... and they do - the TVs go on. So I've had to go in those rooms at midnight. The TVs are flickering away in two different rooms.

(Middle-class father with son, 16, and daughter, 14)

11.4.3 Rules about television

To explore the kinds of ways in which parents try to influence their children's exposure to television, we asked parents of children aged 6-17 on the broadcasters' Television Opinion Panel a series of questions about how they might attempt to guide or control their children's viewing (see Appendix 11.1). Answers revealed three main dimensions of parental guidance:

- *restrictive guidance* (which involves placing restrictions on the child's amount of viewing)
- *evaluative guidance* (which involves discussing programmes with the child with the specific intent of helping him or her to evaluate the material)
- *conversational guidance* (which involves such activities as discussing programmes without the explicit intention of influencing the child's views).

Parents are most likely to say they practise evaluative guidance (see Table 11.4d). Around a third "often" point out good, and bad, things characters are doing, and the difference between television programmes and real life: three-quarters or more say they do so at least sometimes. The majority say they "at least sometimes" co-view with the child, either because he or she asks (71%) or because they think it will benefit the child if they do (61%).

The next most common type of guidance is conversational: here we are concerned with simple conversational interaction occurring during, or immediately before or after, the time of viewing. Around three-quarters of parents say they practise two of the four activities at least sometimes (talking about a show while viewing, and discussing a show just viewed or about to be viewed). Two thirds (68%) say they discuss TV characters' motivations with their child. Interestingly, in view of the majority of parents' agreement that their children are influenced by television to want to buy things (see Table 11.2a), only around half (49%) say they explain the meaning of television advertisements to their child at least sometimes.

INSERT TABLE 11.4d HERE

Restrictive guidance (which we explored in detail in the main survey and have reported earlier in this chapter) is the least likely to be practised and, interestingly, fathers and mothers differ little in their claims. Half (51%) say they rarely or never set specific viewing hours for the child, and almost as many (44%) say they rarely or never specify the programmes that can be watched. Around a third rarely or never change the channel to avoid an unsuitable programme, restrict the amount their child views or forbid the viewing of a particular programme. The most often practised tactic was the mildest: almost three quarters (73%) say they encourage the viewing of specific programmes at least sometimes. The label restrictive is least appropriate for this type of guidance.

The numbers agreeing that they "often" or "sometimes" do these things decreases with the age of the child, with three exceptions. There is no child-age-related difference in the numbers saying they engaged in three of the conversational guidance activities:

- discuss TV characters motivations
- talk about a show while viewing
- discuss a show just viewed or about to be viewed

Parents of younger children, however, are significantly more likely, at least sometimes, to restrict the amount of their child's viewing,[23] to forbid programmes,[24] to set specific viewing hours for the child,[25] to change the channel[26] and to specify which programmes can be watched.[27] These forms of restrictive guidance are also more likely to be used if parents are worried about their child's viewing.

Mothers are significantly more likely to engage in five activities, the last four of which are associated with the evaluative guidance factor:

- change the channel to avoid a programme you don't want them to see[28]
- point out bad things the characters are doing[29]
- point out the good things the characters are doing[30]
- discuss TV characters' motivations[31]
- watch TV with the child because you think the child benefits if you do.[32]

Parents in the lowest social grade (DE) are least likely to restrict the amount of a child's viewing[33] and

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[23]Age 6-7, 76%: 8-9, 72%: 10-11, 69%: 12-13, 62%: 14-15, 41%: 16-17, 20%, $p<0.001$.

[24]Age 6-7, 75%: 8-9, 74%: 10-11, 73%: 12-13, 62%: 14-15,32%: 16-17, 20%, $p<0.001$.

[25]Age 6-7, 54%: 8-9, 46%: 10-11, 46%: 12-13, 39%: 14-15, 23%: 16-17, 17%, $p<0.001$.

[26]Age 6-7, 78%: 8-9, 69%: 10-11, 76%: 12-13, 61%: 14-15,44%: 16-17, 25%, $p<0.001$.

[27]Age 6-7, 67%: 8-9, 60%: 10-11, 57%: 12-13, 62%: 14-15,44%: 16-17, 23%, $p<0.001$.

[28]Fathers, 58%: mothers, 67%, $p<0.01$.

[29]Fathers, 76%: mothers 85%, $p<0.003$.

[30]Fathers, 75%: mothers 83%, $p<0.003$.

[31]Fathers, 60%: mothers 74%, $p<0.001$.

[32]Fathers, 54%: mothers 66%, $p<0.001$.

talk about a show while viewing.[34] Parents in the higher social grades (ABC1) are more likely to encourage the viewing of specific programmes.[35]

We also asked parents on the panel about their main reason for watching with their child (see Table 11.4e).

The largest single proportion (26%) give as their reason the fact that they like the same kinds of programmes and one in five (20%) say they most often watch with their child because they like to know what they were watching. Around one in eight (12%) say they mostly co-view because they just like watching with their child, or because the child happens to be in the room while they themselves are watching. Watching at the child's request is the option least likely to be chosen (by 3%).

INSERT TABLE 11.4e HERE

Mothers are around twice as likely to cite watching in order to know what their child is watching (fathers, 13%: mothers, 24%): fathers are more likely to say they end up co-viewing with their child simply because they happen to be in the room when the child is watching (Fathers, 20%: mothers 14%).

There are no striking differences in the reasons given by parents in the different social grades, although parents in the lowest grade are less likely to say they watch because the child is watching and they themselves happen to be in the room.

We also looked at the reasons for watching television with their child given by parents who scored high and low on the sum of all the parental guidance items. The most common reason given by parents who score highly is "I like to know what my child is watching" (33%). It is noteworthy that 38% of these parents, compared with only 27% in the sample as a whole, say they have particular worries about their child and their viewing of television. The most common reason given by parents who score low on parental guidance items is "we like the same kind of programmes" (30%). Only 15% of these parents say they have worries about their children and watching television.

Parents on the panel were also asked how often they thought their child stuck to the rules about what he or she could watch on television (see Table 11.4f). Nearly three-quarters (72%) think that their children stick to the rules at least most of the time, and one in five (20%) think they do so "all of the time".

There are no major differences in the opinions of mothers and fathers, or of parents from different social grades.

INSERT TABLE 11.4f HERE

Interestingly, 12% of parents say there are no rules about television in their families. However, when these same parents are asked about the fifteen activities in the parental mediation scale, although most say they never set viewing hours for their children (76%) nor specify programmes that can be watched (74%) and half say they never restrict the amount of the child's viewing (51%), the majority in fact do the various activities associated with evaluative (2 in 3 parents) and conversational guidance (3 in 4 parents). This draws attention to the fact that parents and researchers have very different ideas about what constitutes "having no rules". It also suggests that it may be better to avoid talk of "rules" when we wish to inaugurate more general talk about parental guidance or mediation of television use.

There is reason to suppose that this observation may be even more relevant where children are concerned. We also asked children aged 10-16 on the broadcasters' YoungView panel whether the adults in their home had any rules about which programmes they could watch on television, or the times of day they could watch (see Table 11.4g).

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[33]AB, 67%: C1, 62%: C2, 66%: DE, 51%, $p<0.02$.

[34]AB, 88%: C1, 82%: C2, 84%: DE, 76%, $p<0.02$.

[35]AB, 77%: C1, 76%: C2, 69%: DE, 65%, $p<0.02$.

INSERT TABLE 11.4g HERE

Overall two in every five children (42%) say there are no rules in their family. Only around a quarter (27%) think their parents have rules about which programmes they can watch and about the same proportion (30%) say their parents have rules about the time of day they can watch. There are however marked age-related differences. Only a quarter (26%) of 10-11 year-olds compared with two thirds (67%) of 15-16 year-olds think there are no rules. Girls are more likely than boys to feel there are no rules: a sizeable minority of boys (20%) say they "can't say" whether there are rules or not.

In our interviews we found most parents talked of knowing and trusting their children rather than imposing rules. It seemed to us that television has become "wallpaper" in many homes, so taken-for-granted that it hardly seems a matter for "rules" as such - it is on almost permanently and is just accepted as part of life. Older children in particular have little conscious awareness that rules about the content of what they watch actually exist. In such families (the majority it seemed to us) there are television-related "habits" rather than "rules" and parents rely on bedtime and the watershed to control their children's viewing.

11.4.4 The television 'watershed'

There is almost universal support for the watershed: over eight in every ten parents (82%) think it a very good idea (see Table 11.4h).

Although there are statistically significant differences involving social grade (higher social grades were more supportive) and the age of the child (parents of primary school-age children were more supportive), in real terms there is majority support across all social grades and from parents of children of all ages.

INSERT TABLE 11.4h HERE

We also asked when parents thought watershed restrictions should end (see Table 11.4i). A third (36%) support the present time of 9.00 pm, while a quarter favour the later time of 10.00 pm. A mere 5% would like to see restrictions end earlier than 9.00 pm. Parents with younger children are somewhat more likely to support the later times.

INSERT TABLE 11.4i HERE

A regression analysis was carried out, using a variety of potential predictors of the favoured time for restrictions to end.[36] However, only the age of their child predicted parents' preferences for a particular time.

11.5 SUMMARY

This chapter explored parents' views of their children's use of various media. We first showed that, according to parents, helping in the house, homework and going to bed all cause more arguments in the family than children's use of media. Media use also ranks fairly low in parents' list of concerns for their child. However, among the media, television is of concern to a larger proportion of parents than any other medium. One in 4 is concerned about sex, violence and bad language on television. In general, such concerns about television are as common among working-class as middle-class parents.

Parents are more likely to think television affects their child's consumer desires and amount of reading than they are to worry that television violence upsets children or that watching television makes them grow up too quickly. Parents of boys are more concerned about *imitation* of televised violence, while parents of girls are more concerned about them being *upset* by televised violence.

[36] These were: the age of the child, the social grade of the family, parents' educational level, parent's satisfaction with available programmes for the child to view, parent's attitude to the child having a television in the bedroom, and whether or not the child actually had their own set.

However the amount of time children spend watching television is more closely related to the amount of time their parents spend watching, than it is to any of their parents' views about its harmful effects.

Parental beliefs about television have little to do with whether or not the child has their own set. While 63% of children have a television in the bedroom, only 20% of parents think this is a good idea - considerably fewer than consider it a bad one (31%). Middle-class parents, and parents of younger children, are less likely to approve of having a television in the child's bedroom. Parents' desire to protect their own privacy and pressure from children themselves seem likely to be the critical factors in a decision to equip the child's bedroom.

In fact, the majority of parents (68%) are generally satisfied with the television programmes available for their child to view. Over half (57%) think their child has learned a lot by watching and a quarter (26%) believe it has encouraged them to read some good books. The only negative effect confirmed by the majority concerned the child's acquisitiveness - 61% say their child often wants to buy things they have seen on television.

The vast majority of parents are positive about the role of computers in their children's lives: 95% of parents think it is more important for children than parents to know about computers (although this is more the case for parents of sons than of daughters) and the great majority (79%) are keen for their child to know more about computers. Far fewer are worried about their children playing computer games than are concerned about what they may see on television. Only 6% of parents (whose children do play computer games for longer than average) are particularly worried about addictive computer games.

However, only 69% of parents say they are very or fairly comfortable using a computer, compared with 92% of their children. While working-class and middle-class children do not differ in their views of computers, working-class parents feel less comfortable with computers. In middle-class families, both children and parents are most likely to name the father as the person who knows most about computers in the family, while in working class homes, both are more likely to name the child. Direct experience of parental example matters, for children whose parents use a computer at home (but not necessarily at work) feel more comfortable with computers.

Parental regulation or mediation of media has long occupied the attention of policy makers in the field of media. We found that parents report various kinds of mediation or regulation of their child's media use. However, none is as frequent as their regulation of the child going out of the house. We explored restrictive regulation (saying when the child can or can't do something), evaluative guidance (discussing what is good or bad about something) and conversational guidance (chatting with the child about something). Television is the most often restricted, followed by telephone and computer games, while parents chat to their children about a variety of media.

For television specifically, parents are most likely to report advising their children how to evaluate what they see on television. Around three quarters also discuss with their children what they see on television, and of these different kinds of mediation of viewing, they are least likely to report restricting access to programmes. In interviews parents discussed the difficulties of effectively restricting their children's television viewing.

Fathers and mothers report similar amounts of regulation of the child's media use (except that mothers report more evaluative guidance for television than fathers). However, their children not only report considerably lower levels of regulation overall but they are also more likely to say mothers than fathers regulate their media use (for restrictive regulation as well as chatting about media).

In all, around half of parents report placing some restrictions on viewing, particularly for younger children and particularly those parents who have concerns about their child watching television. Three in four parents think their child follows their rules for television viewing most of the time. However 42% of children aged 10-16 say there are no rules in their family for watching television.

Finally, we note that the vast majority of parents support the watershed (82% think it 'a very good idea'). One third agree that the present time of 9 pm is appropriate, while a quarter would favour a 10 pm watershed, particularly parents of older children.

TABLE 11.1a

Percentage of parents choosing as one of three things giving most cause for concern for their own child by demographics (N= 978)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boy	Girl	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
Availability of illegal drugs	51	50	52	43	**54**	**54**	**54***	51	52
Child's job prospects	47	49	45	35	36	52	**66*****	43	**50***
Child being victim of crime	39	37	42	37	39	40	42	40	39
Educational standards in schools	38	39	37	**46**	39	37	30*****	39	38
Child growing up with decent values	34	34	33	37	33	30	34	35	33
Violence, sex, bad language on TV	24	19	**29*****	**26**	**29**	21	19*	25	23
Safety on the roads	21	21	22	**30**	25	20	9***	21	21
Availability of good social facilities	16	17	15	11	13	**20**	**21*****	13	**19****
Having enough time to spend with child	13	14	13	**17**	**15**	**15**	6***	14	13
Addictive computer games	6	7	5	7	6	7	4	6	6
Violence, sex, bad language on videos	6	6	5	3	4	**8**	**7***	4	7
Availability of good childcare facilities	5	6	4	**8**	**7**	4	1***	5	6

*** p<0.001,** p<0.01, * p<0.05

TABLE 11.1b

Percentage of parents saying what regularly causes arguments with children by demographics (N=978)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE			
	%	Boy %	Girl %	6-8 %	9-11 %	12-14 %	15-16 %	AB %	C1 %	C2 %	DE %
Helping in house	59	58	61	44	**65**	**68**	59***	54	59	60	54
Homework	49	**57**	40***	39	49	**59**	47***	48	48	48	51
Going to bed	48	50	45	**69**	58	43	19***	33	31	34	29
Television	34	36	31	**44**	31	31	16***	34	33	35	34
Going out	32	30	33	33	31	34	29	27	25	30	**43***
Money	31	33	29	27	35	34	26	18	23	32	**46***
Phone	30	23	**36***	17	23	35	**45***	20	25	32	**39***
Comp. games	15	**23**	7***	**19**	**16**	**17**	9*	10	14	14	**21****
Videos	14	**17**	11***	**22**	14	10	8***	9	15	12	**18***
Music	8	7	9	5	7	7	**15***	7	7	6	**12***

Note: *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

TABLE 11.1c

Percentage of parents agreeing television has effects on their child by demographics (N=950)

	ALL	GENDER		SOCIAL GRADE	
		Boy	Girl	ABC1	C2DE
Positive effects Child . . . knows difference between characters on TV and real life	94	95	94	94	94
learns a lot from television	57	**59**	55**	60	58
has been encouraged to read some good books	26	24	**28***	25	27
Negative effects Child . . . often wants to buy things has seen on TV	61	62	60	55	**66*****
would read more if watched less	49	48	50	50	48
is often upset by violence on news programmes	32	25	39***	30	**34***
has been encouraged to be lazy through watching TV	32	32	33	33	32
is often upset by violence on fictional programmes	22	16	28***	22	22
has been made to grow up too quickly	16	15	17	16	16
has been made to think violence part of everyday life	15	16	14	14	16
has copied violent behaviour seen on TV	11	**19**	3*****	8	**14*****

Note: *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

TABLE 11.2a

Parents' views about child having own television set, and satisfaction with available programmes by demographics

	ALL	SOCIAL GRADE		AGE			
	%	ABC1 %	C2DE %	6-8 %	9-11 %	12-14 %	15-17 %
Child having TV in bedroom							
(N=943)	19	14	**2 4**	14	17	23	23
Mainly a good thing	50	44	56	43	52	52	56
Neither good nor bad thing	31	**4 3**	20***	**4 3**	32	26	22***
Mainly a bad thing							
Satisfaction with what is available for child on TV (N=975)							
Very satisfied	4	4	4	4	2	5	6
Quite satisfied	64	59	**68**	67	63	63	64
Not very satisfied	30	**3 4**	26	27	32	31	30
Not at all satisfied	3	4	2***	2	3	2	3

Note: ***p<0.001

TABLE 11.3a

Difference in media use, by whether parent is concerned about addictive computer games

	PARENT CONCERNED ABOUT ADDICTIVE COMPUTER GAMES	
	Yes	No
Time spent on media Av. minutes per day *child* plays computer games*	**43** mins	26 mins
Av. minutes per day *child* spends on media	299 mins	289 mins

Note: * p< 0.05

TABLE 11.3b

Parents' attitudes to computers: percentage in agreement by demographics (N=950)

	ALL	SOCIAL GRADE		PARENT			
		ABC1	C2DE	Mother	Father	MOTHER	
						In work	At home
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Agree it is more important for children to know about computers than for parents	95	**97**	94*	96	95	95	95
Agree keen for child to know about computers	79	76	**83****	84	78	79	87
Agree people get left behind if don't know about computers	73	77	70	67	74	73	78
Agree school should teach child more about computers	53	54	52	59	52	54	47
Agree computers are exciting	51	54	48	58	49	50	48
Agree computers stop people thinking for themselves	23	16	**29****	20	24	21	28
Very comfortable using a computer	23	**27**	19***	**38**	19***	**21**	15**

Note: *** p<0.001

TABLE 11.3c

Correlations between parent's view and child's view of computers

	CORRELATION
People get left behind if they don't know about computers	0.044
Computers stop people thinking for themselves	0.144***
It's more important for children to understand computers than for their parents	-0.002
Computers are exciting	0.091**

Note: *** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$

TABLE 11.3d

Parent's view about knows most in the family about computer by demographics (N=937)

	ALL	SOCIAL GRADE***		GENDER (PARENT)		GENDER (CHILD)***	
	%	ABC1 %	C2DE%	Mother %	Father %	Boy %	Girl %
Child	27	17	**3 5**	25	28	**3 2**	22
Mother	16	19	14	15	16	16	16
Father	31	**4 6**	19	38	29	32	30
Sister	7	3	10	9	6	6	8
Brother	14	11	16	11	14	12	16
Other family member	4	3	4	3	4	2	5
No diff./ no-one knows anything	2	2	2	1	2	1	3

Note: *** p<0.001

TABLE 11.3e

Child's view about who knows most in family about computers by demographics (N=1286)

	ALL	***GENDER		*** AGE				***SOCIAL GRADE			
	%	Boy %	Girl %	6-8 %	9-11 %	12-14 %	15-17 %	AB %	C1 %	C2 %	DE %
Child	29	**38**	19	11	29	**38**	**37**	16	26	**33**	**34**
Mother	12	10	14	16	9	12	10	13	15	12	8
Father	31	30	32	**44**	**38**	23	21	**55**	**37**	24	20
Sister	5	3	8	6	6	5	6	3	4	8	6
Brother	17	15	20	14	14	18	**23**	13	12	**20**	**22**
Other	4	3	4	6	4	4	1	0	4	3	6
No diff./ no-one	2	1	3	4	1	2	2	2	1	1	5

Note: *** $p<0.001$

TABLE 11.4a

Percentage of parents saying they tell child when they can/cannot do activities by demographics (N=c. 970)[37]

	ALL	PARENT		AGE OF CHILD				SOCIAL GRADE	
		Father	Mother	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
Going out	77	77	77	**8 6**	83	81	56***	**8 1**	74*
Watching TV/videos	74	73	74	**9 0**	86	73	44***	**8 3**	67***
Making telephone calls	68	62	**70***	68	**7 5**	**7 2**	58**	66	71
Using/playing on a computer	50	48	51	**6 8**	60	50	25***	53	47
Listening to music	25	27	24	**3 3**	25	24	18**	23	27
Reading books	12	13	12	**2 0**	15	10	3***	13	12
None of the above	5	5	5	1	2	3	**15*** **	3	**7***

Note: * $p<0.05$

[37]Only those who have access to the medium at home are considered in this table.

TABLE 11.4b

Percentage of children saying their mothers and fathers tell them when they can/ can't do activities by gender of child (N=c.1096)[38]

	FATHER SAYS WHEN CAN/CAN'T DO			MOTHER SAYS WHEN CAN/CAN'T DO		
	ALL	Boys	Girls	ALL	Boys	Girls
Going out	47	45	49	60	59	61
Making telephone calls	42	36	49***	54	48	59***
Watching TV/videos	35	34	37	41	41	41
Using/playing on a computer	27	30	25	31	35	26***
Listening to music	17	14	19*	20	18	22
Reading books	8	8	8	8	7	9
None of the above	23	26	21	13	13	13

Note: *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

[38]Only those who have access to the medium at home are considered in this table.

TABLE 11.4c

Percentage of those living with both parents saying if mother and/or father, or neither, sometimes tell them when can/can't do following things[39]

	Neither parent says	Father only says	Mother only says	Both parents say
Reading books (N=910)	**88**	3	4	5
Listening to music (N=1047)	75	6	9	10
Using/playing on a computer (N=819)	60	9	12	19
Watching TV/videos (N=1035)	50	9	15	27
Making telephone calls (N=905)	39	8	19	**35**
Going out (N=1074)	33	6	20	**41**

[39]Only those who have access to the medium at home are considered in this table.

TABLE 11.4d

Percentage of parents who practice three kinds of parental mediation of television viewing (N=830)

Parents claiming to ...		Often	Sometimes	Rarely/ Never
Evaluative guidance				
Point out bad things characters are doing	%	34	47	14
Point out good things character are doing	%	33	47	13
Point out the difference between TV programmes or characters and real life	%	35	40	18
Watch TV with the child because he/ she asks	%	17	54	22
Watch TV with the child because you think the child benefits if you do	%	15	46	**3 1**
Conversational guidance				
Talk about a show while viewing	%	34	48	11
Discuss a show just viewed or about to be viewed	%	23	51	19
Discuss TV characters ' motivations	%	22	46	25
Explain the meaning of TV ads	%	16	33	**4 4**
Restrictive guidance				
Encourage the viewing of specific programmes	%	19	54	21
Change the channel to avoid a programme you don't want them to see	%	18	45	30
Restrict the amount of child viewing	%	21	40	33
Forbid the viewing of a particular programme	%	14	46	34
Specify programmes that may be watched	%	16	34	44
Set specific viewing hours for the child	%	18	23	**5 1**

TABLE 11.4e

Main reason parent watches television with child by demographics (N=784)

	ALL	GENDER		SOCIAL GRADE			
	%	Father %	Mother %	AB %	C1 %	C2 %	DE %
We like the same kind of programmes	26	25	27	30	23	26	27
I like to know what my child is watching	20	13	**24**	20	19	17	23
My child is watching and I happen to be in the room	16	**20**	14	19	20	18	9
I'm watching and my child happens to be in the room	12	13	11	10	10	15	12
I just like watching with my child	12	14	11	10	12	11	14
My child asks me to watch	3	3	4	3	4	3	3
Not answered	10	11	9	6	12	11	11

TABLE 11.4f

How often parent thinks child sticks to rules for watching television by demographics (N=823)

	ALL	GENDER		SOCIAL GRADE			
	%	Father %	Mother %	AB %	C1 %	C2 %	DE %
All the time	20	17	22	20	21	17	22
Most of the time	52	50	52	57	53	52	44
Some of the time	10	13	9	9	9	10	14
Practically never	1	1	1	1	1	1	-
Don't know can't say	1	1	1		1	1	2
We don't have any rules	12	14	10	10	11	13	13
Not answered	4	4	5	2	5	4	6

TABLE 11.4g

Children's perceptions of rules for watching television by gender and age (N=507)

	ALL	GENDER		AGE		
	%	Boy %	Girl %	10-11 %	12-14 %	15-16 %
Yes, rules	40	41	40	**55**	36	21
. . . about which programmes	27	28	26	37	24	8
. . . about time of day	30	29	32	42	26	16
No rules	42	34	**49**	26	45	**67**
Can't say	14	**20**	8	12	16	10
Not answered	4	5	3	7	3	2

TABLE 11.4h

Parents views on the watershed by demographics (N=970)

	ALL	SOCIAL GRADE*				AGE OF CHILD***			
	%	AB %	C1 %	C2 %	DE %	6-8 %	9-11 %	12-14 %	15-17 %
Very good idea	82	**83**	**84**	**84**	76	**85**	**88**	81	71
Quite a good idea	13	14	14	13	13	9	9	15	22
No strong view	3	2	2	1	7	4	2	3	4
Quite a bad idea	1	1	-	2	2	1	1	*	2
Very bad idea	1	-	0	-	2	1	*	1	1

Note: *** $p<0.001$, * $p<0.05$

TABLE 11.4i

Parents' views on when watershed restrictions should end by demographics (N=970)

	ALL	SOCIAL GRADE				AGE OF CHILD***			
	%	AB %	C1 %	C2 %	DE %	6-8 %	9-11 %	12-14 %	15-17 %
Later than 11.00 pm	6	5	5	6	8	3	4	8	8
11.00 pm	5	4	2	6	8	3	5	5	8
10.30 pm	6	4	5	8	6	2	6	8	9
10.00 pm	**25**	34	29	24	18	25	24	26	**26**
9.30 pm	14	13	16	10	15	16	15	10	13
9.00 pm as at present	**36**	35	35	39	34	**39**	**40**	**36**	**26**
8.30 pm	3	2	3	3	3	5	2	2	2
Earlier than 8.00 pm	2	2	2	1	2	4	0	0	2
Shouldn't be any restrictions	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	1
No strong views	3	1	2	3	6	3	3	3	5

Note: *** $p<0.001$

CHAPTER 12

RESEARCH AND POLICY CONCLUSIONS

12.1 OVERVIEW

We can no longer imagine leisure, or the home, without media and communication technologies. Nor, for the most part, would we want to. Yet as the technologies themselves are changing rapidly, many questions arise concerning their place in our daily lives.

This research project set out to explore the implications of changing media technologies for children and young people in Britain. To set this inquiry in context, we have also considered the implications of 'new media' for families, parents, teachers and communities. In this report we have answered some of these questions and stimulated yet more. As we hope this report has shown, investigating the place of media in the lives of children and young people is hugely revealing of those lives more generally.

Before developing our main conclusions, let us reiterate the objectives of the project:

- to chart current *access and use* for new media at home (and, in less detail, at school);
- to locate new media uses in the context of a *comprehensive* account of domestic leisure and media activities;
- to *understand the meaning* of the changing media environment for children and parents;
- to map access to and uses of media in relation to *social inequalities* and *social exclusion*;
- to provide a *baseline* for media use against which to measure future changes.

We began with the premise that it has been too restrictive, even misleading, in past research and policy debates to focus on 'the child' in relation to 'the television' or 'the screen' in isolation from the rest of their lives. Thus we have argued for, and hope to have demonstrated the effectiveness of, a thorough contextualisation of media use within the lives of children and young people.

Methodologically, this stress on context has required a multi-method, multi-focussed enquiry which has generated a rich body of empirical material, both qualitative and quantitative. This has allowed us to pursue the meanings and impacts of media as experienced by young people, while also conducting a variety of statistical analyses which interconnect, or segment, the 6-17 year old population according to particular research questions or empirical contingencies.

The project has generated a wealth of specific findings and detailed arguments. While the very diversity of media provision and use makes generalisations about 'children' or 'the media' hazardous, in this final chapter we draw together some of the broader themes in order to reflect upon their implications for both academic research and media policy.

12.2 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE: A DISTINCTIVE GROUP?

The temptation for those trying to anticipate changes in domestic media is to focus on the level of the household - charting household possessions, parents' views, etc. - without recognising that this picture will miss significant aspects of the meanings, access, use or expectations of new media for children and young people.

12.2.1 Young people as enthusiastic adopters of new media

Certainly, it seems that children and young people are particularly confident and enthusiastic adopters of new forms of media, generally sharing a forward-looking perspective which is not just desirous of, but also interested in, 'what's new, what's cool'. Children express little fear of change or the future, and are open to the ways in which the media may provide resources with which identities are constructed, with which time and space is organised and made personally meaningful, and which accompany and shape peer culture.

This broadly positive attitude to new media from children fits with the sense of responsibility that parents feel to support their children in an 'information age', and with the enthusiasm of fathers (rather more than of mothers) for technological innovation. Thus children and parents, though sometimes for different reasons, agree on the advantages of acquiring new media for the home (although they are more likely to disagree over the disadvantages which result).

12.2.2 Children as actors within the household

Yet it may be for rather more pragmatic reasons that households with children tend to lead in the adoption of new media. Given the complex dynamics of family life, acquiring new media goods appears to offer solutions to the many competing claims on time and space which characterise domestic arrangements at the end of the century. It is important here to recognise the role of children within the household as constitutive, contributing to the construction and reproduction of family life, and hence of media uses, rather than simply shaped by parental resources and decisions.

We have suggested that children make a particularly significant contribution to the diversification of media uses within the home through their eager adoption of multiple media goods within both shared and personal spaces. Their relatively casual use of many media throughout the day may also be fuelling the shift from the focal to the peripheral or background use of screen media. And as the mediation and regulation of children's use of media by parents is primarily a matter of workable practices, usually negotiated implicitly between parent and child, rather than one of parental anxieties or principles, children play a key role also in domestic regulation. It is these ways, rather than in terms of their supposedly consumerist, competitive or acquisitive tendencies, than children represent not just a minor part of society but also a market to be taken seriously.

In consequence, children and young people cannot be simply subsumed within an account of the household or the family but represent a sizeable and distinctive subgroup of media users (or audiences) in their own right.[1] Of course, although often it is adults who define the spaces within which children exist, there are many parallels and connections between adult and children's 'lifeworlds'. There are also some key contrasts between the strategies of parents, with their principles, rules and greater power, and the tactics of children, as they manoeuvre within and around these to create their own lifeworlds (de Certeau, 1984). Similarly, in schools we glimpsed the contrast between the optimism and fears of teachers and the pragmatic realism of their pupils. Household uses of new media, family life and classroom activities all result from the negotiated fit between children and adult perceptions and practices.[2]

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[1] Children and young people did not prove to be an inaccessible or impossible group to research; rather children and young people welcomed us into their lives, their bedrooms and classrooms, happy to describe and discuss their lives and the place of media within these. Nonetheless, researching children and young people brings its own challenges methodologically: children's spaces are often not the public spaces of the household; and children's understandings of technologies and time, to take two pertinent examples, required us to rethink our adult-centred questions and categories. Researching this age range also required us to grapple with two less than ideal research literatures: media-centred research tends to problematise, even pathologise children and young people as vulnerable, deviant or manipulated; childhood research tends to celebrate the creative innocence of media-free leisure, implicitly demonising the media as a source of difficulty or distortion in children's lives.

[2] Thus we would concur with the social constructivist approach to childhood which argues that, through their daily activities often unnoticed by adult eyes, children contribute to the construction and reproduction of social structures within which both adults and children live.

12.3 SOCIAL DIFFERENCES AND INEQUALITIES

While we have suggested that children and young people are significant actors within the household, they do not all share in equivalent resources. Rather, children and young people represent a diverse population, not readily reduced to simple categories of 'the child' or 'youth'. There are many ways of conceptualising this diversity: here we offer an overview of the project findings in terms of the key social stratification variables of age,[3] gender and social class. These represent both the key structures of societal and household organisation and the dimensions of media access and use to which policy is oriented.

The shift from an empirical charting of differences to the identification of social inequalities is crucial for targeting policy intervention. Across the range of media, it would be a fair generalisation from our research to say that inequalities in *gender* predominantly arise from differences in content and content preferences, while inequalities in *social class* predominantly arise from differences in media access at home. Our qualitative work especially suggests that both of these inequalities, neither of which is itself new, are now shaping young people's understanding and use of the new media environment.

12.3.1 Age

Age as 'restriction'

Not only do we lack a term in English for those aged 6-17, but parents and young people themselves are in many ways uncertain of what is appropriate or required at different ages. Whatever their age, young people themselves strongly wish to be a few years older, for to them being older is the key to freedom of access to and control over leisure choices and opportunities both within and beyond the home. While parents are greatly concerned about the children's safety outside the home, they express relatively less concern about media use within the home.

Young people's concerns are rather different from those of their parents, for their overriding concern is with having somewhere to go outside; while we were asking about media use, instead we got a powerful complaint about the absence of public leisure facilities. Where, young people asked us again and again, are the affordable and accessible meeting places - cafés, parks, swimming pools, cinemas, skating rinks, youth clubs, etc.? This dissatisfaction puts the relatively lesser concern of parents with the domestic regulation of media into perspective. It also leads us to suggest that public discussion regarding children and young people might usefully shift from a typically protectionist stance to one focussed on more positive provision, albeit in the public rather than domestic arena.

Media access and use

When we focus on actual practices of media use, we discover a variety of age-related trends. Interests (which guide preferences within and across media), not surprisingly alter with age, and while preferences actually tend to become slightly more homogeneous as children become teenagers, the expressed culture of individualism results in much talk about unique identities and hence, unique media tastes.

Media uses depend in large part on media provision. In the home, there are rather few differences according to the age of the child interviewed, but their bedrooms become increasingly media-rich with age, to the point where most teenagers have their own hi-fi, television set and walkman, and many also have their own video recorder, games console and, increasingly, personal computer.

Possession of books, however, declines with age, and this also means that reading books becomes less common as children grow older (although to some extent, magazines for girls and newspapers for boys take their place). Other media show a peak in middle-late childhood (e.g. computer games), while still others become more widespread, and occupy more time, as children grow up (e.g. music).

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[3] For age these might better be termed age trajectories than age inequalities for while we have noted many age-related differences in both access and use, in contrast to the situation for gender or class there is no general expectation that young people of different ages *should* be treated equivalently.

Overall, younger children are more likely to be relatively low media users overall, while a large proportion of teenagers can be said to live 'media-rich' lives, often making more specialised use of media. In the main, however, whether use is relatively high or low, for most young people the media diet is a varied one, and we found few young people who make predominant use of just one medium.

Age and IT at school

Young people may or may not have access to computer-based media at home, depending primarily on the social class of their parents (see below). However, their experience of such media is significantly altered when they reach secondary school age, and it is clear that on various dimensions, use of IT leaps forward at this point. Whether young people's competence in the use of IT would be enhanced should they be introduced to it earlier is a question beyond the scope of this report, but it seems that primary schools are at present relatively ill-equipped - in terms of both facilities and training - to make much use of IT at this level.[4] As a result, much IT experience before the age of 11 stems from the home rather than the school, and is thereby heavily influenced by social class inequalities.

There is an interesting tendency for 'serious' (i.e. non games) uses of computers, as well as enthusiasm for computers, to decline after about 14 years old. Without longitudinal data we cannot say whether this is an age or a cohort effect (i.e. does this particular cohort of 15-17 year-olds have less interest because they were older when the introduction of computers in home and school gathered pace?).

12.3.2 Gender

Content preferences

Gender represents a major divide in the interests and media preferences of children and young people. Over and again, for a variety of media and non-media leisure activities, boys tend to congregate around an interest in sport while girls show a greater preference for narrative media. For some, these divisions are experienced as restrictive, but for the most part there is little expressed dissatisfaction, and both boys and girls appear to find sufficient media appropriate to their tastes. An interesting exception to this was the increased television viewing seen among younger girls and older boys in cable or satellite homes, suggesting that either those without this multichannel environment are relatively ill-served by terrestrial television or that these groups particularly opt for more specialised broadcasting where available.

Interest in different content leads to girls and boys preferring different media. Girls' pleasure in using the telephone and (for those few with convenient access) in emailing friends, flags up the importance for them of direct *communication* with others. Boys are more enthusiastic in general about *computers*. They are both interested in them as technologies and more likely to see them as fun, associating them more than do girls with game playing.

However, the primacy of content preferences suggests that if we wish to encourage more girls to use PCS or boys to read, efforts should be directed at improving the relevance of the content to their main interests. More books about sport and competition? More adventure or other narrative-based computer games with female heroines?

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[4] We note that despite a widespread discourse surrounding the 'obvious' value of introducing information technology into the classroom (this being a discourse which both preceded and is also stimulated by present Government commitment to 'the Learning Society'), teachers found it difficult to articulate to us exactly what the educational advantages of this are. The best account they could offer included a stress on transferable skills (into the workplace), on the possibilities for both team-working and individually-paced work (especially appreciated for special needs pupils), and on encouraging responsibility for one's own work; but the difficulties of establishing exactly what advantages may accrue from familiarity with IT is making at least some teachers sceptical.

Access to media

With the exception that more TV-linked games machines are to be found in boys' homes, there are few gender differences in media access in the home in general. But we found considerable differences in the provision of media in children's bedrooms, with boys generally being better provided for, particularly as regards screen media, including their own personal computer. Girls have few advantages in access, and even though they are more likely than boys to read, use the phone or listen to music, they are not more likely than boys to have their own books or telephone or hi-fi. Yet it is girls who invest their bedrooms with greater meaning and personal importance.

Given that girls are also more restricted in their access to places outside the home, it would seem that girls lose out on both home-based and outside leisure opportunities. The combination of media equipment and public freedoms intersects, on occasion, to boys' advantage: they are more likely to have friends with computers to visit, and they are more likely to frequent cybercafés where new media are available; thus any increase in public provision of IT facilities will need to guard against the subtle exclusion of girls.

Time use

Looking across time spent with different media at home, there are several gender differences. Screen-entertainment fans (those children who combine computer games, television and video as their predominant entertainment mix) are far more often boys while girls are generally less screen-focussed, though they read more and listen more to music. As it is these screen-entertainment fans who tend to attract outside adult concerns (regarding addiction, violent contents, escapism, etc.), it would appear that boys are both better equipped with media and yet also the subject of more concern, while girls appear relatively neglected on both counts.

This may become an issue as more and more media converge upon, and become accessible through the screen (unless girls' preference for print 'off-line' can somehow be transferred to 'print' on the screen). Certainly when it comes to computers, girls are likely to say that boys' experiences in game playing stand them in good stead, encouraging their confidence and familiarity with computers (interestingly, neither parents nor teachers agree, both tending to disdain computer games as an activity).

IT and gender at school

In terms of overall provision of computers and access to computers at school, there are few gender inequalities, although some do exist for actual use of IT at school. Both girls and their teachers tend to believe in gender differences in confidence if not competence. Beyond trying to separate girls and boys into different groups, teachers offer few ideas of how to deal with the tendency of girls to lose interest in computers as they grow older. The absence of girl-friendly software, and the scorn of peers regarding computer 'boffs' and 'geeks' does not help matters.

Also important is our observation that boys but not girls appear more likely to treat screen-based media similarly (the more they play computer games, the more they watch television and the less they read books, for example), while girls seem to use media less *qua* technologies (for here they lack both confidence and interest, particularly as teenagers) and more as opportunities for certain social functions (associating email with the telephone or letter writing, for example). Possibly, encouraging girls to use computers might best be approached through a focus on communication (or possibly, narrative) rather than as 'IT' specifically.

If we are to learn from boys' relatively greater enthusiasm and confidence regarding computing, instead of disdaining computer games we should consider seriously the observation that it is in relation to game playing that boys talk of 'control' or 'mastery'. Perhaps it is just this experience which gives them the confidence to try out other kinds of uses of computers. If you learn about crashing programmes, mouse control, and faulty software as part of play, computers may not seem so off-putting as they do to those girls who, while motivated to use computers for school and homework, are nervous of 'breaking' the computer.

12.3.3 Social class

Content preferences

Social grade primarily makes a difference in terms of media access, not in terms of use or interests. In this it contrasts with gender (and age) as a source of inequalities. In the main, we found no significant differences between middle-class and working-class children in their preferred types of television programme, their favourite kinds of computer game or their named interests.

Access to media

Apart from the near universality of television and music, all other media in the home are stratified by social class: apart from computer games machines, nearly all media are more available to middle-class than working-class children, and this is as true for new media such as the computer, CD-Rom and Internet as for older media such as books or the telephone. (Middle-class children tend also to attend more after-school clubs and classes, so that they have both more to do, in terms of media, and less free time to do it in.) Focussing on domestic computer-based media particularly, the present findings provide ample support for concerns about the so-called 'information rich' and 'information poor' in our society.

While in equipping the home, household income is particularly important, this is not the case for provisioning the child's bedroom. Generally, age and gender are the key factors here, although the level of parental education (rather than household income) is also important. Thus some relatively poor homes may contain well-equipped bedrooms, though these tend to have more screen-entertainment media than books. Thus, having a television in the bedroom is far more common among working-class than middle-class children. The decision to provide for children in their bedroom seems to be linked to two factors: first, are parents for or against screen entertainment media and secondly do they prefer shared, or more personalised, media use within the family.

Interestingly in relation to the diffusion of the PC, we observed that while middle-class children are much more likely to have access to a computer at home, they are no more likely than working-class children to have their own PC. In a working-class family the PC is more often put in the child's bedroom, raising the interesting question of whether working-class children are being privileged or isolated in this respect.

Time use

Matching differences in media provision, middle-class children spend longer reading books, while working-class children generally spend more time on screen media (television and computer games). Interestingly, those working-class children with a PC at home use it just as much as do middle-class PC users. And similarly, while more middle-class children are readers, they do not spend longer reading than working-class readers.

Parental expectations and concerns for their children relate closely to these usage patterns: at least as seen by their children, middle-class parents appear more concerned that their children read books and do not spend 'too long' with screen-entertainment media (although importantly, when we ask parents, working-class parents do not express any less concern about their children's screen usage).

IT and social grade at school

For working-class children, school is far more likely to be the only place where they use the PC, CD-ROM and Internet, compared with middle-class children who are twice as likely to have access at home as well as in school. Hence the role of the school is vital in redressing the inequalities of IT access at home. Although it should be noted that we could not identify in detail what IT facilities exist or are used in schools, it is nevertheless noteworthy that we found few class differences in provision and use of IT in schools - in terms of frequency or type of use.

The PC-rich child - with access to a PC at home and at school - is likely to be older and middle-class, and though home access to new media may be changing rapidly, the experience with past new media would lead us to expect that middle-class homes will retain their advantage as newer IT facilities become available in the market place. In this respect it is significant that working-class parents report

relatively less confidence with computers, for themselves, and in homes with computers, working-class children are more likely to feel that they, not their parents, are the computer 'expert' at home.

12.4 THE CHANGING MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

12.4.1 The pace of change

How much of all this is new? Are we mistaking technological change in the forms of media hardware, delivery and content for underlying social change in the family, youth and leisure? There are dangers in both overestimating and underestimating the pace and significance of the changing media environment. The market for domestic technologies is expanding, yet many aspects of children and young people's lives remain relatively constant.

Looking back to 'Television and the Child' (1958)

Comparing our initial findings with those from Himmelweit's *Television and the Child* forty years ago, we find many constancies: children preferred to watch adult programmes then as now; how much children view, then and now, tends to follow that of their parents' viewing, and parents then and now encourage their children to watch television to give parents some private time. Children then and now read very little compared with time spent on both television and music, both of which offer all-absorbing focal experiences yet can shift into the background if so preferred. Thus in the 1950s, children were not glued to the 'box in the corner' : they combined television with older and more familiar media in a more complex way, as present day children are learning to do with the computer.

Social change is slow. Yet while the past four decades have been dominated by one medium, television, it is this very dominance which is now challenged by computer-based domestic entertainment media. Children and young people's lives are increasingly constructed from a diversity of media combined in different ways through space and time to generate different, albeit systematically patterned, lifestyles. Given a diversifying media environment, our key questions in this report have concerned the *mix* of media available to young people, the *match* between different young people and particular combinations of media and the *meanings* and patterns of *use* associated with different media 'styles'.

The expanding media mix

At present, this mixed media context means that new media are not occupying much more than one hour per day for most new media users, out of some five hours per day of media use. Children and young people appear to be assimilating today's new media into the structure of their everyday lives rather than radically altering their ways of living. This suggestion is in tune with the lessons from the history of previously 'new' media which emphasise that new media rarely replace or even, displace, older media. Rather, new media add to the available options, to some extent prompting new, more specialised, uses for books, television, radio, etc., resulting in an expanding media mix as both old and new media readjust their positions in young people's lives. Certainly, we can see early signs that the introduction of the PC will encourage further specialisation of both books and television.

Thus while we have found that children read no less today than they appear to have done in the days before television or the personal computer, it seems that just as television prompted new and more specialised uses for radio, so too television and newer screen media are now prompting specialisation of books. Our findings show that while books are at the most general level seen as 'boring', they remain important for a particular age group (approximately 7-10 years old), while more specialised genres are valued also at other ages (e.g. the horror genre for early teenage girls), and books remain popular at certain times of day (notably bedtime). This trend towards specialisation rather than displacement - seen over and again in the history of new media (Marvin, 1998) - means that the range of media options is multiplying not only because of the increased variety of technologies (channels, contents, forms of delivery, etc) but also because each new medium produces a multiplication and diversification in the social uses of older media, including the times and places in which media are used.

While a new medium adds to the choices available to children, it is rather older and more familiar factors which affect whether and how the medium eventually finds a place in their lives. If we

compare television - a 'transparent' technology, one which is thought of primarily in terms of *content* rather than as a *technology* or *consumer good* - with newer computer-based media, it is clear that these latter media are still early in the process of appropriation by children and families.

How this process of appropriation occurs depends on how readily new media may be incorporated into young people's pre-existing practices and priorities, namely those of social interaction, communication, narrative and play. It also depends on the transferability of pre-existing interests to the contents of new media: the importance for children and young people of sport, music, stars, drama, animals, etc - all these suggest ways of encouraging their use of newer media. And here it is particularly important to pay attention to the interests of girls, and of working-class children, if information inequalities are not to increase.

12.4.2 Lessons for the PC from the social history of the TV

Given the likelihood of future convergence of television and computer screens, we may speculate on what can be learned about the future of the computer screen from the recent social history of the television screen.

A social trajectory: from focal to casual

While not raising new technological issues, the rapid multiplication of domestic media goods is new in social terms, altering the social and regulatory environment for television use. The household in the 1950s acquired the one television set, placed it in the living room, and everyone had to negotiate with each other about how they were going to engage with that set. Similarly, when the video recorder was first introduced, it was supposed that each household might or might not buy one VCR.

Yet, households with children particularly are now acquiring multiple television sets, with two-thirds of children in our sample having their own set in their bedroom (as many as have books in their bedroom) . Multiple VCRs, multiple computers, multiple telephones, and so forth are also becoming more common.The trend for television has been to move from foreground to background, from centre of family life to a balance - struck differently in different families - between communal and individualised uses, and from the mainstay of the family evening to a round-the-clock experience, including breakfast time, daytime and night-time.

While the PC as a technology appears to assume a focussed user, there is nothing intrinsic to the screen which requires this - as the history of television shows. If the computer is to follow television, one might speculate that while currently it occupies pride of place in the family living room and is most used in the after-school period, computer use may become more casual, more individualised, and more routinely used throughout the domestic timetable.

Historical shifts

Flichy (1995) traces the social history of various media, showing how each has shifted from collective use in the family living room to a pattern of 'living together separately' under the family roof', facilitated by the new portability and cheapness of each medium as it diffuses through the market. This is now evident for the television, and may yet become apparent for the personal computer.

The present project originated with the idea of updating Himmelweit et al's *Television and the Child* to the present day. However, in view of the considerable social and economic changes which have accompanied changes in media from that time to this, it has proved more useful to situate new media within a broader historical framework in which the timeline of the diffusion of each new medium is superimposed on to the timeline of longer term sociocultural shifts towards privatised and individualised lifeworlds. Thus changes in the social construction of time, space and social relations have been easily as important to our understanding of the changing media environment for children and young people as have been specific technological innovations.

12.4.3 Individual or social uses of media?

In addition to the historical trends discussed above, the question of individual versus social uses of media can be applied cross-sectionally. One key dimension we have identified which differentiates among families is that between those families who 'live together separately', using media according

to their divergent lifestyles, and those families who are committed to sharing a common timetable and leisure pursuits, and find a place for the media within these shared activities.

'Socialising' the media

Moreover, despite the historical trend towards 'individualisation', we have also witnessed a powerful desire on the part of children and young people to 'socialise' the media, drawing them into their social life with friends instead of using them to erect boundaries or isolate themselves with the media. Given that the balance struck at any one time between social and individual leisure activities is not primarily a media-centred story but rather concerns larger social and domestic trends within which the media find their place, in this respect the computer and television as sites for social activity appear at present to be developing in opposite directions.

Despite frequent suggestions that new screen-based media are isolating children from social contacts, it is currently television - once a social medium around which the family gathered - which is increasingly watched alone. On the other hand, while the PC appears as a technology to be most appropriate for individual use, emerging domestic practices suggest more social uses: children and young people use the computer together, they talk about computers with friends, they swap games, visit those who have a new game, etc.

While this 'socialisation' of the computer appears to conflict with the longer term trend towards individualised media uses, we have also observed the same desire to 'socialise' television, albeit with less success in translating desire into practice. Distinguishing social relations with friends and with family becomes crucial. Children desire greater access to friends and the peer group, drawing the media where possible into these relations, so that even if media are not actually used together with friends, they still play a vital *social* role in peer culture. Yet at the same time, as children grow older, they desire individual and private spaces marked off from other family members, and here the media are used to mark difference rather than to maintain connection.

Balancing family and peer contexts of use

As children grow older, they have always developed from a family- to a peer-orientation. However, children of all ages are increasingly able to choose how far they wish to share their media interests with the family. At the same time, children and young people are seeking new ways of sharing their media interests with friends, raising the possibility of their being drawn ever earlier into a media culture centred on identity and consumption.

These links between media, identity and consumption also lead us to note that the opposition traditionally posed between passive media use and active face-to-face communication - implicit in the above discussion - is particularly and increasingly inappropriate for children and young people, for both the developing technologies and also the enthusiasm with which children embrace them act to undermine this opposition. Children and young people today conduct their social relations in a media-saturated environment: it is about soap opera that children gossip on the phone, they are excited by the Internet as a way of meeting others in far off places, they visit each other to share a new computer game, they hire videos to watch in a group, etc.[5]

The early signs are that 'virtual' interaction adds a valued dimension to young people's social worlds, without necessarily challenging face-to-face relationships: rather, email and the Internet add to the mix of communication modes available to young people, providing a unique opportunity to test out alternative identities or possible relationships. Yet, as with more traditional computer games, we find that young people tend to combine face-to-face and virtual communication, rather than allowing the latter to exclude the former (e.g. in the cybercafé or through email, young people either interact with those they already know, or arrange to meet face-to-face those they have got to know

[5]Not only do we need to rethink concerns which derive from the opposition between mediated and face-to-face communication, but we must also rethink the question of media effects, where these are conceived as an external intrusion into ongoing lives. Instead we must ask about mediated practices and mediated meanings, mapping the complex relations among media and the many other aspects of daily lives within which media use is inextricably embedded.

virtually).

12.4.4 New media and the dimensions of social change

As we proposed earlier, the changing media environment can be viewed with a larger lens, as part of - and as contributing to - wider social and cultural changes. Several dimensions of social change, introduced in chapter 1, shape the appropriation of new media within the lives of young people.

Public and private spaces for leisure

The multiplication of *personally owned* media may be contributing to the shifting boundary between public and private spaces in two ways. First, the boundary of *'the front door'*: for rather different reasons, parents and children are dissatisfied with young people's access to public spaces and facilities (this of course may or may not represent an actual decline in provision or in safety). This frustration with public access and civic leisure facilities emerged very strongly from the research, and it may be that one key consequence is increasing levels of provision and use of media within the home.[6]

Second, the boundary of *'the bedroom door'*: this multiplication of personally owned media may be facilitating the division of communal and individual or private space *within* the home, as parents find that equipping the bedroom represents an ideal compromise in which children are both entertained and kept safe.

Individualisation of lifestyles

In addition to these changes in the spatial and temporal dimensions of media use, the d*iversification* of media forms and contents may also be contributing to the growing importance of individualised lifestyles. Our research demonstrated that socio-demographic factors (age, gender and social class) do not tell the whole story. Rather, leisure choices and media use are increasingly incorporated into *individualised lifestyles* which cut across these traditional categories. Dividing young people into 'traditionalists', 'screen-entertainment fans', 'specialist' media users (for books, music or the PC) and 'low' media users has provided a means of teasing out the complex relations between demographic factors and access to, and the meanings and use of, different media.

Convergence of traditionally distinct social activities or locations

Converging screen technologies may be contributing to the blurring of boundaries between traditionally distinct activities such as information, education, work and entertainment. As both work and education are increasingly brought into the home, facilitated in particular by the introduction of the PC, this cultural (as opposed to technological) convergence throws up some new areas of possible contention. At the present time, we find that the role and image of the domestic PC is under negotiation and is often seen differently by parents and children: parents generally buy a PC to benefit their children educationally, while both middle-class and working-class children mostly use the PC at home for games. Further, the meanings and practices surrounding the terms 'work', 'leisure', 'education', etc. differ according to the social background of the home. As a result, the meaning of the PC, its location in the home, its users and uses all vary accordingly.

Specifically, in middle-class homes the PC has often been acquired by parents for themselves as much as for their children, as part of a culture which prioritises books and learning over screen entertainment. Computer 'games', unless they have educational content, are seen as less acceptable. Although working-class parents also have hopes for the PC's educational potential, they are less

[6] It is beyond our scope here to chart trends in the availability of youth clubs, local cinemas and other public facilities, or in the actual or perceived safety of streets and public spaces. Clearly, the problem of mobility mediates that of public facilities, for it may be that such facilities are not being cut but rather they are becoming centralised in malls, out of town centres, etc, thereby reducing access from young people for whom mobility is a serious constraint. However, it is clear that both parents and, more strongly, children and young people consider that their options are not commensurate with their desire for access to public leisure facilities. In the balance of mediated to non-mediated leisure options, therefore, the social environment for children and young people appears to be increasingly a home-based, media-based environment.

likely to know how to use it and less likely to be able to help their child with problems. These families are also more likely to value screen entertainment and less likely to be opposed to computer games (as exemplified in the numbers with TV-linked games machines). On the other hand, working-class children are more likely to be the family computer expert, (with all that implies for self-esteem) and parents are more likely to place the only PC in their child's room (giving them greater freedom to explore the technology).

Changing modes of communication

New forms of engagement between user and medium may contribute to the gradual shift from a clear distinction between mass communication and face-to-face communication to a more diversified, participatory, active notion of mediated communication in everyday life. In the context of new media, 'interactivity' is the promised land, with a dynamic, constructive and educational dialogue with the new information and communication technology being promised. Yet, although the personal computer is now commonplace in the family home, we have found it hard to survey young people's uses of other new media such as the Internet or email, because these are still found mainly among the unrepresentative group of early adopters. And despite the much-hyped potential of new forms of interactive media, these are either barely available as yet or the interactivity offered is very limited.

Thus it seems fair to say that, despite the spectacular success of computer and video games, especially with boys, present reality does not yet match up to the dream. School computers are largely used for word-processing, few as yet have substantial experience with the Internet and those who have tend to be ambivalent about it.[7] More interactive applications involving the *television screen* (video-on-demand, on-screen banking and tele-shopping) are not yet generally available and have had virtually no impact on today's children, except as part of futuristic fantasies. 'Interactivity' is a good selling point and as such is often over-claimed, being used to cover very different kinds of user-machine interfaces; of these, the most interactive at present, and hence for young people the most exciting, involve interaction with other people rather than with the machine.

12.5 MANAGING THE CHANGING MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

12.5.1 Increasing complexity

When the dominant medium was television, and when everyone received the same broadcast or the same few channels, at the same time as everyone else, on their one television set, sitting with the family in the living room, it may not have seemed overly misleading to make the assumptions about 'the viewer'. Under those conditions, viewing practices within the household were easier to research methodologically as well as easier to conceptualise. And looking beyond television, researchers could specialise - on the broadcasting audience, the computer user, the newspaper reader, etc, with little need to cross into other specialisms. Over the years the situation has become ever more complex as audience research has had to take greater account of diversified lifestyles as well as of demographic variables, and of new screen-based media.

The young person growing up today lives in a mixed media environment, attending to multiple media simultaneously and often more casually than the industry would wish, yet also actively integrating media in often unanticipated ways, seeking out thematically-related contents across different media and non-media forms. As the economic and technical determinants of media systems are changing, the result is increasing asynchronicity of viewing, multiset households, plurality of channels, interactivity of media themselves and blurring of key boundaries - between producer/ consumer, work/ leisure, entertainment/ information.

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[7] In this context it is interesting to observe how rapidly those with Internet experience have developed a repertoire of criteria with which to evaluate the Internet. Yet as young people themselves see it, they would appreciate greater support in this respect, providing a kind of 'net-literacy' to help them move beyond what's cool to deciding what's important and what's valuable on the Internet. One group discussion among pupils (grateful for the help with their health project obtained through a drug company website) illustrates how such newly emerging critical skills are in need of further development.

We have already addressed some of the key policy concerns under the headings of 'social differences and inequalities' and 'the changing media environment', for understanding the nature of change and the inequalities or divisions which are thereby alleviated or, more worryingly, brought about, is crucial to informed policy intervention. However, given that the media environment for children and young people - and for their parents and teachers - is becoming increasingly complex, there are several further policy matters on which the findings of this report have some bearing.

12.5.2 Regulating the young

Nationally, the new media environment is less easy to regulate than before; domestically it is less easy to supervise than before. As the experience of the media, once common across the nation, becomes increasingly a diversity of experiences shared only within specific subgroups, there is increasing scope for social, psychological and cultural factors to determine who engages with which media and why. Issues of meaning, preference, identity, pleasure, conflict, lifestyle, practice and context not only become more important, but they must also be brought into the policy process.

How should children and young people's media use at home be regulated, and by whom? In the main, British parents are satisfied with the media, especially the television programmes, available for their children. Thus they worry little about their child watching television or playing computer games unsupervised in their bedroom, and they generally consider their child (though often not other people's children) to be sensible and discriminating media users.

However, from their viewpoint, the proliferation and diversification of domestic media makes regulating media use at home ever more difficult, and hence the argument that public regulation should not intrude into the privacy of the home found little support amongst parents. Ironically then, as regulation of media producers and distributors becomes increasingly complex and difficult on a national level, so that more and more expectations are being placed on parents' shoulders, it is noteworthy that parents themselves strongly wish to be able to continue to rely on the good judgement of broadcasters and media regulators.

This is especially the case because most children over eight years old prefer to watch family/adult rather than children's programming and because many parents have relatively little understanding of the computer games or Internet sites that their children make use of. Parents are generally of the view that once their children have reached their early teens, it is all but impractical for them to attempt restrictions on their media use at home, and parental control is little attempted after the age of about 14.

As television sets spread into the bedroom (being frequently watched there after the 'watershed' even by children as young as 6) for example, more liberal options such as parental mediation through conversation during co-viewing become less practicable and hence being able to rely on national regulation becomes even more important. Children's and parents' accounts often differ in relation to bedroom viewing, making it difficult to obtain a clear picture, but there may be grounds for concern regarding viewing after 9 pm in bedrooms by young children without parental mediation, whether this mediation is seen in terms of restriction or, more constructively, in terms of the shared discussion and interpretation of television contents.

Yet we observed little enthusiasm among parents for taking on themselves a more restrictive approach to their children's media use. As a strategy, parents find trying to regulate children's media use by the clock relatively impractical (hence strong support for the broadcasting 'watershed'), and while deciding where to put media within the home offers a more manageable strategy, this depends on many factors other than that of controlling children's media use.

12.5.3 A very British picture?

The importance of screen entertainment for British families

Regulating the media and information industries is no longer just a task for national regulators and industry managers. In view of our comparison between Britain and other European countries, we note that many of the findings reported here may reflect a very British picture. Given the emergence of Europe-wide regulatory practices for both the audiovisual sector and the Internet, therefore, the distinctiveness and strength of Britain's 'screen-entertainment culture' must be borne in mind.

By screen-entertainment culture, we draw on our comparative findings which show British children to be more likely than those in other European countries to have their own screen media, especially their own television set in their bedroom and to spend longer each day with screen-entertainment media in general, again especially with television; they are also the least likely to have books in their bedrooms.[8] While historical data are lacking to allow us to determine whether this time is taken from that previously spent with books, our findings do show that the screen-entertainment media cohere together - the more time spent with video, the more spent on computer games, for example - while the same is not the case for the print media.

However, explaining why British children appear to be relatively more screen-focussed than is the case in other European countries takes us away from an account of the media *per se*. Indeed, a combination of three factors seems to be involved. First, a relative lack of things to do in the area where they live (here again, British children are far more dissatisfied in this respect than their European counterparts). Second, the relatively high level of parental fears for their children's safety outside the home. And third, the easy attractions of an increasingly personalised media environment inside the home. Other factors may also be significant: a long-established tradition of high quality public service broadcasting for children and families, for example (and a similarly long-established tradition of moral concern over the quality and nature of media contents and their possible harmful consequences for children). Yet such a tradition is under increasing pressure and so may decrease in significance with time.

Britain falling behind in IT?

It is noteworthy that British is not 'ahead' in the computer age as it has been for television. Indeed, European comparisons suggest that the UK 'leads' for screen-entertainment culture but lags behind for IT. By comparison with key European countries, children and young people in the UK have more access to, and make more use of television and computer games, but they have less access to the PC, multimedia computers and the Internet.[9]

Moreover, in the UK the differentials between lower and higher social grade households in access to both multimedia computers and the Internet appear to be much more marked than in the Scandinavian countries especially. Current Government policy is designed to address this through schools, but while schools indeed have the potential to equalise access across social groups, it remains the case that the most flexible, sociable and entertaining access to computers is through the home.

12.5.4 IT at home and at school

The issue of inequality - as discussed above - represents one of the most difficult problems for policy makers (cf. the aim of the National Grid for Learning of providing widespread access to computers and the Internet in schools and libraries by 2002). As we have seen, the availability and use of computer-based media at home is unequal, depending especially on social grade. This raises

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[8] As we show in Livingstone, Holden and Bovill (in press), in the UK 50% of 6-7 year olds have a television in their bedroom, compared with 32% in Denmark, 25% in Sweden, 21% in Spain, 17% in Germany and 16% in France. The figures for video recorders and TV-linked games machines follow the same pattern. By contrast, only 68% of this age group in the UK have books other than school books, compared with 83% in Denmark, 85% in Germany, 89% in Spain, 93% in France and 94% in Sweden. Viewing figures mirror these trends, with average time spent watching television in the UK being up to half an hour per day more than in Sweden and Spain, and as much as an hour per day more than in Germany and France.

[9] In the UK only 27% of 15-16 year-olds have access to a PC with CD-ROM at home, and similar figures are found in France (21%) and Italy (34%). But in many other countries, figures are much higher: in Denmark 63% of 15-16 year-olds have a multimedia PC at home, as do 55% in Sweden, 52% in Switzerland, 51% in Spain, 50% in Germany, 48% in the Netherlands and 47% in Finland. Moreover, in the UK 7% of 15-16 year-olds have Internet connections at home and similarly small percentages are found in Italy (12%), Spain (11%), Germany (9%), and France (5%). Access is much more common in Scandinavian countries: Sweden (38%), Finland (30%) and Denmark (26%). For further details, see Livingstone, Holden and Bovill (in press).

important questions of how to create a culture of open access and use within public locales which is attractive to all young people (see 'Excellence in Schools', HMO, July 1997).

The teaching of IT in schools is crucial if existing social divides are to be ameliorated rather than exacerbated. Although the use of IT in schools was not our primary focus, it is a strength of the present study that we could examine the relation between use of IT at home and at school for the same sample of children and young people. In some ways, we find this relationship to be an uneasy one. Fearful of compounding class inequalities, teachers are reluctant to draw on the home computer as an educational resource, leaving parents who have bought a PC to support their children's education somewhat 'out in the cold'. We also find that if pupils have up-to-date IT facilities at home, they tend to be critical of school equipment. However, in other respects our findings are encouraging: for example, children whose only access to a PC is at school report themselves as being just as excited by and confident with computers as those who also use one at home.

Teachers seem acutely aware of the difficulties of introducing IT into classrooms, though they may be enthusiastic about the potential, if not always the reality as yet, of IT in schools. Around the country, a variety of experiments with IT in schools are ongoing, and while examples of best practice will soon emerge to guide further developments, we were told of a clear wish list from teachers which stresses more and better teacher training, more technical back-up, and more money.

For young people and their families, the definitions of new technologies are still fluid: young people are uncertain whether to associate the PC with print or with screen entertainment, whether to associate the Internet with an encyclopaedia or with communication and fun. This is therefore a key moment for addressing social inequalities, and whatever adults think, it seems likely to be the latter rather than the former associations which most young people will find encouraging. After all, those who have found the communicative possibilities of the Internet, or the games potential of multimedia, are the most enthusiastic.

To take their place in the twenty first century, children must be screen-wise as well as book-wise. The screen is becoming ever more central to education, work and leisure and new kinds of interaction or engagement with screen media are becoming available. Both trends make a wide-reaching programme of media and computer education essential for the acquisition of the necessary skills.

12.5.5 Moral panics

Public debates and concerns regarding the media and young people have often lacked a grounding in a detailed account of the access and uses of new media among children and young people in Britain today. Consequently, the present report has presented findings in some detail. We have included apparently small as well as sizeable 'findings' because of the difficulties, from the vantage point of the present, in knowing which may be the key indicators of important changes to come. Further, much of the detail provided arises from our insistence on contextualising new media uses, and this insistence in turn stemmed from a concern to question or, where appropriate, rebut, the 'moral panics' which arise for today's new media just as they have done for then-new media in previous decades.

Those who worry about children and the media may take comfort from our conclusion that while media are now inextricably part of children and young people's lives, their primary concern remains with direct social interaction rather than gazing at a screen. As we have shown in various ways throughout this report, children would always rather go out, see a friend, talk to someone than they would stay in and absorb what's given to them, unless they are tired, needing time out, to relieve boredom or to fill a gap between activities.

It is important to note that despite moral panics about the media, we found very few children indeed who viewed large amounts of television to the exclusion of other activities. Nor, among those few with access to the Internet, did we encounter children upset by inappropriate materials they had found. Nor did we find children so addicted to computer games that they had become socially isolated. This is not to say that there is no need for concern. This study was conducted while broadcasting especially remains largely subject to comparatively high levels of national regulation, and it may be that some of the trends we have identified - for example, children's preference to watch television alone rather than with their family - will be more problematic if and when the broadcasting environment becomes more diversified and less regulated. The Internet is at a very early, though

rapidly escalating, point in its diffusion through British society, and a much more detailed study is required of the manner of its use by children and young people as access becomes more widespread.

However, as critics of moral panics have long argued (e.g. Drotner, 1992; Bazalgette and Buckingham 1995), it is important to recognise when societal anxieties about cultural change - often acutely experienced as anxieties about young people - are expressed as concerns about the media. Notwithstanding a public tendency to scapegoat the media, our report has found that the major distinction in children and young people's leisure time is - just as it was 40 years ago - not that between media time and non-media time, but rather that between time inside and time outside the home.

Parents' concerns are consistent with this conclusion, for we have not found parents' worries about their children's media use to be as strong as their concerns for their children's physical safety, their employment prospects or their schooling, although parents undoubtedly feel many qualms regarding the childhood they can offer their children compared to that which they themselves experienced. The differences today, compared with forty years ago, are that first, free time spent outside the home is increasingly restricted, while second, leisure time spent inside the home is ever more time spent with media, especially screen-entertainment media.

By and large, parents express some regret at this situation, but feel concern only in relation to other people's children. Children and young people express regrets regarding their freedom outside the home but only enthusiasm for the expanding media opportunities within it. In our research, we have found some grounds for concern and some for optimism; however, judging the wider consequences of the changing media environment remains more a moral than an empirical question, and one whose scope is beyond that of this report.

12.6 AFTER WORD

Despite the diversification and multiplication of media forms, for British children (and their parents) television still dominates their leisure hours and interests, being the medium which offers a far wider range of gratifications than any other. Nearly all watch television almost every or every day, television is identified most often when we ask which medium children would miss most, television is most often named when we ask what they talk about with friends, and watching television is the activity that children most often share with their parents.

Thus while we have tried to balance television in relation to other media, in this report we keep returning to the dominance of television for at present the new media occupy only a rather small proportion of some children's time and attention. A future report of this kind may look very different, as even now television is increasingly in competition with other media for young people's time. In the future, the screen itself will no longer be occupied simply by television: it already includes video, teletext and video games, and in the future it may merge with the PC, or at least acquire certain PC functions such as home shopping, the Internet, etc. Arguably, over this past forty years we have witnessed one stage of a longer term shift from a print to a visual culture, from a mass audience to a more segmented audience, from an accepting to a more critical and interactive audience. However, given the poor record of past futurologists, we will not engage in further crystal ball gazing here.

The present project began with the premise that a systematic and broad-ranging description was needed of the 'changing media environment' for children and young people. We suggest that contextualising new media use in relation to other media and leisure activities serves to diffuse public anxieties about addicted or isolated children. More broadly, as will have become clear over the preceding chapters, the findings in this report touch on policy debates from a wide range of fields encompassing domestic broadcasting regulation, education for information technology in schools, consumer demand for new media goods, national versus European or even global flows of media contents, concerns over the family, lifestyle or other segmentations of common culture, inequalities in social and technological competence and children's versus parental rights.

We hope that those with particular academic or policy interests can focus on the relevant sections of this report to discover the findings or arguments pertinent to their questions. Understanding social change and informing debate is a valuable and ambitious goal, for the more social science keeps pace

with technological change, the better the chances for influencing, both directly or more likely indirectly, the conditions of their shaping, regulation and use. As a further aim of the project was to provide a baseline against which future changes may be measured, it may be that some policy implications will only emerge in the years to come.

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APPENDIX 1.1

The European comparative project on *"Children, Young People and the Changing Media Environment"*

The project reported here for Britain has been conducted in parallel in 11 other European countries: Belgium (Flanders), Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. These national studies follow a common conceptual framework and methodology, incorporating qualitative methods and a large scale survey involving some 15,000 children and young people across the 12 countries during 1997-8.

For an initial account of the key similarities and differences among European countries concerning children and young people's ownership, access and time spent with a range of both 'old' and 'new' forms of media, see Livingstone, Holden and Bovill (in press). Additional discussions of the comparative findings can be found in a Special Issue of the *European Journal of Communication* (Livingstone, December 1998) and will appear in a forthcoming book containing contributions from all countries.

Directed by the British Team, the European comparative project, ***Children, Young People and the Changing Media Environment,*** has been supported financially by the Broadcasting Standards Commission (UK), the EC Youth for Europe Programme (EC-DGXXII), and the European Science Foundation. Each national team obtained national funding from a variety of academic and industry sources (see below).

Denmark
Institution: Centre for Youth Media Studies, University of Copenhagen
Team: Dr Kirsten Drotner and Dr Gitte Stald.
Funding: Danish Telecom (Tele Danmark), and The Danish Ministry of Culture.

Finland
Institution: Universities of Jyvaskyla and Tampere.
Team: Dr Annikka Suoninen, Dr Marja Saanilahti, Professor Taisto Hujanen, Riitta Koikkalainen, and others.
Funding: The Academy of Finland, The National Children's Fund for Research and Development (ITLA), The Finnish Public Broadcasting Company (YLE), The University of Tampere (Department of Communication) and The University of Jyvaskyla (Research Unit for Contemporary Culture).

Belgium
Institution: Nijmegen University.
Team: Dr Leen d'Haenens.
Funding: The Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghent (Belgium), and The Department of Communication, University of Nijmegen (the Netherlands).

France
Institution: Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris
Team: Dr Dominique Pasquier, Dr Josiane Jouet, Dr Eric Maigret, and others.
Funding: France Télévision, Canal Plus, CNET, and Télérama.

Germany
Institution: Hans-Bredow Institut fur Medienforschung University of Hamburg
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United Kingdom
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Team: Dr Sonia Livingstone and Dr Moira Bovill
Funding: Conducted in association with the Broadcasting Standards Commission, the project was supported financially by the Advertising Association, the British Broadcasting Corporation, British Telecommunications plc, the Broadcasting Standards Commission, the ITV Network Ltd, the Independent Television Commission, the Leverhulme Trust, STICERD, LSE, and Yorkshire/Tyne Tees Television.

APPENDIX 1.2

Technical Report

1 PILOT WORK

1.1 Interviews in the home and in school

Pilot interviews with children and their parents in six families, and with four classes in primary school and two in secondary school, were carried out to establish optimal ways of conducting interviews with children of different ages[1]. This work demonstrated that children and young people are may reveal different aspects of themselves and their relationship with the media, depending upon whether they are interviewedat home alone, at home with their family, or in schools with their peers.

Interviewing children and young people individually in their homes gave us direct access to their media environment both in the bedroom (where many of the interviews with the children were held) and elsewhere in the home (where parents were interviewed separately). Discussion of media use and family rules about media arose naturally and could be pursued in context and in depth. The place of the media in the lives of the children and their families could be observed directly.

Interviewing in schools, on the other hand, allowed us to observe the peer context in the group situation, thereby revealing other aspects of media meanings for children. Notwithstanding some peer pressure, we found that most children were able to express their individuality in the groups. The groups showed very clearly which topics they found interesting and which they had much to say about - for then they both want to tell the interviewer and want to tell/discuss with each other. These findings led to the decision to interview children both at home and in school in the qualitative phase of the main project.

Pilot interviews also made it clear how for the youngest age group we would need to modify certain questions (such as how long children spent on an average day with a medium). Children under the age of 9 generally could not answer this question reliably, although they all came up with some sort of figure ("Half an hour and three minutes" from one six year-old). We therefore decided to rely on parents to give us this information on behalf of children younger than nine.

The pilot interviews allowed us to develop and refine our interviewing techniques in a number of other ways. They gave us the opportunity, for example,to explore the vocabulary childrenused to describe new media and consequently enabled us to construct questions which could be readily understood by even the youngest children and seemed appropriate to them in terms of their interests. For example, we developed colourful tags for the youngest children to wear. These had pictures of different media (multimedia computers, Gameboys, TV-linked games machines, mobile phones, books etc) and a space for the child to write their name. The children were then asked to choose a tag, fill in their name, and introduce themselves to the researcher, describing the picture on their tag and explaining why they had chosen it. This was particularly helpful in establishing that for children a "computer" was a generic term almost universally identified with playing games. Thus particular care had to be taken to ensure that children understood when our questions referred to PCs and when to TV-linked games machines or hand-held computer game toys such as Gameboys.

At this stage several questions were identified as successfully putting children at their ease at the beginning of interviews, as well as providing us with valuable contextualising information about their daily lives:

[1]Further information about the children interviewed can be found in Tables 1 and 2 in section 2.6 of this Technical Report.

- "What's it like living around here?"
- "What's it like being <child's age>?"

A number of support materials were also tested out: these served to break up the interviews and facilitate discussion. For example, we made up sets of coloured cards on which we glued pictures of all the media we wished to talk about with labels printed underneath. These cards could be used in the interviews in a number of different ways:

- to make media maps of technologies which children felt "went together"
- to act as a focus for discussions (which were the exciting/ boring media, the media parents and teachers approved or disapproved of, the media they would miss most etc)

Discussion in the school groups, we found, sometimes benefited if broken up by interludes where the children worked on topics individually. Based on this experience, we provided pencils and prepared small tasks. For example a sheet of paper titled MY LIFE, had a line drawn down the middle and WITH MUSIC as a heading on one side and WITHOUT MUSIC on the other. Children were asked to either draw a picture (or write a brief account if they preferred) of what their life would be like with and without that particular medium. Similar sheets were available for other media and could be used if and when the discussion prompted.

Other sheets were headed TELEVISION or COMPUTERS and children were invited to think about NOW compared with THE FUTURE. Other sheets had drawings of a stick character watching television with an empty "think bubble" for the child to fill in. Particularly successful were blank sheets entitled MY BEDROOM IN THE YEAR 2000, which almost all children approached with considerable enthusiasm. These techniques in fact had to be sparingly used, as the children found them so absorbing that they wanted to spend too much time elaborating their drawings. They were however a valuable resource when discussion flagged or got out of hand.

1.2 Surveys

Three pilot surveys using the resources of the broadcasters' panels of viewers were carried out, one with children aged 7-17 and a second with children aged 10-17 on the YoungView panel and one with parents of children aged 6-17 on the adult panel.[2]

These surveys enabled us to pre-test forms of questioning (for example, how to ask children of different ages about time spent on media), and to establish the important dimensions of attitudes which we would not, given space constraints, be able to explore as fully in the main survey where we would be covering the whole spectrum of new media. Thus we asked children and parents twenty detailed questions about their attitudes to computers and parents fifteen questions about the ways in which they monitored and controlled their children's viewing. This had two benefits: first the data was of value in its own right, and secondly results allowed us to select a smaller number of questions on attitudes to computers and parental guidance for inclusion in the main survey.

We were also able to ask children to draw pictures for us, showing how they usually watched television. A number of these have been included in this report. The liveliness and eloquence of these drawings and the obvious care which children had taken in producing them, inspired us to use this technique when time permitted in several of our interviews. Drawing was particularly popular with children up to the age of twelve.

[2] At the time of the research the B.A.R.B. adult television panel consisted of a panel of respondents recruited from R.S.L's Capibus survey. Each week four and a half thousand respondents on the nationally representative panel were sent a self-completion diary about all the programmes they had seen and in addition asked to answer more detailed questions about particular programmes and other more general media-related topics. Around three thousand booklets were returned on average each week. The YoungView panel consisted of around 1,000 children recruited from these families, who returned questionnaires each month. Response rates on the children's panel were consistently high.

1.3. Demographic characteristics of T.O.P and YoungView samples

		Parents of children aged 6-17 (830) %	Children aged 7-17 (719) %			Children aged 10-17 (457) %
Gender of parent						
	Male	42				
	Female	58				
Age of parent						
	16-24	5				
	25-34	23				
	35-44	49				
	45-54	20				
	55-64	1				
	65+	1				
Social grade of family						
	AB	22	20			20
	C1	28	29			23
	C2	22	27			26
	DE	27	25			31
Age of child						
	7	28[3]	11			
	8-9	17	21			
	10-11	15	23	Aged	10-11	35
	12-13	15	26		12	12
	14-15	15	18		13-14	40
	16-17	8	2		15-16	13
Gender of child						
	Boy	48	48			50
	Girl	47	52			50
	N/A	5				

2. MAIN QUALITATIVE SAMPLES

On the basis of the pilot work described above, it was decided to conduct both group interviews in schools and in-depth individual interviews at home**.** The samples for interviews in schools were recruited by SMRC Childwise from the nationally representative panel of schools used in their annual Childwise Monitor report. Families for the personal interviews were recruited by the same market research company through personal interviews, carried out door-to-door in the North, South and Midlands.

In addition, since use of the new media and of the Internet in particular, is at present comparatively rare, it was decided to convene groups and conduct interviews with Internet use as the specific focus. In all there were six interviewers, including the report authors who personally carried out the majority of assignments. Children interviewed individually in their homes were always interviewed by a female interviewer, following the requirements

[3]Parents were asked when answering our questions to think about their *youngest* child. For this reason, although the sample of parents is representative in age, social grade and gender, the children talked about tend to be younger.

of the recruitment agency.

Detailed interview guides were prepared for both the school groups and in-home interviews, and alternative, simplified versions drawn up for the youngest children. These were not followed verbatim in any interview, as the priority was for discussion to develop naturally, following the children's lead and exploring the topics of most interest to them. However the interviewers ensured that all topics addressed in the guides were covered in the groups as a whole.

2.1 Outline of discussion guides

The school interviews covered the following topics:

- area where children live
  - freedom and access to public spaces
- being their age
- media in context of other activities
  - enjoyable/ boring things to do
- representations of the media e.g.
  - spontaneous associations
  - media mapping
  - definitions of old and new media
  - which are seen as exciting/boring
  - which have a social function and which are used alone
- change
  - What was it like when got last new piece of equipment?
  - What would you like for next birthday? Why?
- TV content (favourite programmes/channels)
  - focus on one selected genre - soaps/ music/sport etc
- computers (games/ PC use/ Internet)
- telephone
- expectations of the media future.

Simple questions were developed which could lead to discussion of issues such as globalisation, intertextuality, consumerism, peer pressure, identity formation and gender stereotyping.

The guide for the interview with the teacher in charge of I.T. covered:

- background information about the school
  - size
  - catchment area
  - history
  - plans for the future
- IT and media education
  - media equipment (how much/how funded/how maintained)
  - how IT taught (separate subject/ integrated into curriculum)
  - teachers' reactions
  - pupils' reactions (gender/age differences)
  - school/home liaison
  - educational implications
  - hopes and fears for the media future

The in-home interview schedule covered most of the areas explored in the schools interviews. However less time was spent on representations of the media, more on media content and additional topics explored in depth:

- how media fit into family life
  - media possessions and where they are kept

- when and how used and by whom
- bedroom culture
- parents' attitudes to media and family rules
- friendship networks

The interviews with parents addressed the following questions:

- ownership and use of media
- parents' own media biographies
- pattern of daily family life
  - shared activities
  - source of regular family arguments
- television
  - favourite programmes
  - worries and rules
- computers
  - attitudes to new technology
  - worries and rules
- telephone
- consumerism
  - pocket money
  - effects of advertising
- values
  - aspirations for child
  - perceptions of child's values

The Internet interviews covered the following topics:

- representations of the Internet
  - how do young people see the Internet?
- use of the Internet
  - who introduced them to Internet?
  - what do they use Internet for?
  - how does use differ in different locations (home/school/cafes)?
  - how is use of the Internet by young people financed?
  - is global access a major attraction?
- how do young people engage with the Internet?
  - how long do they spend on it?
  - are they rivetted or dropping in and out?

2.2 Group interviews in school

Six primary and six secondary schools were selected (see Table 1) to represent a range in respect of three characteristics :

- *geographical location*
  (rural, town and city settings in the North, South and Midlands)

- *social grade of catchment area*
  (middle-class and working-class)

- *achievement level of school.*

Achievement level was assessed by the percentage of GCSE passes at A-C in England or 1-4 in Scotland in secondary schools (average 44.5%) and in primary schools by the percentage of pupils getting Level 4 or more in the 11 year-old tests in English (average 56%), maths (average 53%) and science (average 61%).

Care was taken to ensure that a number of schools in cabled areas were selected.

This research design allowed us to examine age, gender and social grade differences, and also gave scope for more fine-grained comparisons between:

- boys and girls from each age group in rural, town and city environments
- working-class and middle-class children in each age band in each of the three different types of location
- working-class boys and girls with middle-class boys and girls in each age group.

Group interviews of around one hour were held with same-sex groups of around six boys or six girls, aged 6-7, 9-10, 12-13 and 15-16 from the same class. In each school we also interviewed either the head teacher or the teacher with special responsibility for I.T.

All interviews were audio-taped and fully transcribed and those with the children were coded and analysed using Q.S.R. NUD*IST, a software package for qualitative data analysis. Q.S.R. NUD*IST is designed for the efficient management and exploration of complex, unstructured data sets. It provided us with a tool for the comprehensive retrieval of material on particular topics, which ensured that our interpretations were not biased by memory limitations or impeded by difficulties of having to trawl through entire transcripts when new questions arose. A broad coding frame was developed, using fifteen codes in addition to classificatory background codes recording age, gender, social grade, location and type of interview. Ten of these fifteen codes specified different media, while three referred to different people in the children's lives - family members, friends and teachers. The remaining codes served to retrieve background factors of major concern, such as the child's interests outside the media and perceptions of what it was like to be his or her age. An overall inter-coder reliability of 80%[4] was achieved: this was even higher for the eleven media codes, where reliability was 88%. Mismatches were almost entirely due to omissions: there were, as can be imagined from such a simple coding frame, almost no disagreements about which code was appropriate.

This coding procedure was mainly used as a heuristic for identifying sections of interview transcripts which concerned particular broad topics. More interpretative analysis of the material could then be based on *all* relevant passages from the interviews. The sheer mass of information meant that a less structured approach risked the omission of pertinent material. In no way was the coding technique used to substitute for the process of researchers familiarising themselves with individual transcripts as a whole. Before and during both coding and writing up, the manuscripts were read through in their entirety by all project researchers.

2.3 Home interviews

Sixteen families (see section 2.6, Table 2) were recruited using the following selection criteria:

- *age of child* (in one of four age bands 6-7, 9-10, 12-13 and 15-16)
- *gender of child*
- *social grade of family* (working class and middle class)
- *family type* (single parent or couple)

Once again a balanced sample allowed us to compare working-class with middle-class, and single-parent with two-parent, families for each gender within each age band. Families from the North, South and Midlands were interviewed: a quarter came from rural and city areas, while a half lived in towns.

Two researchers visited each home together, so that individual, hour-long interviews could be held with parents and

[4] A number of transcripts were dual coded in the process of developing the final coding frame. When a workable coding frame had been secured, two coders separately coded two transcripts and the reliability index was calculated by dividing the number of codes where there was agreement by the sum of all agreed codes plus the sum of each coders' unique codes. Thus if 10 passages were coded in the same way by both coders, but 5 unique codes appeared in one transcript and 2 unique codes in the other, the reliability index would be 10/17 or 59%.

children separately. Parents were typically seen in the living room or kitchen, while children were interviewed separately, often in their bedrooms.

Again all interviews were taped, transcribed, coded and analysed, using a slightly extended version of the previous coding frame covering comments on:

- family life (mealtimes, bedtimes etc)
- family rules about media
- the child's bedroom
- worries/ concerns
- consumerism (any mention of money/ cost/buying things)

and, in the case of interviews with the parents, documenting:

- parents' own use of media
- parents' memories of their childhood leisure use
- parents' aspirations for the child or perceptions of the child's aspirations

In this case a reliability index of 75% for the coding was achieved: once again this was higher (86%) for mention of specific media.

2.4 Follow-on interviews

In order to facilitate the triangulation of multiple methods we decided to overlap the samples from the at school and at home interviews. Thus, follow-on interviews in their homes (see section 2.6, Table 3) with a boy and girl previously interviewed in school allowed us to gauge in how far individual children from each age band gave different accounts depending on different contexts. Once again all interviews were taped, transcribed, coded and analysed using Q.S.R. NUD*IST.

2.5 Internet interviews

In addition to the interviews outlined above, we also talked to forty four children and young people who used the Internet (see section 2.5, Table 4).

Interviews were held in two Cybercafés in the London area, selected to represent different café environments (one was more games-oriented, whereas the other was frequented by Internet users). In these contexts interviews were not pre-arranged, although they did follow a planned interviewing schedule. Interviews lasted from half-an-hour to forty five minutes, sometimes with small groups, at other times with a couple of friends and occasionally with individuals. Respondents were almost all boys, as very few girls were found to frequent the cybercafés, and ranged in age from ten to eighteen years.

Three group discussions and three depth interviews were also held in two schools in the South East, a state comprehensive and a private boarding school, both of which had taken part in the recent Schools OnLine[5] project.

These interviews were taped and transcribed, but not computer-analysed, as the smaller number of transcripts made this unnecessary.

[5]Schools OnLine is a research project launched with 60 schools in 1995. It is funded by the DTI and brings together Higher Education research, schools and commercial partners to deliver curriculum materials in science and modern languages plus a small team of annotators for other curriculum areas (http://sol.ultralab.anglia.ac.uk/pages/schools_online/about_sol/SolPress.html).

2.6 Qualitative samples

TABLE 1

Schools sample

SCHOOL	SIZE	AREA	LOCATION	SOC. GRADE[6]	ACHIEVEMENT	ABILITY[7]	AGE
PRIMARY							
SCHOOL F	63	Rural	Scotland	Mixed	Above average	Above average	6-7 girls 9-10 boys
SCHOOL B	300		Hampshire	Working class	(Based on SATS) English 54% Maths 54% Science 60%	Average	6-7 boys 9-10 girls
SCHOOL A	627	Town	Hampshire	Working class	English 31% Maths 16% Science 12%	Below average	6-7 girls 9-10 boys
SCHOOL E	250		Nottingham-shire	Middle class	English 48% Maths 40% Science 50%	Average	6-7 boys 9-10 girls
SCHOOL C	270	City	Newcastle	Working class	English 44% Maths 15% Science 30 %	Average	6-7 boys 9-10 girls
SCHOOL D	350		London	Middle class	English 54% Maths 54% Science 60%	Average	6-7 girls 9-10 boys
SECONDARY							
SCHOOL H	650	Rural	Suffolk	Working class	(Based on GCSE's) 31%	Below average	12-13 boys 15-16 girls
SCHOOL M (no teacher interview)	?		Norfolk	Middle class	42%	Average	11-12 girls 15-16 boys
SCHOOL G	?	Town	Cheshire	Working class	30%	Below average	12-13 girls 15-16 boys
SCHOOL J	1000		Kent	Middle class	62%	Above average	12-13 boys 15-17 girls
SCHOOL K	1000	City	Edinburgh	Mixed	59%	Above average	12-13 boys 15-16 girls
SCHOOL I	490		Newcastle	Working class	11%	Below average	12-13 girls 12-13 boys 15-16 boys
SCHOOL L	1500		London	Middle class	64%	Above average	12-13 girls

[6]Based on interview with Head teacher about the catchment area.

[7]Ability levels were determined according to how the school had performed in relation to National Average Performance levels cited in the 1996 school league tables. At that time the percentage of children in British primary schools gaining level 4 or better was as follows: English: 56%, Maths: 53%, Science: 61%. For secondary schools, 44.5% gained 5 or more GCSE's, and the average points for students taking 2 or more A levels was 18.3.

Pilot groups

SCHOOL	AREA	LOCATION	SOC. GRADE	ACHIEVEMENT	AGE
PRIMARY	Town	Cambridgeshire	MC	English 89% Maths 77% Science 91%	6-7 boys 6-7 girls 10-11 boys 10-11 girls
SECONDARY	City	Manchester	WC	11%	13-14 girls 15-16 boys

TABLE 2

In-home interview sample[8]

AGE	GENDER	AREA	LOCATION	SOCIAL GRADE	FAMILY TYPE
6-7	Boy	Town Town	West Midlands West Midlands	MC WC	Single parent Couple
	Girl	Town Town	Essex Nottinghamshire	MC WC	Couple Single parent
9-10	Boy	Rural City	Essex London	MC WC	Single parent Couple
	Girl	Rural City	Lincolnshire Newcastle	MC WC	Single parent Couple
12-13	Boy	Town City	Nottinghamshire Newcastle	MC WC	Single parent Couple
	Girl	Town City	West Midlands London	MC WC	Single parent Couple
15-16	Boy	Town Rural	Essex East Anglia	MC WC	Couple Single parent
	Girl	Rural Town	East Anglia Essex	MC WC	Couple Single parent

Additional interviews

5	Girl	Town	Essex	WC	Single parent
11	Boy	Town	Essex	WC	Single parent
16	Girl	Town	Nottinghamshire	WC	Single parent

[8]One parent or both were interviewed separately from their children. Occasionally a sibling within the age range 6-17 also participated in the interview with the child.

Pilot interviews

AGE	GENDER	AREA	LOCATION	SOCIAL GRADE	FAMILY TYPE
5 and 8	Boys	Town	Oxfordshire	MC	Single parent
5 and 7	Boy & girl	Rural	Oxfordshire	WC	Couple
8 and 10	Girls	Rural	Oxfordshire	WC	Couple
11	Girl	Town	Oxfordshire	WC	2 single parents
9 and 12	Girl & boy	Rural	Oxfordshire	MC	Couple
14 and 17	Girl & boy	Rural	Oxfordshire	MC	Couple

TABLE 3

Follow-on interview sample[9]

AGE	GENDER	AREA	LOCATION	SOCIAL GRADE	FAMILY TYPE
6-7	Boy	City	Newcastle	WC	Couple
	Girl	Rural	Scotland	MC	Couple
9-10	Boy	Rural	Scotland	WC	Couple
	Girl	City	Newcastle	WC	Couple
12-13	Boy	Rural	Norfolk	MC	Couple
11	Girl	Rural	Norfolk	MC	Single parent
15-16	Boy	Rural	Norfolk	WC	Couple
	Girl	Rural	Norfolk	WC	Couple

[9]These children were selected from the groups previously interviewed in school.

TABLE 4

Sample of Internet users

LOCATION	AGE	GENDER	TYPE OF INTERVIEW	N. IN GROUP
CYBERCAF_	14 - 15	Boys	Group	6
	14 - 16	Boys	Group	3
	14 - 15	Boys	3 paired depths	6
	10	Boy	Father/ son	1
	14 - 17	Mixed	5 individual depths	4 boys, 1 girl
SCHOOL	15 - 16	Mixed	Group	3 boys, 2 girls
	12 - 13	Boys	Group	5
	15 - 16	Boys	Paired depth	2
	13 & 14	Girls	Paired depth: Internet rejectors	2
	17	Boy	Individual	1

3. MAIN SURVEY SAMPLE

3.1 Sampling technique

The Media Research Group at the London School of Economics commissioned the market research company BMRB International to carry out a survey of young people between the ages of 6-17 and their parents between 14th April and 5th May 1997. The research employed a tightly controlled form of RANDOM LOCATION sampling.

The aim of random location sampling is to eliminate the more unsatisfactory features of quota sampling without incurring the cost involved in conducting surveys according to strict probability methods. One of the principal advantages of probability techniques of sampling is that selection of respondents is taken out of the hands of interviewers. In conventional quota sampling, on the other hand, interviewers are given quotas to fill, usually from within specified administrative areas. When for example, an interviewer is asked to complete a quota of AB respondents, he or she will tend to go to a part of the district where such individuals are most likely to be available. AB individuals living in mixed social class areas will have little chance of inclusion. This and similar defects lead to biases which are concealed by superficial agreements between sample profiles and accepted population statistics.

The principal distinguishing characteristic of random location sampling, as operated by BMRB International, is that interviewers are given very little choice in the selection of respondents, who are drawn from a small set of homogenous streets. Sampling points are census enumeration districts (each of about 150 households), selected to replicate the regional profile in terms of census statistics. Before random selection, enumeration districts are first ordered according to standard regions within the country, and further organised within these regions according to ACORN[10] type - thus ensuring that they are selected with probability proportional to population on these criteria. Thus the design is single-stage, using direct selection of appropriate enumeration districts (rather than larger units such as wards or parishes) within which a limited number of streets is available.

Quotas were also set for the age and sex of the child, so that the sample was demographically representative of the population. Interviews took place in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The achieved sample satisfactorily matched the social grade population profile for households with children:

	Achieved sample	*Households[11] with children aged 5-15*	*All households*
	%	%	%
A	2	2	2
B	15	15	17
C1	26	26	27
C2	25	23	20
D	17	19	16
E	14	12	14

[10]ACORN is a system developed by C.A.C.I. Information Services and frequently used by market researchers when they want to target a consumer market as precisely as possible. It is a geodemographic targeting classification built from data from the 1991 Census. Seventy nine different pieces of information produced by the Census authorities for each of 150,000 small geographical areas covering Britain are incorporated into the ACORN classification. This, it is claimed, "means that all the significant factors - such as age, sex, marital status, occupation, economic position, education, home ownership - are covered to give a very full and comprehensive picture of socio-economic status". (C.A.C.I. Information Services User Guide, 1993: 4)

[11]Figures for households with children, and for all households, are taken from BMRB's TGI survey,1997.

3.2. Questionnaire development

Children's questionnaire
The children's questionnaire was developed after intensive discussions with colleagues from ten other European countries[12] and Israel, who had agreed to conduct parallel research in their countries. It also benefited from our experience in the pilot survey with the broadcasters' YoungView panel. The main areas covered were as follows:

Background

- satisfaction with what is available to do in area where child lives
- freedom to do what child wants
- leisure activities engaged in at all (19 listed, including 7 non-media-related)
- who child lives with
- if lived abroad where would prefer to be

Time

- Average minutes per day spent on media (television on weekdays, Saturday and Sunday; videos; computer games at home (on TV-linked games machine or Gameboy) and in leisure time generally; PC use not for games at home and in school; listening to music; reading a book; listening to the radio; using the Internet)
- times of day television switched on in the home
- times of day television watched in bedroom
- proportion of leisure time at home spent in bedroom
- bedtimes (when school next day and when no school next day)

Access

- access to computers in school

(Focus on 16 items:
television, video recorder, cable/satellite television, teletext, camcorder
radio, stereo/CD/record player, personal stereo
TV-linked games machine, Gameboy
PC/computer not able to take CD-ROMs, PC/computer with CD-ROM Internet link/modem
telephone, mobile phone
shelf of books.)

- media equipment in the child's bedroom[13]
- media equipment elsewhere in the home

Use/modes of engagement
(Focus on 16 items above)

- which does child use personally
- which would child miss most
- want to get next birthday

---

[12]Teams from Belgium (Flanders), Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Italy, Israel, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland collaborated in the research.

[13]Children were asked two sets of questions about their possessions. First, whether they had a particular item in their bedroom, and second, whether there was one somewhere else in the home. Responses to these questions were used individually, and also combined into a third variable, whether they had the possession anywhere in their home, in their bedroom or elsewhere in the house. For this variable, corrections were made where the view of the parent was available. The child's view was taken to be primary for the bedroom, but where a parent's response contradicted the view of the child about there being a possession elsewhere in the house, this view was taken. A further correction was made using the variable 'do you use x in the home?'. Where they answered positively to this question, it was also recorded that they did have the variable somewhere in the home.

(Focus on 11 media:
television, video
music tapes/CDs/records, radio
books, magazines, comics, newspapers
computer/video games, PC - not for games
telephone.)

- which does child choose when:
  - bored
  - wants to relax
  - wants excitement
  - wants not to feel left out
- which does child concentrate on
- which does child talk about to friends
- which are parents keen for child to do

(Focus on 10 media:
books, magazines, comics, newspapers
computer/video games, CD-ROMS, Internet
television, videos
cinema)

- which find best for following main interest (named in *Values/interests*)

(Focus on 9 items:
books, magazines, comics
music tapes/CDs/records
computer/video games
videos
clothes, toys, things you collect.)

- which does child buy with own money
- which does child swap with friends

(Focus on television)

- how often does child flick from one channel to the other
  - while watching a programme
  - when the adverts come on

(Focus on computers)

- what are computers at home/ in school used for
- what is Internet used for

<u>Content</u>

- name of favourite television programme
  - is it for older/younger people?
  - does child talk to friends about it?
  - are parents keen for child to watch?
- type of favourite computer game

<u>Social context</u>

- who child spends most of free time with (alone/with family/ with friends)
- who usually watches favourite television programme with
- who usually plays computer games with/ assk for advice about computers
- how often do things with parents (eat main meal/ watch TV/play or make things/talk about things that matter/ talk about things on news)
- does child ever go round to friend's house if doesn't have equipment to:
  - watch a video

play a computer game
watch cable/ satellite TV
use a computer not for games
use a CD-ROM
use the Internet

Parental guidance

(Focussing on 6 activities

Watching television/videos, using/ playing on computer, listening to music, making telephone calls, reading books

Going out.)

- which child told when can/can't use (for father and mother separately)
- which media parent talks to child about (for father and mother separately)

Attitudes

- attitudes to computers
- attitudes to school and teachers[14]
- attitudes to parents

Personality characteristics

- how often:
  - worry
  - get bored
  - like being the way you are
  - find it hard to make friends

Values/interests

- which out of 14 topics interests child most
- perceptions of what makes someone child's age popular
- what will be most/least important to child when grown up

The children's questionnaire was piloted by the market research company before going into the field.

Parent's questionnaire

The parent's questionnaire was used to provide:

- additional demographic information
- a check on the reliability of some of the children's answers (e.g. time spend and media ownership)
- information about the parents' perspectives

Topics covered were:

Background/demographic information

- number of older/younger brothers/sisters
- mother and father's working status
- mother and father's educational level
- household income
- ethnic origin

[14]Four questions were asked which all related to the child's overall attitude to school: 'Do you like going to school?', 'Do you often get bored in class?', 'Do your teachers want you to do well?', 'Do you get fed up with teachers telling you what to do?' The scoring on the second and fourth questions was reversed, so that a high score represented a positive attitude to school on all the items, and Cronbach's Alpha was computed. Using the whole sample and all four questions, a value of 0.57 was found. Removing the third item increased the Alpha to 0.65, representing a reasonably high level of internal reliability for the scale. A positive attitude to school score was therefore computed for each child, using just these three variables, by computing their mean.

- religiosity
- main language spoken at home
- type of area live in (inner city, suburbs of city, middle of town, outskirts of town, countryside /village)
- parent's experience with computers
- which clubs child attends and how often goes
- proportion of time spent outdoors without adult supervision (for child and parent at child's age)
- safety of area where live (for child and parent at child's age)
- type of school child attends
- how well child is doing in school
- whether or not child has to share a bedroom
- bedtime (when school next day and when no school next day)
- willingness to be recontacted

Time

- average minutes child spends on media (television on weekdays, Saturday and Sunday; videos; music; computer/video games; PC not for games; books; comics)
- average minutes per day parent watches television

Access

- media equipment in the child's bedroom (16 items listed as before)
- media equipment elsewhere in the home (16 items listed as before)
- media equipment bought in last six months
- media equipment intend to buy in next six months
- how many books, videos, computer games, CD-ROM discs child owns

Concerns

- three main concerns out of a list of 12, including three media related issues: violence/sex/bad language on television, violence/sex/bad language on videos, addictive computer games.
- subjects which regularly cause arguments from a list of 11, including 5 media-related: watching television, playing computer games, watching videos, using the phone and playing/ listening to music
- effects of television on child: 12 possible effects listed.

Attitudes

- to computers (how much agree or disagree with 6 statements)
- satisfaction with what is currently available for child to watch on television
- to child having television in bedroom
- to the watershed (good/ bad thing; when restrictions should end)

Family interaction

- how important decisions are arrived at in the family

Parental guidance

(Focussing on same 6 activities as before)

- which tell child when can/can't use
- which talk to child about

Values

- changes would like to see in society
- Inglehart's shortened post-materialism scale

Time-budget diary

The time-budget diary covered one week. Children were asked to consider a list of ten activities:

- messing about/playing outdoors
- going out to a club
- watching television or video
- listening to music
- playing a video or computer game
- using a computer not for games
- painting/drawing/making something
- reading a book not for school
- doing homework
- doing something else

The task was to record by ticking the appropriate box, up to two things they did in every half hour from 6.00 am to midnight on Saturday and Sunday and from 6.00 am to 9.00 am and from 3.00 pm to midnight on weekdays.

3.2 Procedure

Families were approached by interviewers who carried a letter of introduction from Dr Sonia Livingstone at the Department of Social Psychology at the London School of Economics and Political Science. This letter detailed the names of current funders and identified the focus of the survey as the changing world of "children and young people's leisure use". The letter emphasised that at present there was very little reliable information on how developments in television and computer technology were impacting on the lives of children. In particular it was pointed out that children and young people themselves had rarely been asked to contribute their views and that this national survey sought "to give young people and their parents a voice in the debate at a time of increasing public concern". Respondents were informed that their answers would contribute to a book and a number of academic publications and assured of complete confidentiality and anonymity. No incentives were provided for taking part in this part of the survey.

Interviewing took place on weekday afternoons and evenings and at weekends. In-home interviews (lasting forty minutes on average) were conducted using the Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing(CAPI) system. The CAPI system enables the questionnaire to be contained on a laptop computer. The questions appear on the screen and the interviewer enters answers via the keyboard. The advantage of CAPI is that routing from one question to another (which may vary depending on the answers given) is automatic: therefore complex filtering, which would be difficult to administer using a paper questionnaire, is straightforward. In addition respondents may key in answers to sensitive questions[15] themselves, thus avoiding embarrassment.

Parents were present at the interview if they wished: in the event a parent was present during 73% of the interviews. Interviewers were asked to record the percentage of questions which had been answered by the parent on the child's behalf. Three quarters (76%) of the children and young people answered all of the questions themselves, 19% had up to a quarter of the questions answered for them by a parent, 2% had over a quarter and up to a half, and 2% had more than half of the questions answered for them by a parent. Over 80% of those children who had any questions answered for them were aged eleven or younger. Amongst the twenty two individuals who had more than half of the questions answered for them, ten were aged 6, eight aged 7, two aged 8 and two aged 9.

A 16-page self-completion questionnaire was given to one parent for each child interviewed. This was either completed by the parent at the same time as the child's CAPI interview and returned via the interviewer, or was completed later and returned in the post to BMRB.

Self-completion 7-day time-budget diaries of leisure use were placed with children in the age ranges 9-10, 12-13 and

[15]For example, when we asked questions about relationships with parents, young people were given the laptop, shown how to access the questions and they keyed in their own answers.

15-16. An incentive of a £3 voucher was left with the diary to encourage its return.

Two postal reminders were sent to those who had not returned their diaries or the parent's questionnaire, the first on 22nd May and the second on 2nd June, 1997.

3.3 Response rate

3.3.1 Children's questionnaire

The aim had been to achieve 1,250 interviews: in the event 1331 children's questionnaires were returned. After discarding those which were incomplete, or where the age or sex of the child was not recorded, 1303 usable questionnaires were left. Each interviewer had been allotted 8 interviews and on average 13 contacts had to be made to fulfil the quotas. We can therefore assume that around 2,163 families were approached in all. Making the conservative assumption that all of these families would have been in target, the final achieved response rate was 60%.

Interviewers were asked how easy they had found it to obtain interviews and whether the parents or the children had been the source of most refusals: 82% of interviewers replied. Almost half (46%) reported that they found the interview easier to achieve than usual. Only one in eight had found it more difficult.

How easy was it to obtain interviews?

	%
Easier than normal	46
Same as normal	42
More difficult than normal	12

Refusals were largely due to the parents being unwilling.

Who refused to give the interview?

	%
Mostly parent	65
Mostly child	9
50/50	16
No refusals	11

3.3.2 Parent's questionnaire

1011 parents returned questionnaires. After discarding those which could not be reliably matched to the child's questionnaire because of discrepancies involving answers about the target child's age or gender, 978 questionnaires remained. Thus 75% of the parents in the achieved children's sample returned useable questionnaires. The conservative estimate of the response rate, taking into account initial refusals, was therefore 45%. Of the parent sample 79% were mothers and 21% fathers.

3.3.3 Time-budget diary

In all, 676 of the children interviewed were within the target age ranges and eligible to be given the diaries. Almost all (95%) initially accepted. However some enthusiastic interviewers placed an unknown number of surplus diaries with children not in quota. Of the 488 diaries returned around a quarter were out of target. After discarding these out-of-quota returns, together with diaries in which more than 15% of daily time-slots were left blank, a final sample of 334 was achieved.

	Diaries in quota
Eligible	676
Placed	639
Returned	358
Useable	334

Thus 49% of children in the target age range who were given diaries provided us with useable versions. Taking into account the 1125 children in that age range who can be presumed to have been approached initially, this gives a conservative achieved response estimate of 30%.

3.4 Demographic characteristics of achieved samples

The age, gender and social grade of all respondents in the achieved samples is as follows:

TABLE 5

Main survey samples

		Children's quest. (1303) %	*Parent's quest.* (978) %	*Diary* (358) %
Gender of parent	Mother		78.7	
	Father		20.7	
	N/A		0.6	
Gender of child				
	Boy	50.6	50.2	45.5
	Girl	49.4	49.8	54.5
Age of child				
	6	7.5	7.6	
	7	7.8	7.2	
	8	9.5	10.4	
	9	8.4	8.7	14.4
	10	7.8	8.3	15.3
	11	7.9	8.8	
	12	8.7	9.5	18.6
	13	9.2	9.3	18.3
	14	8.1	8.1	
	15	8.5	7.8	15.9
	16	9.0	8.1	17.7
	17	7.7	6.3	
Social grade of family				
	A	2.2	2.5	3.6
	B	15.2	16.5	20.7
	C1	25.7	26.7	26.9
	C2	25.1	26.0	23.7
	D	17.2	15.6	12.6
	E	14.0	12.2	12.0
	N/A	0.5	0.6	0.6

APPENDIX 3.1

Classification of children's favourite programmes

1 Coding of origin

We classified programmes as either national or international. The intention was to distinguish those programmes which incorporated a British perspective from those which had been produced elsewhere and sold to an international market. Programmes which followed an international format, but had been adapted for British television (like *Gladiators*) were considered national. Where children named "Sport" as their favourite programme it was presumed they were referring to British sport. If they answered "Sky Sport", that was considered unclassifiable. "European football" or "National Basketball" as replies were classed as international.

2 Coding of target audience

Programmes were identified as children's programmes or family/adult programmes. Anything transmitted during the timeslots reserved for children on BBC and ITV as a children's programme. Indeed a number of the younger children simply nominated these slots (CITV, Children's BBC) as their favourite programme. Similarly others named one of the children's cable or satellite channels (Nickelodeon, The Disney Channel, Cartoon Network, Trouble) and these were also classed as children's programmes.

There is clearly a grey area surrounding programmes for young people. Programmes explicitly targeted at the teenage audience (like *Byker Grove*, *Heartbreak High*, *Hang Time*, *California Dreams*, *Sweet Valley High* and *Saved by the Bell*) were classed for our purposes as children's programmes, whereas *Top of The Pops*, *Neighbours* and *Home and Away* were classed as family/adult. Similarly *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* was considered a children's programme, where *Bewitched* was considered a family/adult one.

We also decided to discriminate where we could between family/adult and children's cartoons. *The Simpsons*, *Dolly Pond* and *Wallace and Gromit* qualified in our view as family/adult programmes, whereas *Tom and Jerry* or *Rugrats* were children's programmes.

3 Coding of genre

We identified thirteen genres drawing first on the ways in which children grouped programmes, or discussed genres in the qualitative interviews, and second on the set of programmes actually named by children as their favourite. Note that sport and films were often given as answers without specific programmes being mentioned.

Soaps	(*EastEnders, Emmerdale., Brookside, Neighbours, Home & Away*)
Sci-fi	(*X Files, Dark Skies, Star Trek*)
Other series/serials	(*Peak Practice, E.R, Baywatch, Byker Grove, Grangehill, Hollyoaks/ Sister Sister, Moesha, Sabrina the Teenage Witch*)
Comedy/Sitcoms	(*Red Dwarf, Father Ted, Rab C. Nesbitt/ Friends, Frasier, Fresh Prince of Belair*)
Cartoons	(*Wallace and Gromit, Tom and Jerry, Simpsons*)
Chat Shows	(*Jerry Springer, Oprah Winfrey, Rikki Lake*)
Music/ Quizzes	(*T.O.T.P., The Chart Show, The Box/ MTV*)
Family Shows	(*Beadle's About, Noel Edmonds, Play Your Cards Right)*
News/ C. Affairs/ Documentaries	(*Tomorrow's World, 999, Crimewatch, Children's Hospital*)
Sport	(*Match of the Day, National Basketball, Football Focus*)
Films	(*Space Jam, Clueless*)
Magazine progs	(*Blue Peter, Big Breakfast*)

APPENDIX 5.1

Measurement of time use

1 Measuring exposure to media

Any exercise in measuring time spent with media involves a series of judgements concerning appropriate measurement tools and the degree and types of error associated with each.[16] Asking people how much time they spend with a particular medium is fraught with difficulties, and this is multiplied for children. The particular tools we developed for this project were based on:

- past experience - consideration of the variety of measurement instruments used by the broadcasting industry, by market researchers and by academic researchers;
- practicalities - assessment of a range of practical considerations to do with the survey sample, materials, administration (including expertise of interviewers, time taken to administer the survey), statistical analysis and presentation of data, ethical issues, etc.;
- pilot work - following qualitative work with focus groups and in parent interviews, asking about time use in different ways, we then tested several ways of measuring time use using the Young View TOPS panel. The survey questionnaire constructed as a result of this was piloted by BMRB, further refined, and then administered to the survey sample.

In practice there were two significant constraints on the kinds of measures we could use. First, what questions readily make sense to children and therefore are easily and validly answered? Second, what questions could be answered in a relatively short period of time in a face-to-face interview: the entire survey to children took about 45 minutes on average, containing some 200 questions in total, of which nearly 70 measured media exposure. Using a relatively small set of pre-coded response options was our main means of keeping questions both comprehensible and quick to deliver.

The specific questions asked in the survey were as follows:

- We are interested in all the things you do when you're not at school (NB For those not at school: ... in your leisure time). *Show shuffle pack of activities*: Please pick out all the things that you yourself do in your free time. [*DO*]
- Now I'm going to ask you how often you do each of the things you've picked out. Think about how often you do things nowadays, now you are back at school (... in the last few weeks). How often do you [activities]? *Show card of responses*: 6 or 7 days a week, 4 or 5 days a week, 2 or 3 days a week, about once a week, about once a month, less than once a month, don't know. [*DAYS*]
- [To all aged 9+, or to parent of respondents aged 6-8] On a day when you [activity], about how long altogether do you usually spend [activity]? *Show card of responses*: a few minutes, around half an hour, around 1 hour, around 2 hours, around 3 hours, around 4 hours, around 5 hours, more than 6 hours, don't know. [*HOURS*]
- For time spent with television, hours/minutes were asked separately for a weekday (Mon-Fri), Saturday and Sunday.

In order to generate a set of measures to work with, and in order to combine the separate responses for days and hours spent using each media into the average minutes per day variable, the response options were scaled as follows:

- For number of days per week (*DAYS*): 6 or 7 days = 6.5, 4 or 5 days = 4.5, 2 or 3 days = 2.5, Once a week = 1.0, Once a month = 0.25, Less than once a month = 0.1;

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[16] See for example, Kubey and Cziksentmihalyi, (1990) and Barwise and Ehrenberg (1988) for discussion of the measurement of media use, and Ang (1991) for a highly critical account of both academic and industry attempts to measure time spent with television.

- For hours per day (*HOURS*): Just a few minutes = 0.1, About half an hour = 0.5, 1 hour = 1, 2 hours = 2, 3 hours = 3, 4 hours = 4, 5 hours = 5, 6 hours or more = 6.
- *AVERAGE MINUTES PER DAY* variables were then computed by multiplying the hours and days variables, dividing the product by 7 and multiplying the result by 60.
- This last variable was also re-scaled into a categorical measure with values of non-user, low, medium and high, for use in selected analyses. Because media use varied with age and type of media, this categorisation was age and media-specific.[17]

Do, Days, Hours, and *Average Minutes per Day* were measured in the survey for the following eleven media activities:[18]

- phone someone
- read a book (not for school)
- read a comic
- watch television
- watch a video
- listen to music tapes, CDs or records
- play a computer or video game
- use a computer like a PC or Macintosh (not for games)
- use the Internet
- play games on a Gameboy
- play games on a TV-linked games machine

And, for 9-17 year olds only:

- read a magazine
- read a newspaper
- listen to the radio
- do homework
- play a musical instrument
- go to the cinema
- write a letter

NB additional questions were asked to determine use of PCs (with and without CD-Roms) at home and at school.

Do and *Days* were also measured in the survey for the following activities:

- spend time with friends
- play/mess about outdoors
- go out to a club (Brownies, Cubs, Sports/Youth clubs, etc)
- paint, draw or make something

---

[17]Thus different values for average minutes per day were found for each media, and for each of 4 age groups, which divided the sample into three roughly equal groups, excluding non-users. Having found these cut-off points individually for each age group and coded the cases accordingly, they were then combined into a single variable for each media.

[18]Several data cleaning and screening procedures were conducted prior to any analyses to check for errors and outliers. The data file was first checked for mistakes made during data entry. Frequencies were run for all variables and any data points that were not legitimate values were corrected or re-assigned as missing. Checks were then made to find incomplete interviews. Six, of originally 1303 respondents, were excluded as they had provided responses for only 20% or fewer of the questions. Special care was taken over the *Average minutes per day* variable to reduce the effect of outliers. Tukey's boxplots were calculated for this variable, for each media. Fourteen 14 cases (1% of the overall sample), were identified as extreme univariate outliers on one or more of these variables. A screening variable was computed to exclude these cases from all analyses using the average minutes per day variables. The diary was subject to the same screening procedures as used for the main survey data (i.e. illegitimate values were corrected or excluded, and cases with badly incomplete data were deleted).

In addition, the diary measured a reduced set of activities (to simplify the task of diary completion, in order to maximise response rates):

- television or video
- reading
- music
- computer games
- music
- PC (not for games)
- play/mess about outdoors
- paint/draw/make something
- homework
- go out to a club
- something else

Having developed appropriate measurement tools, we generated the following kinds of data from the survey to measure children and young people's time use for different media:

- survey questions (face to face administration via CAPI) to the young people (aged 6-17), N=1303;
- survey questions (via self-completion questionnaire) to the parents (of children aged 6-17), N=978;
- diary (one week, self completion) to all young people in the survey aged 9-10, 12-13 and 15-16, N=358 (Note therefore that all comparisons below referring to the diary include just these age groups).

We are reasonably confident that these measures are generated from a set of questions to children, young people and their parents which were easily answered, not experienced as problematic, and fairly analysed to construct a good measure of time use. However, any measuring tool contains biases and limitations. Some of these are readily apparent. For example, the *Do* variables assessed by selecting cards, so there is a possible bias in the direction of underestimating activities engaged in. *Days* is measured on scale with a maximum value of 6-7 days (scaled as 6.5), which may underestimate the actual number of days for activities conducted daily; time use as measured by the diary underestimates infrequent activities (being based on one week only). Other kinds of biases and limitations in the measuring instruments may also exist.

One strength of the present research is the use of multiple methods to measure the same underlying variable of time use. Specifically, for several key variables, we have obtained time use estimates from the child, from the parent and from the diary. In order to report on the reliability and validity of the measures used in this research, and in order to offer some guidance to future research projects which need to select among these measures, we offer below a brief analysis of the degree and kinds of discrepancies among these measures. Clearly, it is possible that all three measures would broadly agree with each other, or that one would be rather different from the others. It is also possible that for boys the discrepancies would be higher than for girls, or for younger children they may be higher than for older children, etc.

While no measure can be taken as the 'correct' measure from which others are seen to deviate, for the present purposes, we take the child's estimate of time use in the survey as primary, and then report on how estimates provided by parents, and by the diary, deviate from this. Note that in each case the activities compared vary depending on whether the same questions were asked across different methods.

2 *DO* variable

: for comparisons of whether the respondent engages in the activity at all, we have data from the child, the parent and the diary for each of seven media activities.

2.1 *DO*: comparison between child's account and parent's account of the child (N=969)

In the main, parents and children agree substantially over the nature of the child's leisure time activities. Any degree of bias is clearly in the direction of the child's underestimate or parent's overestimate (these cannot easily be distinguished). The possible sources of such bias are social desirability in reporting (especially likely for parents' view of children's reading), differences in knowledge availability (maybe the 4% of children who claim to use a PC do so as part of their leisure outside the home and so parents are not aware of such activities) and measurement bias (parents were asked to check items on a list, children to select among cards with named activities on them - maybe

children 'forget' comics, for example, or missed cards when so many were in a shuffle pack together). Note that since all watch television, there is little scope for variation here.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

2.2 *DO*: comparison between child's account in survey and in diary (N=358)

For this comparison, agreement between the child's survey response and the diary is high. Where there is disagreement, the child is more likely to report an activity not recorded in the diary. This is most likely to be because the diary data report activities for the single week following interview (April/May) while the survey asks whether the activity is part of the respondent's free time in general (ie a range of activities may be engaged in less frequently than weekly - eg use of PC, painting, or going to a club). Again there is little error for television viewing. The bias for reading is interesting - like their parents, children appear more likely to say they do read than they appear to find a space for reading within a particular week's timetable. Most striking are the 26% of respondents for whom the diary indicates they play/mess about outdoors but this is not recorded by the survey. The discrepancy here would seem to be one of labelling children's activities: in the diary, respondents had to tick a box for each time slot, and for a variety of activities it seems that 'play/mess about outdoors' provided the most appropriate label. Yet when simply asked, in a survey, if they 'play/mess about outdoors', the same respondents say no, and presumably have in mind an alternative label for such time use. From the qualitative work, we see that children and young people talk of 'going to see if a friend is at home' or 'riding my bike' or 'going to the park' - all more goal-oriented descriptions than the adult label by which children are seen to be not really doing anything, just hanging about.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

3 DAYS variable: So much for whether a child does an activity at all. We can also compare measures for how frequently (i.e. how many days per week) they engage in the activity. For this comparison, we have data from the child and from the diary, but not from the parents. Here we report both the degree and direction of disagreement and also the correlation between the two measures.

3.1 *DAYS*: comparison between child's account and diary (N= 358)

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

To interpret this table, taking the case of TV/video, this means that for nearly half of the cases, the survey and diary indicate the same number of days per week spent on this activity, for some 16% of cases the diary estimate is nearly one day greater than the survey estimate, for one third of cases, the diary estimate is one and three quarter days less than the survey estimate, and taking all cases into account, the two measures disagree by just half a day (with the diary being slightly less than the survey). For television and video, the tendency for the survey to overestimate may be explained by the fact that time spent on these activities were measured separately by the survey but as a combined activity in the diary. However, agreement between the measures is clearly highest for TV/video, doubtless because this is a daily activity for most respondents.

In general it is unusual for the diary and survey to agree completely in estimating number of days per week for an activity, although the overall degree of discrepancy is of the order of between half and one day in all. For almost all media, the diary tends to underestimate the frequency obtained through the survey. This is particularly noticeable for listening to music, playing computer games and using the PC - presumably these are generally engaged in either as background (music) or for relatively brief periods of time, and hence seem least likely to be ticked as the main activity in a half hour period. Once again, play/mess about outdoors is more represented by the diary than by the child's survey response. In general, it does not appear that the frequency of media-related activities is more difficult to measure than the frequency of other kinds of activities.

3.2 We also consider whether there are demographic variations in the degree of agreement between the survey and the diary measures. Here it should be borne in mind that the subsample sizes are relatively small, accounting for some nonsignificant results. However, all correlations between measures are statistically significant for the overall sample. The correlations below certainly suggest that the measures become more reliable with age - for half the activities, there is a positive trend in the magnitude of the correlation across age groups. Moreover, for all but

two activities, the correlations are higher (indicating greater reliability of measures) for boys than girls. There is no evidence that ABC1 or C2DE respondents differ in the reliability of their reporting.

INSERT TABLE 4 HERE

4. ***HOURS*** **variable**. We had asked, 'On a day when you do X, about how long altogether do you usually spend doing it?' For this comparison, we have data from the child, the parent and the diary for seven media. The table below shows that, to take the case of TV, for nearly half of cases, parent and child agree on how many hours the child watches for per day, about one fifth of parents estimate an average of an hour and a half more than the child, and another third estimate a similar amount less than the child. Overall, parents and children disagree by a matter of about 8 minutes, with the parents' estimate tending to be lower than the child's.

Agreement on hours between parents and their children is fairly high, with parents tending to underestimate slightly relative to their child, but with the overall discrepancy between these two sources of data being negligible (the greatest mean discrepancy being quarter of an hour for the PC). There is no tendency for those media on which children spend relatively more (or less) time to result in greater discrepancies; rather, the highest discrepancies are for PC and video, the lowest for music, computer games and print media.

INSERT TABLE 5 HERE

4.2 When we examine this comparison using correlations, all the 'all' comparisons are statistically significant, as are most for the demographic subgroups (again, sample sizes become relatively small). There is no simple relation between patterns of results across media for *DAYS* and *HOURS*. Again, boys' correlations tend to be higher, though not for video or computer games. For the first three activities there is a positive association between correlation size and age, but this is not consistent across media activities. The SES comparison also shows no consistent pattern.

INSERT TABLE 6 HERE

4.3 Comparing the survey and diary for *HOURS*, clearly the diary represents a significant underestimate of the child's estimate of time use in the survey for each of these media, with the discrepancy being the greatest for television and video viewing (nearly 2 hours per day - though recall that for the survey, these figures are added from separate estimates for television and video, possibly resulting in some inflation) and least for music (three quarters of an hour). Only rarely is the diary an overestimate compared to the child's view. It may be that, at least for television and music, this relatively underestimate of the diary can be explained by the fact that the diary measures primary activity, whereas the survey estimates include all use of the medium. And it may be that for PC especially, children are likely to boast about how much time they spend with it.

INSERT TABLE 7 HERE

4.4 Looking at the correlations for this comparison, it is evident that once again the 'all' comparisons are all significant. Those for the PC are most likely nonsignificant for reasons of small sample size, but nonetheless the correlations are clearly lower for this medium. One wonders why the PC appears hardest to estimate time use for. Regarding demographic variables as a possible source of bias, there are no clear trends by age or gender, but a clear tendency for ABC1 respondents to produce more reliable measures than C2DE respondents.

INSERT TABLE 8 HERE

5 As described above, these measured variables allowed us to calculate the ***AVERAGE NUMBER OF MINUTES PER DAY*** the respondent spends with each medium. As this composite variable is the one we use most frequently in the research, it is worth considering the reliability of this measure also.

5.1 For this comparison we lack data from the parents, but can compare the child's survey and diary (by demographic variables). For each of the 5 media for which comparisons were obtained, the discrepancies between measures are rather low, indicating a satisfactory degree of reliability in the survey measures. For 4 of the media, girls now appear more reliable than boys. There are no clear age trends, and there is once again a tendency for ABC1

groups to show rather greater agreement between the measures than C2DE groups. Overall, all but one figures are positive, indicating that the survey estimates are slightly higher than the diary estimates, for reasons discussed above.

INSERT TABLE 9 HERE

5.2 As with the foregoing analyses, we also report the correlations between these two measures. All the 'all' correlations, and most of the subsample correlations, are statistically significant. The tendency is for older respondents and more middle-class respondents to show higher correlations between the two measures.

INSERT TABLE 10 HERE

6 COMMENTARY: Despite the above account of limitations in the present data, the present project has generated rather similar data for television viewing to that generated by the industry. For many of our findings, however, little comparable data exists (for instance, time spent with computer games or magazines for 6-17 year olds). In the research, we primarily make use of the children's survey for time use data, although all estimates of time use for 6-8 year olds (ie those assumed to be too young for reliable estimates of time use) are taken from the parents' questionnaire. This is clearly a matter of judgement, and is consonant with our prioritisation of the perspective of children and young people in the present research.

For a variety of reasons, the above analysis suggests that research which uses parents as a sole source of information about their children's leisure would generate a slightly different picture. As the sample size for the diary data is much smaller than that of the children's questionnaire, these data are used primarily as a check (see above) and for specific information on use of media by day and by time of day (see Chapter 4). Finally it should be noted that any use of multiple measures to access the same putative underlying variable will generate discrepancies: it should not be supposed that the discrepancies identified here are any larger in principle than those which exist, but cannot be identified, in research which has only single measures. Thus the point essentially is to note the relative patterns of discrepancies.

6.1 Summary points

- Given the history of debates over how to measure media time use, we have employed multiple measures in this research project. There were no problems reported by respondents or interviewers regarding the administration of these measures. For 9-17 year olds, we take the child's report of time use as primary and compare it with the diary (completed by the child) and the parent's report of time use by their child. For 6-8 year olds we combine measures from the child and parent.

- *DO:* Parents and children agree substantially over whether or not the child engages in an activity at all, though any discrepancies are generally in the direction of parents overestimating activities. There is also substantial agreement between the child's survey and diary responses, though with the diary tending to underestimate activities reported in the survey. Disagreement is highest for reading and for non-media leisure activities and least for television viewing.

- *DAYS:* The child's responses in the survey and diary commonly vary for the number of days per week an activity is engaged in, with the diary tending to underestimate frequency of use. Overall the discrepancy is between half a day and one day per week, depending on the activity. Correlations between survey and diary responses are all statistically significant. There is also a tendency for correlations to become higher with age, and to be higher for boys.

- *HOURS:* Agreement between parents and children on hours per day spent with a medium is fairly high, with parents tending to underestimate. The average discrepancies, however, are low (maximum - quarter of an hour). Correlations between these two measures are significant for all media. There is a tendency again for boys correlations to be higher, and some indication that reliability improves with age. The diary, by comparison with the child's survey response, generally represents an underestimate of hours spent with media, though the correlations are all significant. For the survey/diary comparison there is a tendency for higher correlations among middle class respondents, but no such tendency by gender or age.

- *AV.MINS./DAY:* For the 5 media compared, discrepancies between survey and diary are low (between 5 and 12 minutes per day on average). Girls now appear marginally more reliable, with some indication also that ABC1 children are more reliable; there are no age trends here. The correlations among these measures are statistically significant, with older and more middle class respondents showing higher correlations.

- In sum, the child's survey, child's diary and parent's survey responses all show variation when asked to indicate time spent with a particular medium, and this applies to all the types of variable measured to a greater or lesser extent. However, average discrepancies for each medium are generally very low, and for each medium the different methods of measurement correlate significantly.

- Compared to the child's response in the survey, the diary tends to underestimate whether, how frequently, and for how long, the child engages in a particular activity. Similarly, compared with the child's survey response, the parent tends to overestimate whether the child does an activity but to underestimate how long he or she spends on the activity. For the most part these generalisations hold across different leisure activities (including media and non-media), indicating that the sources of bias lie in the methods of measurement rather than in specific contexts of use for different media/leisure activities. Demographic variables prove to be unreliable indicators of measurement bias, though there is a tendency for older and more middle class respondents to produce slightly more convergent measures.

- Finally, we note that as all absolute data values are subject to bias, whatever the research method used, our guiding principle is to place more emphasis on patterns of data (trends, demographic comparisons, cross-media comparisons, etc) than on absolute values.

TABLE 1

Comparison between child and parent on child's leisure time activities

	CHILD & PARENT AGREE (YES/NO)	CHILD 'YES', PARENT 'NO'	CHILD 'NO', PARENT 'YES'
Television	99.3%	0%	0.7%
Video	84.0%	0.8%	15.2%
Music	88.2%	0.9%	10.9%
Computer game	78.7%	1.6%	19.7%
PC (not for games)	72.0%	4.1%	23.9%
Books (not for school)	63.1%	0.5%	36.4%
Comics	53.0%	2.1%	44.9%

TABLE 2

Comparison between child's account and diary of child's leisure time activities

	CHILD & DIARY AGREE (YES/NO)	CHILD - 'YES' DIARY - 'NO'	CHILD - 'NO' DIARY - 'YES'
Television or Video	99.7%	0%	0.3%
Music	85.5%	9.2%	5.3%
Computer games	71.2%	16.8%	9.8%
PC (not for games)	71.2%	18.2%	10.6%
Reading (not for school)	67.8%	27.9%	4.2%
Play/mess about outdoors	71.3%	3.1%	25.7%
Homework	78.2%	8.4%	13.4%
Go out to a club	70.7%	13.4%	15.9%
Paint/draw/make something	66.7%	20.4%	12.8%

TABLE 3

Comparison between child's account and diary of days spent on leisure time activities

	% CASES - SURVEY & DIARY AGREE	% CASES - DIARY HIGHER (MEAN OVERESTIMATE)	% CASES - DIARY LOWER (MEAN UNDERESTIMATE)	AVERAGE DISCREPANCY
TV or video	47.7%	16.2% (0.81)	36.1% (-1.72)	-0.49
Music	0.6%	36.2% (1.03)	63.2% (-2.49)	-1.20
Computer games	5.3%	26.7% (1.74)	67.9% (-2.20)	-1.03
PC (not games)	7.9%	23.8% (1.57)	68.2% (-1.98)	-0.98
Play etc outside	1.7%	55.6% (2.00)	42.7% (-1.70)	0.39
Go out to club	25.3%	30.9% (1.38)	43.8% (-1.26)	-0.13
Homework	2.5%	30.1% (1.46)	67.4% (-1.81)	-0.78
Paint, draw etc	9.3%	24.0% (1.66)	66.7% (1.76)	-0.77

TABLE 4

Correlations between child's account and diary (N= 358) of days spent on leisure time activities, by demographics

		GENDER		AGE			SOCIAL GRADE	
	ALL	Boys	Girls	9-10	12-13	15-16	ABC1	C2DE
TV or Video	0.20	n.s.	0.29	0.23	n.s.	0.22	0.22	0.18
Music	0.48	0.55	0.37	0.25	0.43	0.46	0.48	0.50
Computer games	0.36	0.35	0.29	0.33	0.36	0.39	0.42	0.31
PC (not games)	0.28	n.s.	0.36	n.s.	0.37	0.44	0.21	0.38
Play etc outside	0.37	0.37	0.34	0.30	0.28	0.45	0.33	0.42
Go out to club	0.55	0.62	0.48	0.52	0.66	0.43	0.55	0.54
Homework	0.51	0.54	0.48	0.46	0.43	0.28	0.30	0.43
Paint/draw etc	0.32	0.51	0.21	0.28	n.s.	0.58	0.58	0.35

* all correlations are statistically significant unless stated ($p<0.05$). (N's too small to include figures for reading).

TABLE 5

Comparison between child and parent accounts of hours spent by child (9+ years) in leisure time activities (N=928)

	% CASES - CHILD AND PARENT AGREE	% CASES - PARENT HIGHER (MEAN OVEREST.)	% CASES - PARENT LOWER (MEAN UNDEREST.)	AVERAGE DISCREPANCY
TV	45.8%	22.4% (1.55)	31.8% (-1.54)	-0.14
Video	62.1%	10.9% (1.32)	27.0% (-1.36)	-0.22
Music	48.9%	29.0% (1.47)	22.0% (-1.62)	-0.07
Computer games	57.5%	19.4% (1.20)	23.1% (-1.24)	-0.06
PC	61.3%	11.8% (0.88)	26.9% (-1.33)	-0.25
Books	64.9%	16.6% (0.94)	18.5% (1.03)	-0.03
Comics	72.4%	17.2% (0.54)	10.3% (-0.67)	0.02

TABLE 6

Comparison between child and parent accounts of hours spent by child (9+ years) in leisure time activities (N=928), by demographics

		GENDER		AGE			SOCIAL GRADE	
	ALL	Boys	Girls	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
TV	0.51	0.53	0.49	0.28	0.31	0.41	0.52	0.49
Video	0.44	0.38	0.50	n.s.	n.s.	0.27	0.43	0.43
Music	0.47	0.47	0.46	0.19	0.26	0.27	0.51	0.45
Computer games	0.59	0.53	0.69	0.43	0.43	0.40	0.66	0.55
PC	0.57	0.60	0.55	0.32	0.27	n.s.	0.51	0.65
Books	0.49	0.50	0.47	0.19	0.62	n.s.	0.47	0.50
Comics	0.53	0.59	0.47	0.21	n/a	n/a	0.56	0.51

* all correlations are statistically significant unless stated ($p<0.05$).

TABLE 7

Comparison between child's survey and diary (N=358) on hours spent in leisure time activities

	% CASES - CHILD AND DIARY AGREE ON NO. OF HOURS	% CASES - DIARY HIGHER THAN CHILD (MEAN OVEREST.)	% CASES - DIARY LOWER THAN CHILD (MEAN UNDEREST.)	OVERALL MEAN DISCREPANCY (INCL. ALL ESTIMATES)
TV/ video	9.7%	6.9% (1.32)	83.4% (-2.25)	-1.79
Music	28.6%	17.5% (1.46)	53.8% (-1.30)	-0.44
Computer games	16.0%	11.5% (0.70)	72.4% (-1.33)	-0.88
PC (not games)	9.3%	4.6% (0.70)	86.1% (-1.30)	-1.09

TABLE 8

Correlation between child survey and diary (N= 358) on hours spent in leisure time activities, by demographics

		GENDER		AGE			SOCIAL GRADE	
	ALL	Boys	Girls	9-10	12-13	15-16	ABC1	C2DE
TV/video	0.39	0.31	0.47	0.36	0.26	0.40	0.56	0.34
Music	0.38	0.43	0.33	n.s.	0.23	0.31	0.46	0.31
Computer games	0.28	0.23	0.32	n.s.	0.37	0.28	0.34	0.25
PC	0.22	0.23	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	0.22	n.s.

* all correlations are statistically significant unless stated ($p<0.05$).

TABLE 9

Average minutes per day spent in leisure time activities: overall average discrepancies (in minutes)
NB positive discrepancy means that children's estimates exceeds diary estimates

		GENDER		AGE			SOCIAL GRADE	
	ALL	Boys	Girls	9-10	12-13	15-16	ABC1	C2DE
TV	12.1	13.8	10.5	-2.5	14.3	21.8	7.2	17.3
Music	7.5	9.1	6.1	7.1	8.6	6.6	8.1	17.4
Computer games	9.0	14.4	4.5	7.6	5.9	13.8	4.7	1.7
PC (not games)	5.1	7.7	2.9	1.4	4.9	8.5	6.7	5.6
Reading (not school)	9.9	9.3	10.3	5.1	14.3	9.1	12.1	16.8

TABLE 10

Comparison between child's survey and diary on average minutes per day spent in leisure time activities: correlations for average number of minutes per day, comparing child's survey and diary (by demographic variables)

		GENDER		AGE			SOCIAL GRADE	
MEDIUM	**ALL**	Boys	Girls	9-10	12-13	15-16	ABC1	C2DE
TV/video	0.35	0.30	0.41	0.31	0.38	0.37	0.44	0.29
Music	0.46	0.50	0.41	n.s.	0.34	0.37	0.55	0.39
Computer games	0.36	0.26	0.42	0.27	0.27	0.47	0.45	0.29
PC (not games)	0.44	0.44	0.47	n.s.	0.41	0.56	0.40	0.53
Reading (not school)	0.39	0.41	0.37	0.20	0.46	0.38	0.22	0.50

* all correlations are statistically significant unless stated ($p<0.05$).

APPENDIX 5.2

Graphs of media use by time of day
(Time budget diary data)

Figure 5.1

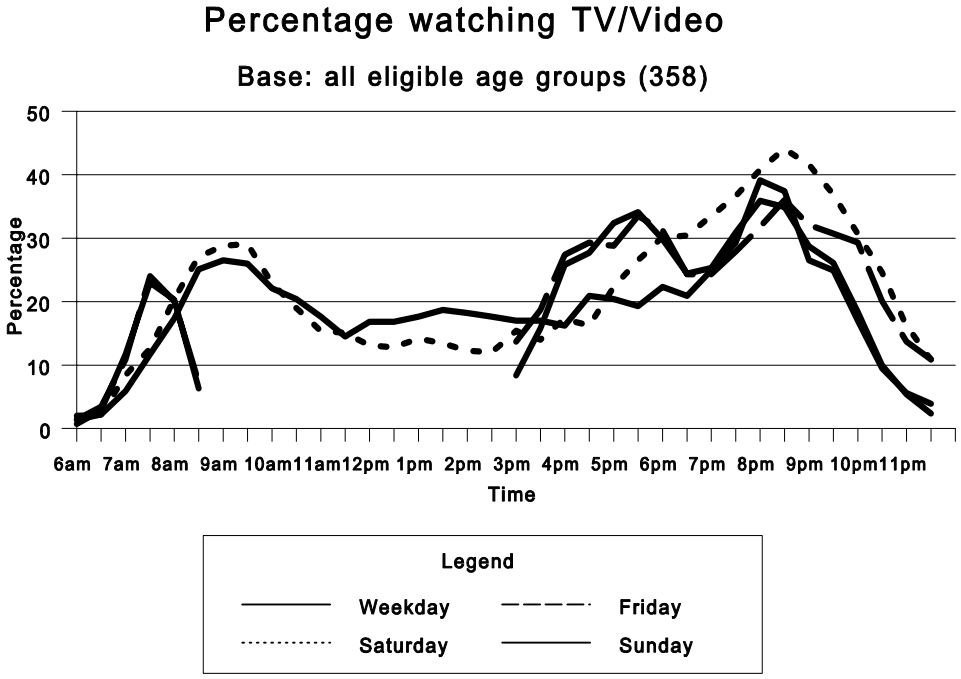


Figure 5.2

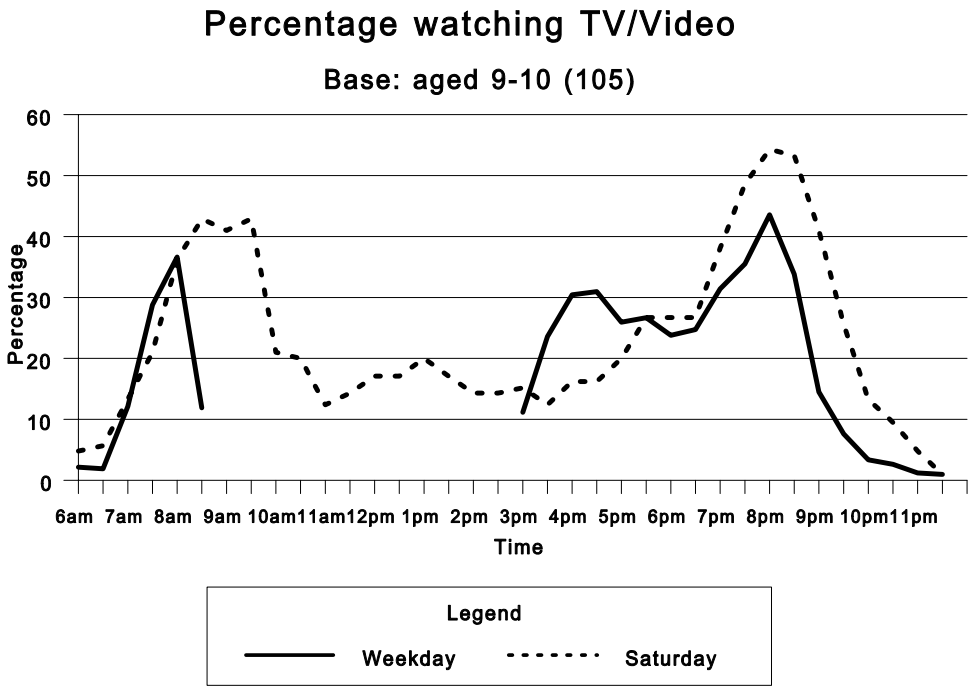

Percentage watching TV/Video
Base: aged 9-10 (105)
Percentage
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Weekday
Saturday

Figure 5.3

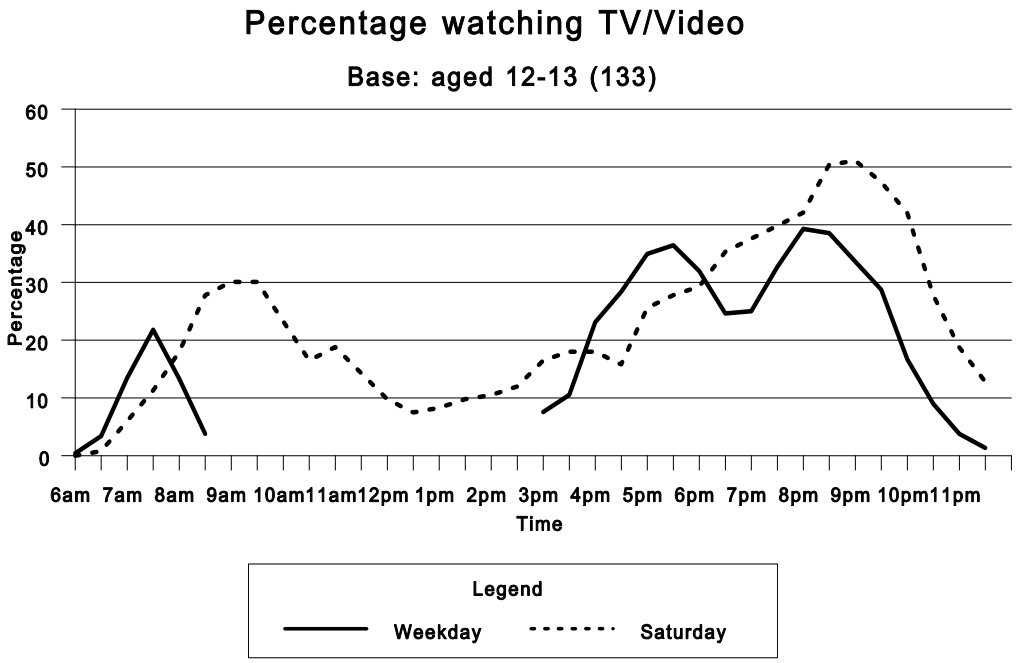

Percentage watching TV/Video
Base: aged 12-13 (133)
Percentage
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Weekday
Saturday

Figure 5.4

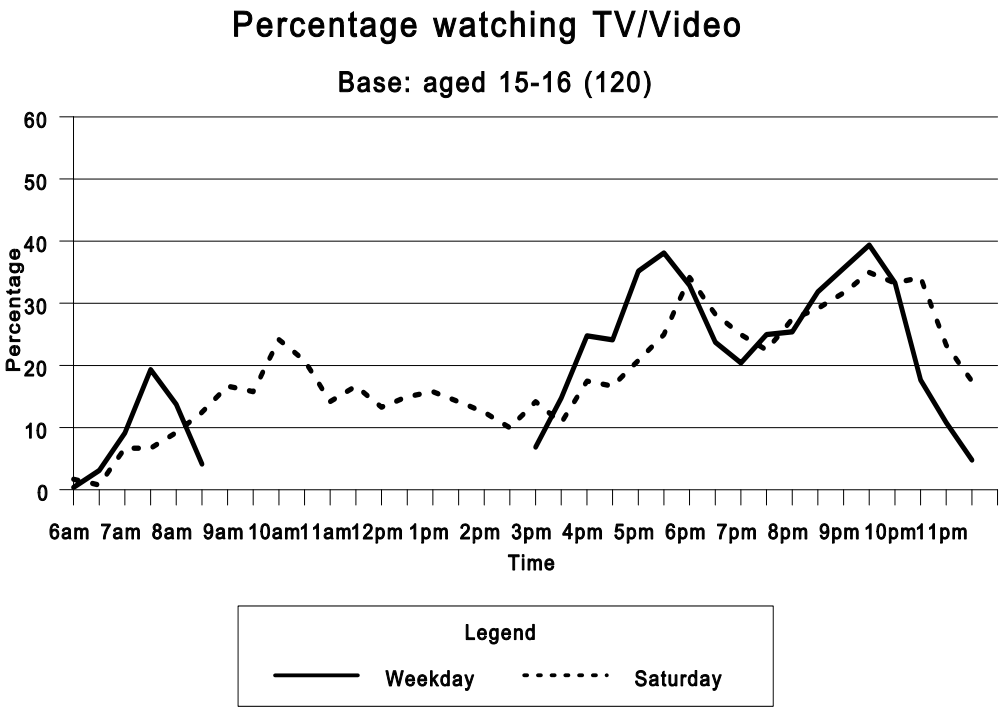

Percentage watching TV/Video
Base: aged 15-16 (120)
Percentage
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Weekday
Saturday

Figure 5.5

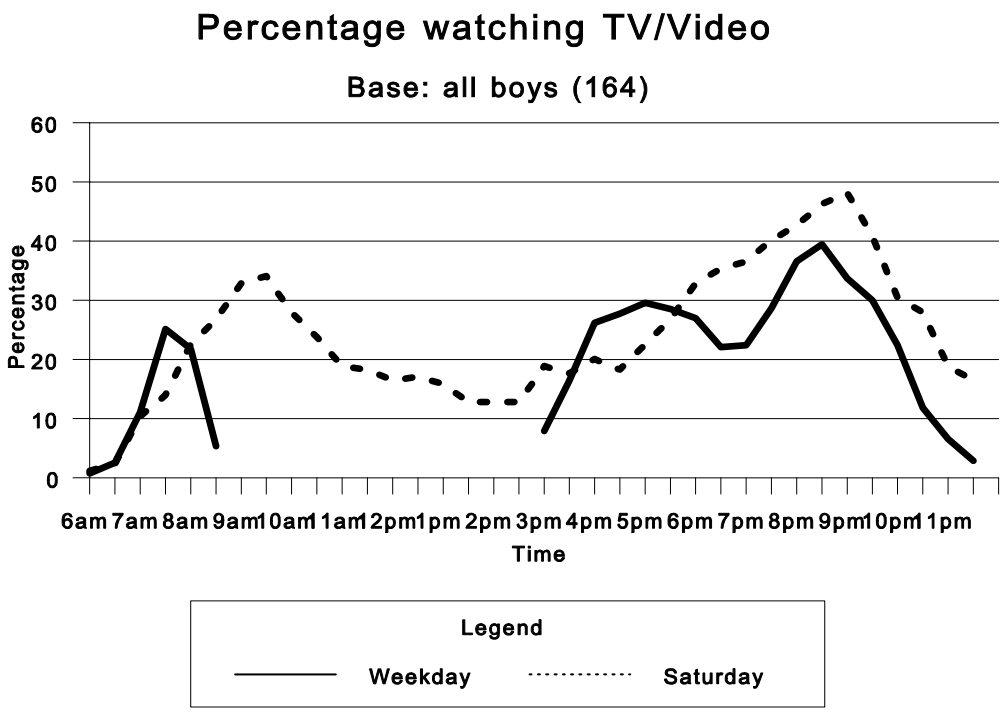

Percentage watching TV/Video
Base: all boys (164)
Percentage
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Weekday
Saturday

Figure 5.6

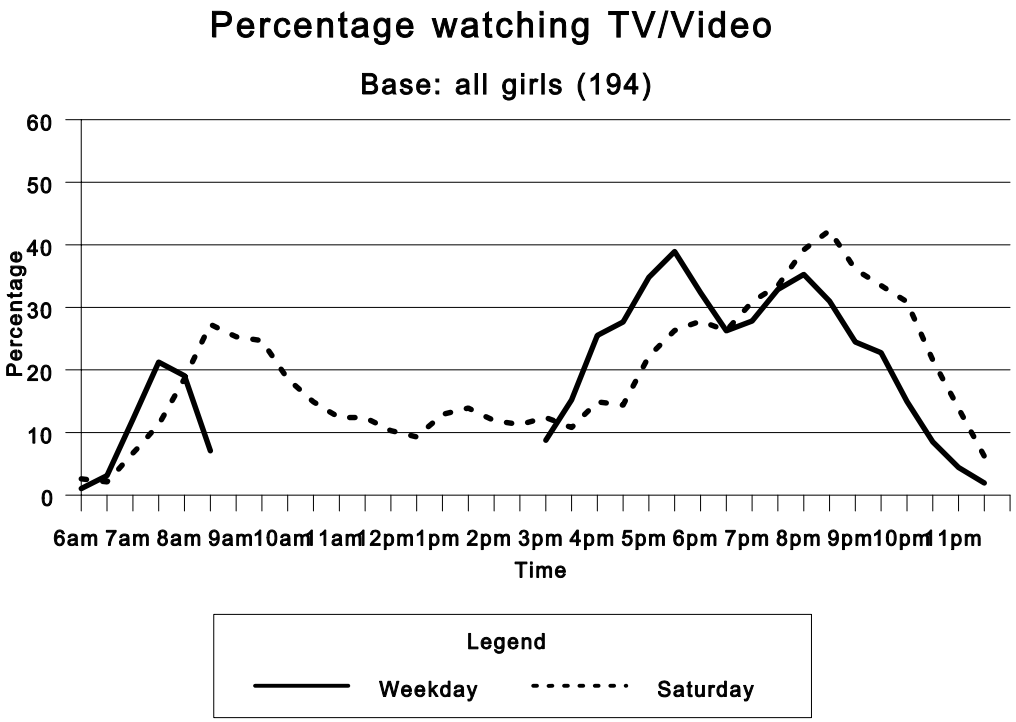

Percentage watching TV/Video
Base: all girls (194)
Percentage
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Weekday
Saturday

Figure 5.7

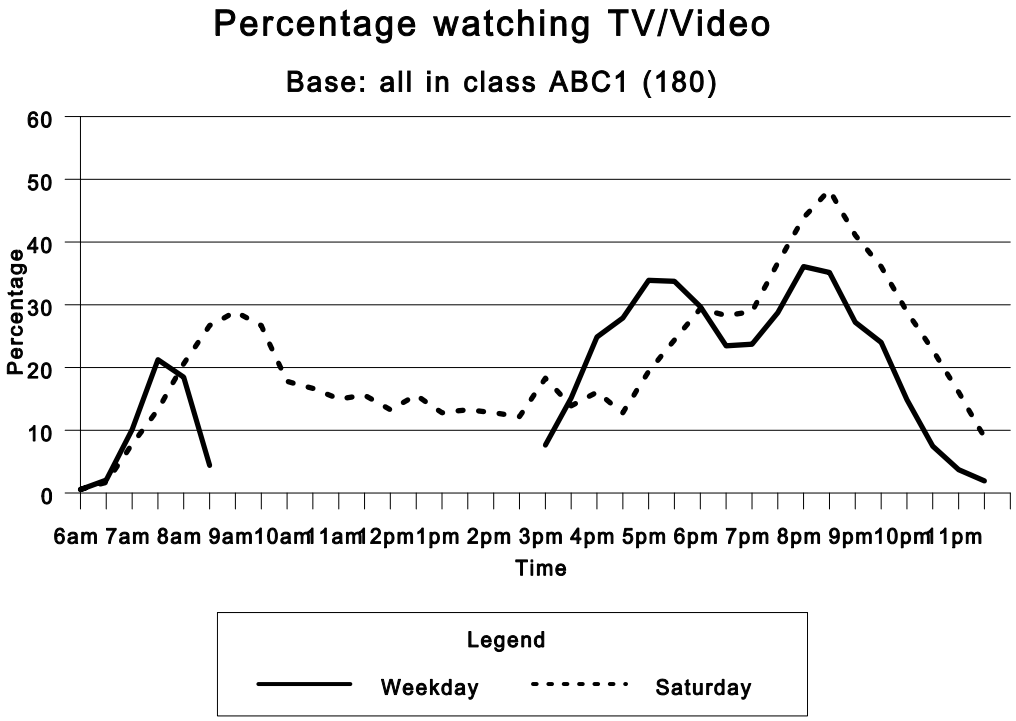

Percentage watching TV/Video
Base: all in class ABC1 (180)
Percentage
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Weekday
Saturday

Figure 5.8

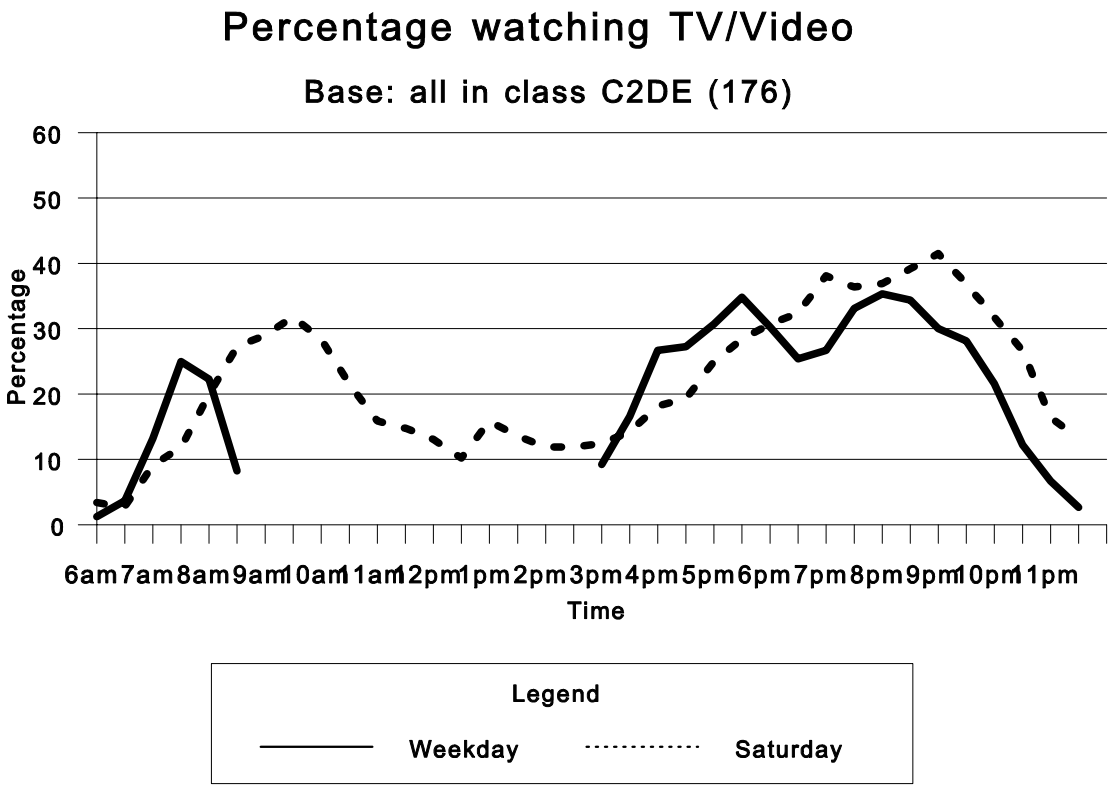

Percentage watching TV/Video
Base: all in class C2DE (176)
Percentage
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Weekday
Saturday

Figure 5.9

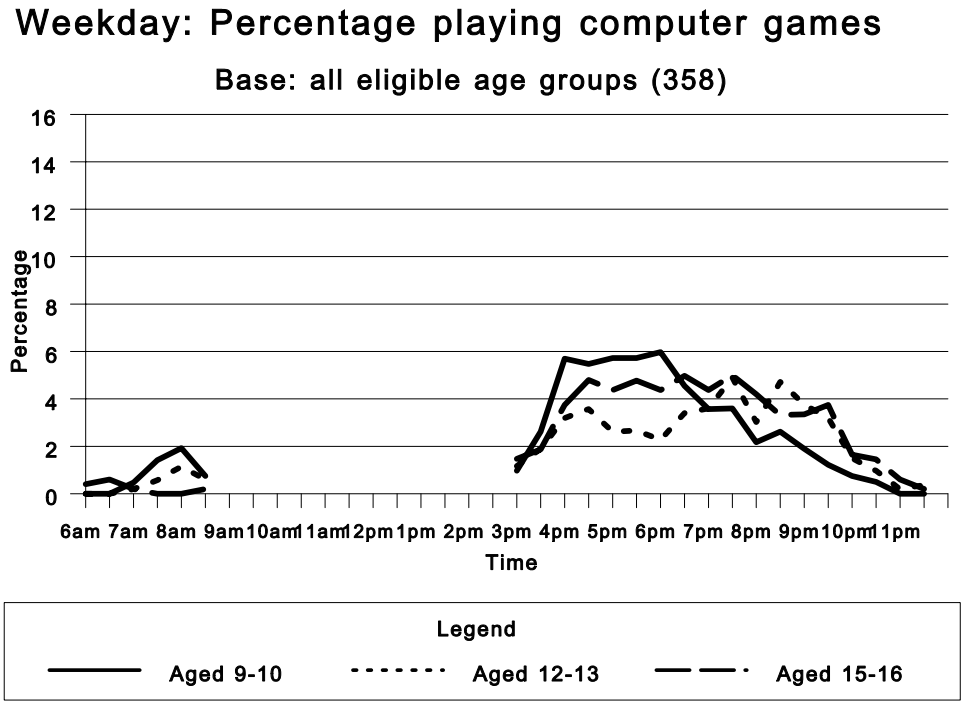

Weekday: Percentage playing computer games
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Aged 9-10
Aged 12-13
Aged 15-16

Figure 5.10

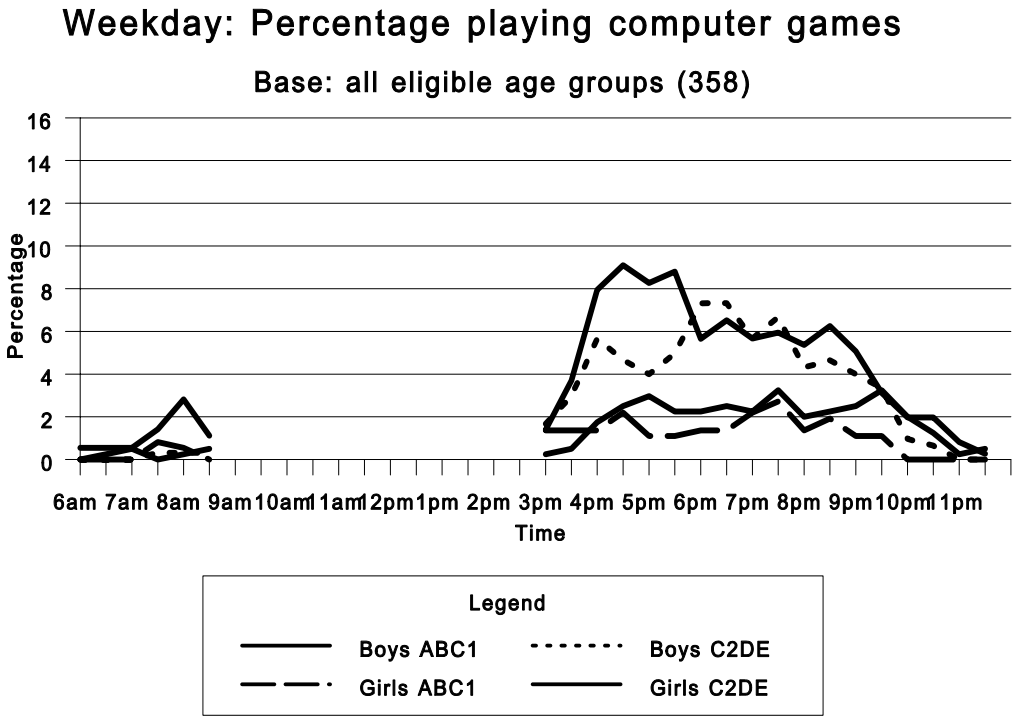

Weekday: Percentage playing computer games
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Boys ABC1
Boys C2DE
Girls ABC1
Girls C2DE

Figure 5.11

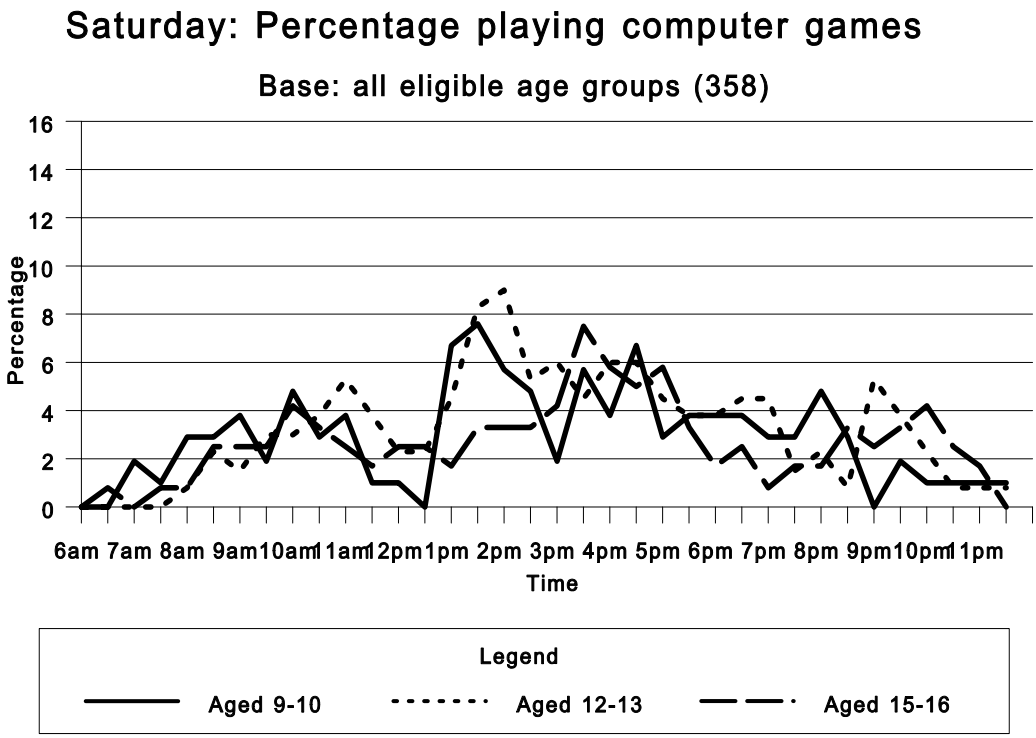

Saturday: Percentage playing computer games
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Aged 9-10
Aged 12-13
Aged 15-16

Figure 5.12

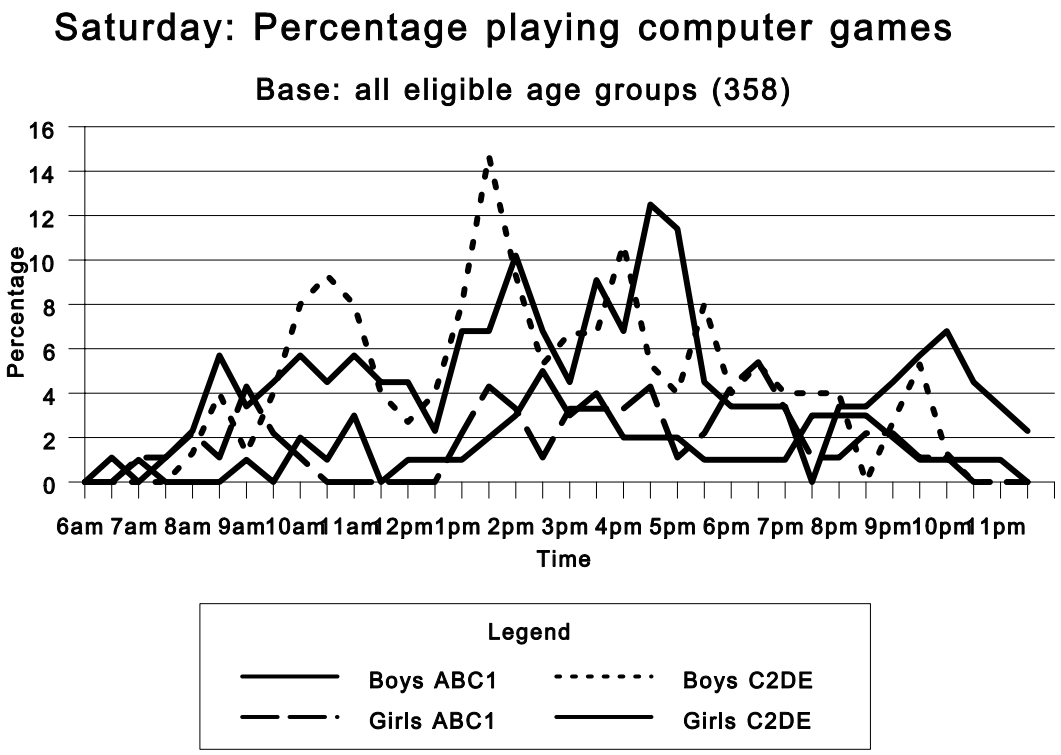

Saturday: Percentage playing computer games
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Boys ABC1
Boys C2DE
Girls ABC1
Girls C2DE

Figure 5.13

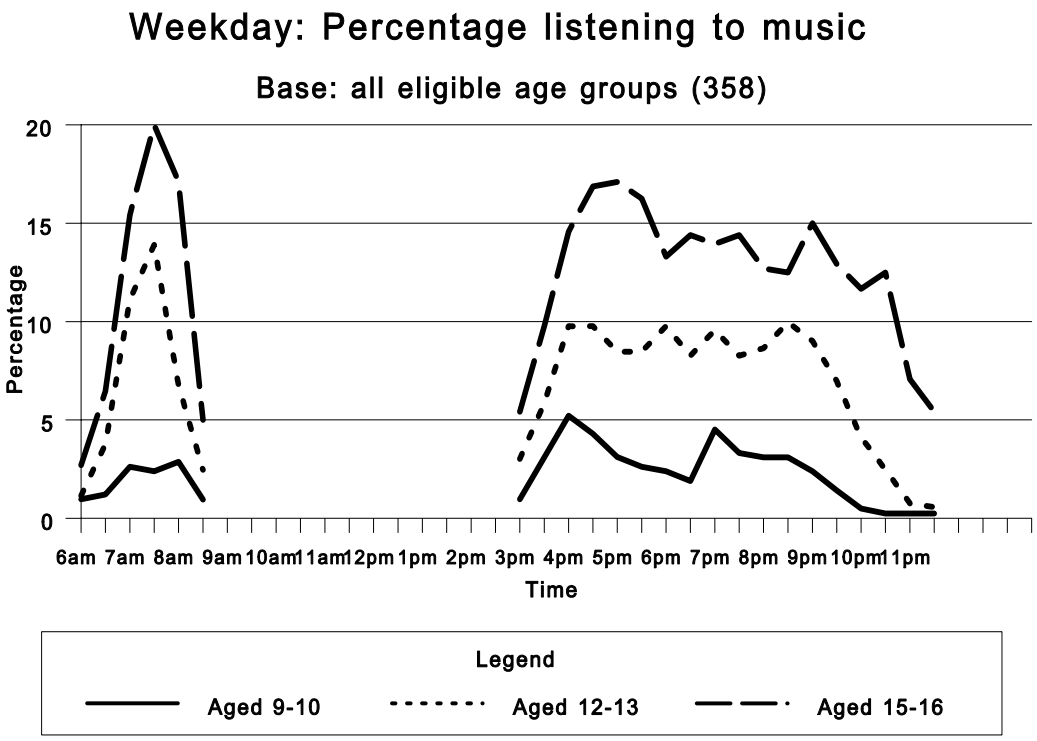

Weekday: Percentage listening to music
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
20
15
10
5
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Aged 9-10
Aged 12-13
Aged 15-16

Figure 5.14

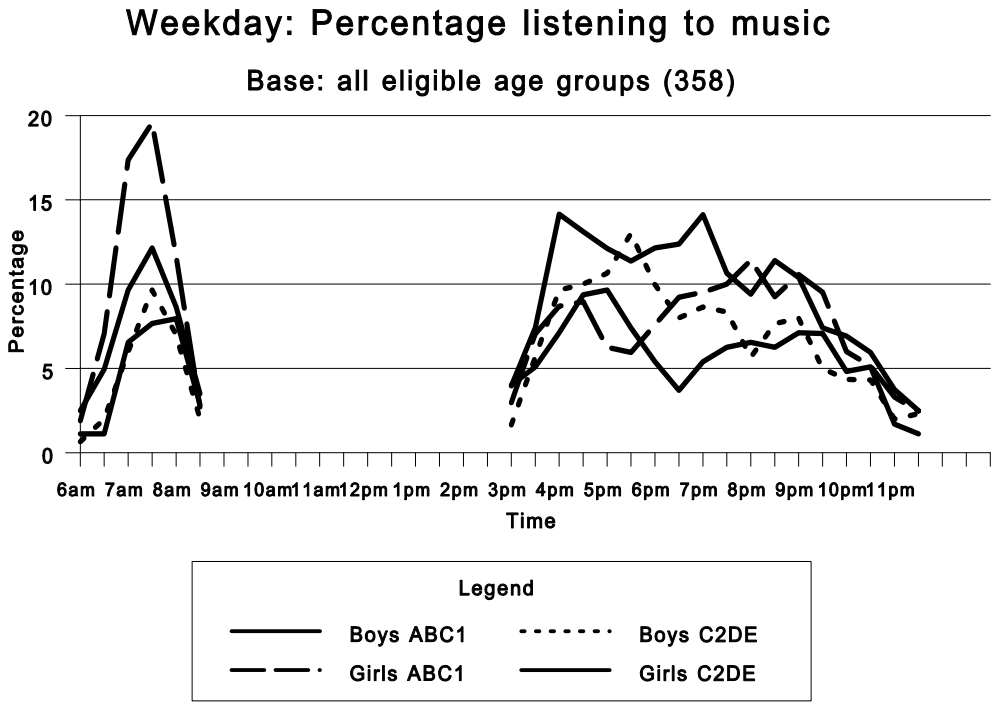

Weekday: Percentage listening to music
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
20
15
10
5
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Boys ABC1
Boys C2DE
Girls ABC1
Girls C2DE

Figure 5.15

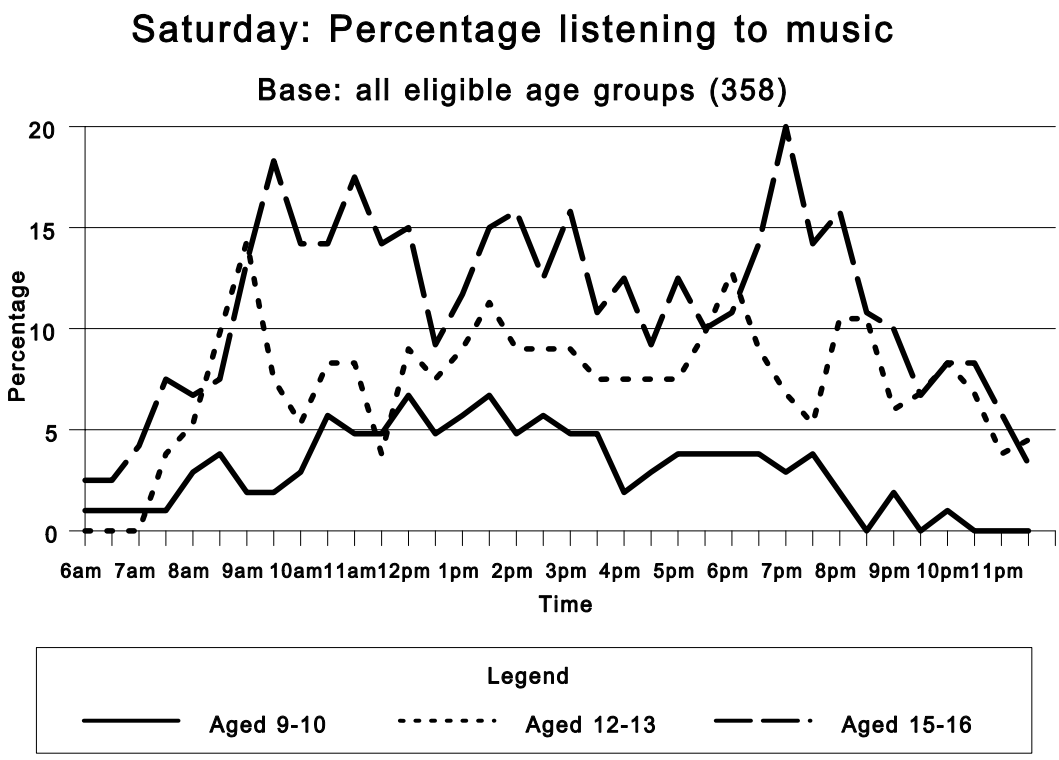

Saturday: Percentage listening to music
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
20
15
10
5
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Aged 9-10
Aged 12-13
Aged 15-16

Figure 5.16

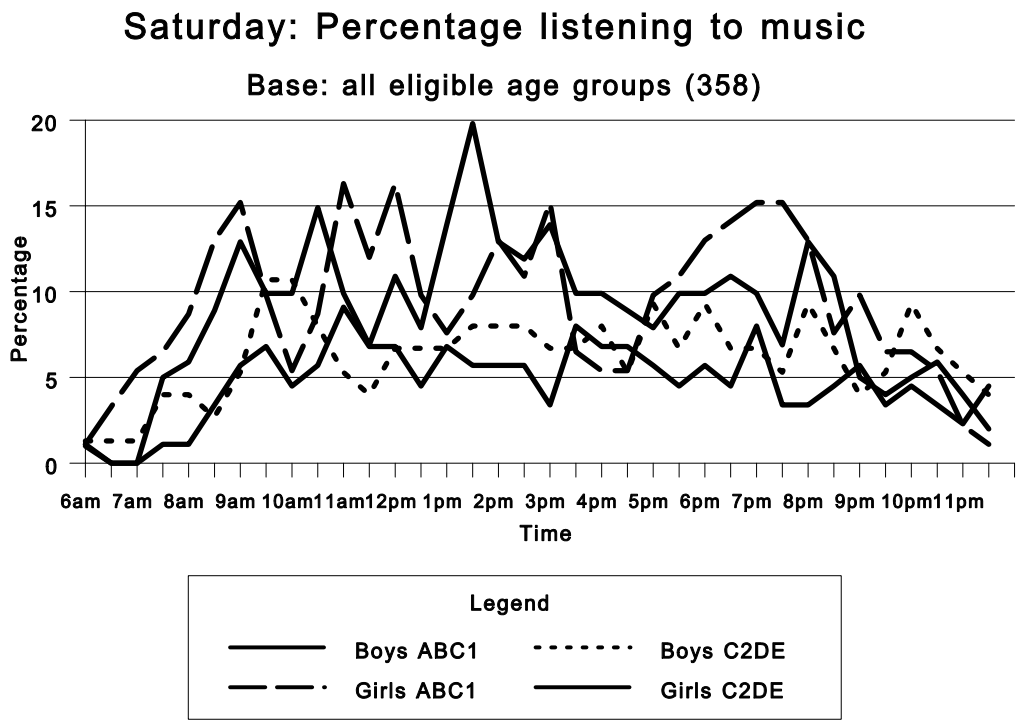

Saturday: Percentage listening to music
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
20
15
10
5
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Boys ABC1
Boys C2DE
Girls ABC1
Girls C2DE

Figure 5.17

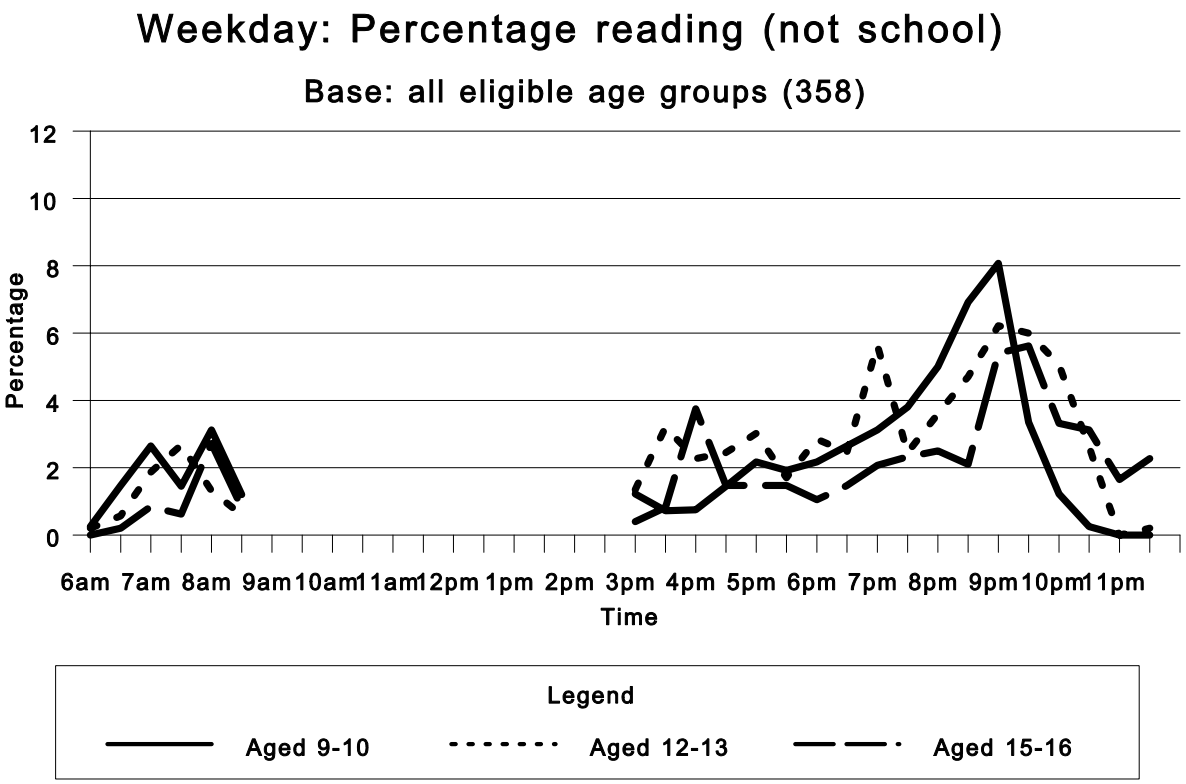

Weekday: Percentage reading (not school)
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Aged 9-10
Aged 12-13
Aged 15-16

Figure 5.18

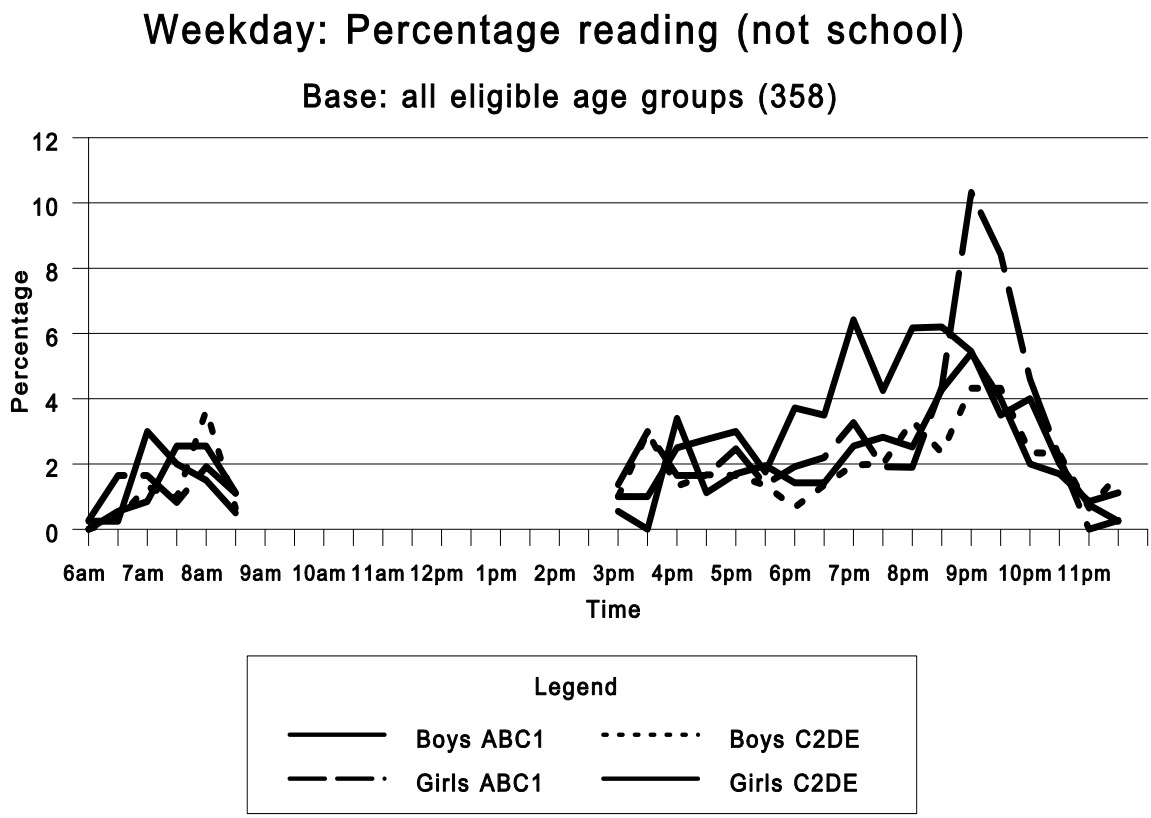

Weekday: Percentage reading (not school)
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Boys ABC1
Boys C2DE
Girls ABC1
Girls C2DE

Figure 5.19

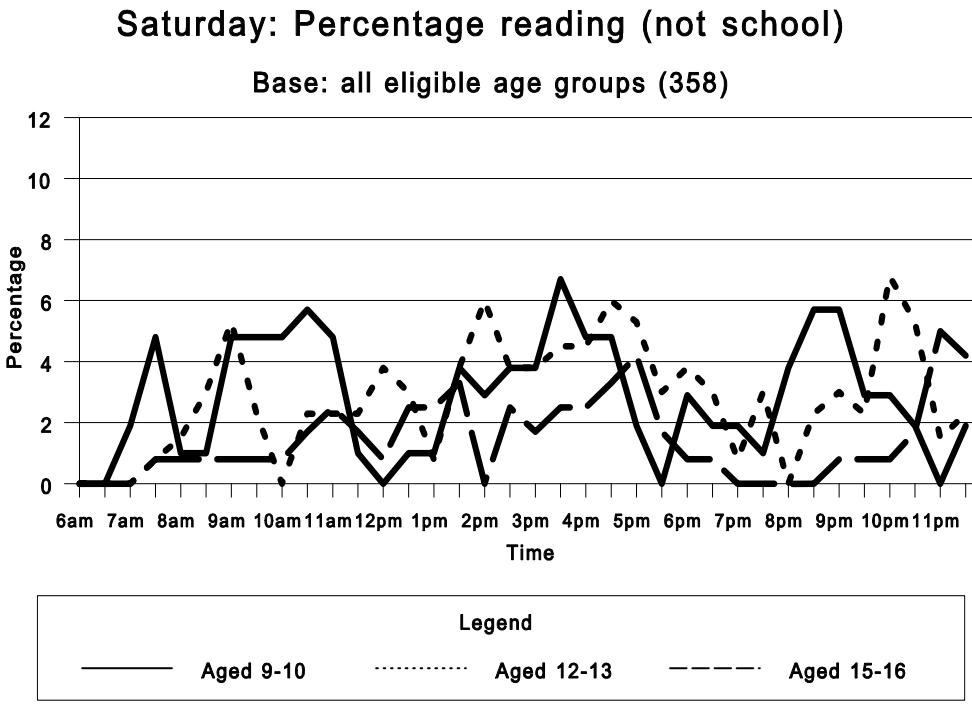

Saturday: Percentage reading (not school)
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Aged 9-10
Aged 12-13
Aged 15-16

Figure 5.20

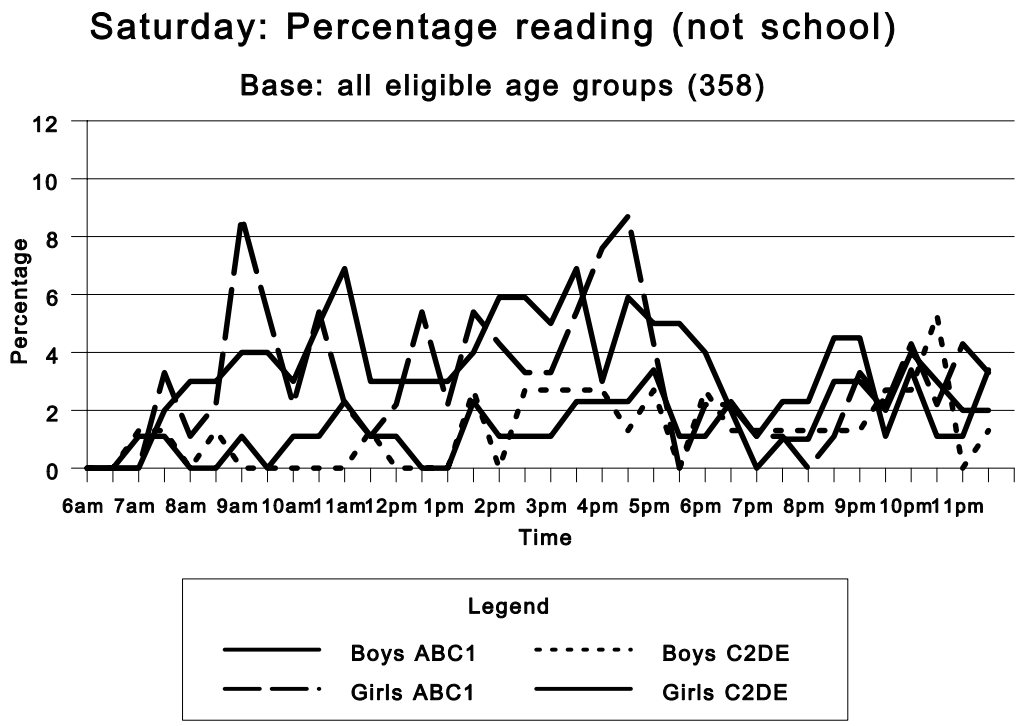

Saturday: Percentage reading (not school)
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Boys ABC1
Boys C2DE
Girls ABC1
Girls C2DE

Figure 5.21

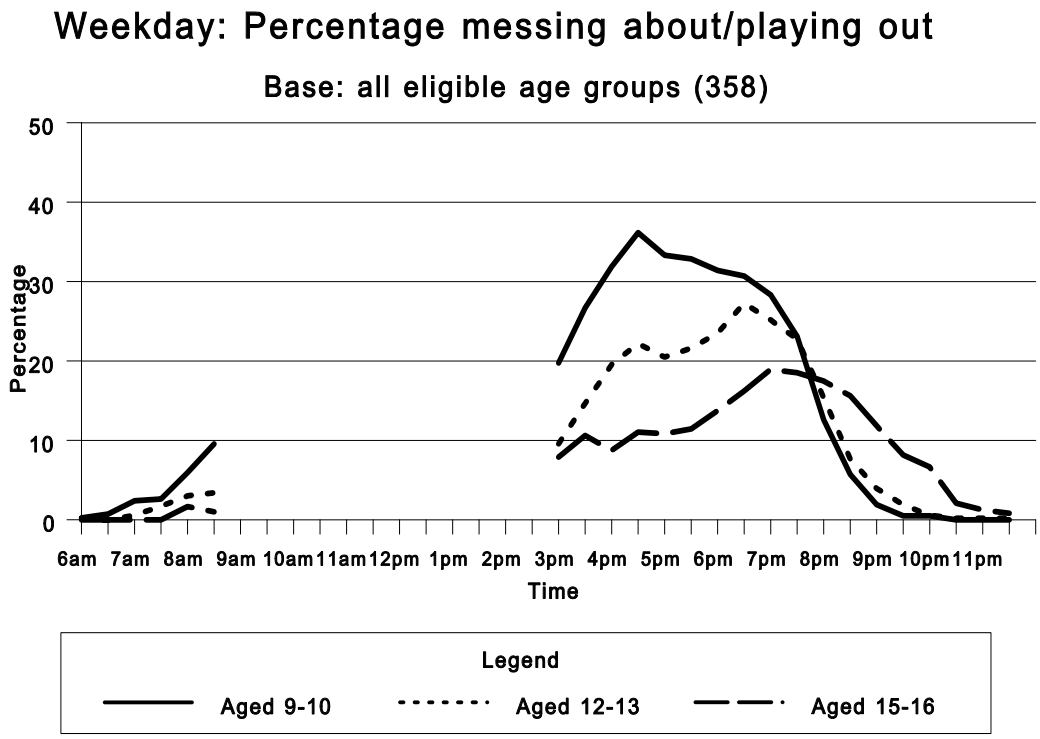

Weekday: Percentage messing about/playing out
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
50
40
30
20
10
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Aged 9-10
Aged 12-13
Aged 15-16

Figure 5.22

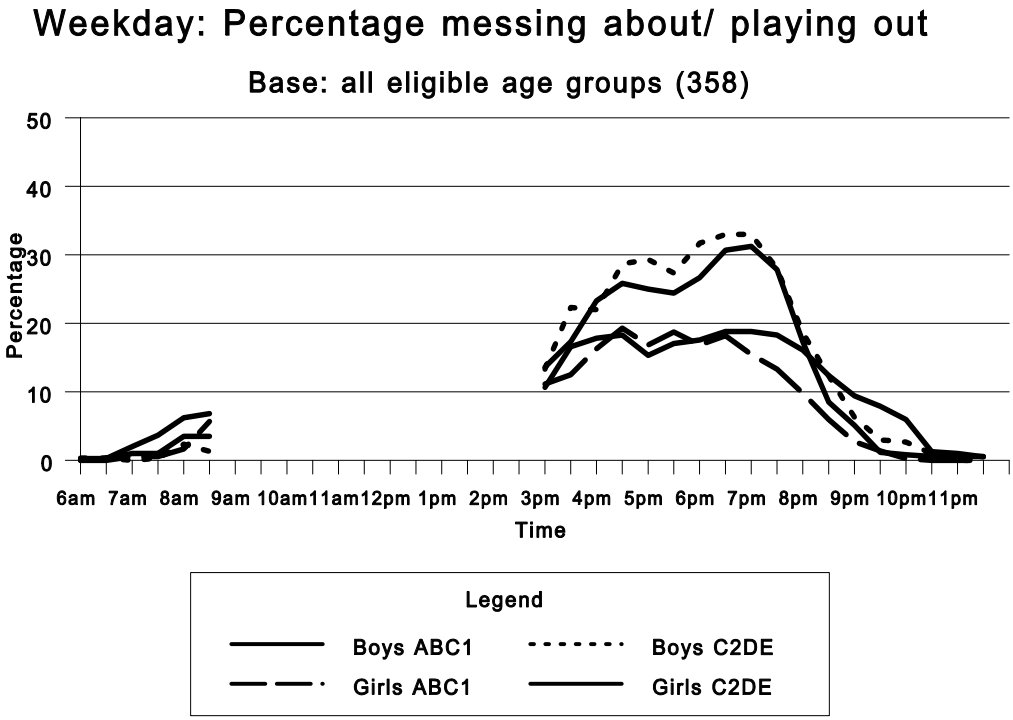

Weekday: Percentage messing about/ playing out
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
50
40
30
20
10
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Boys ABC1
Boys C2DE
Girls ABC1
Girls C2DE

Figure 5.23

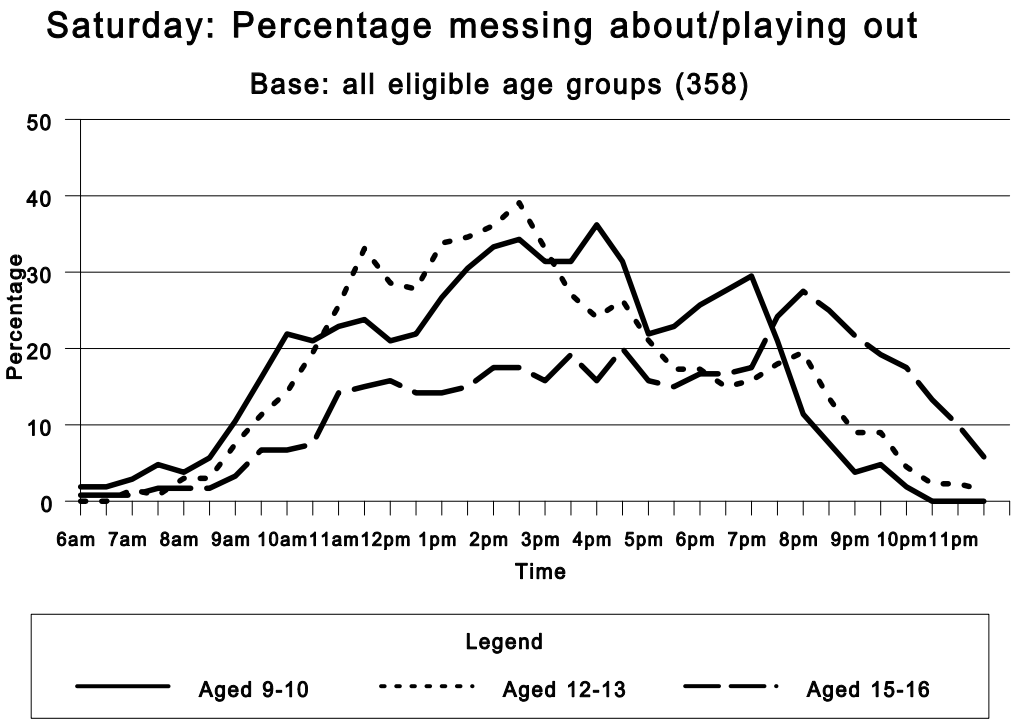

Saturday: Percentage messing about/playing out
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
50
40
30
20
10
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Aged 9-10
Aged 12-13
Aged 15-16

Figure 5.24

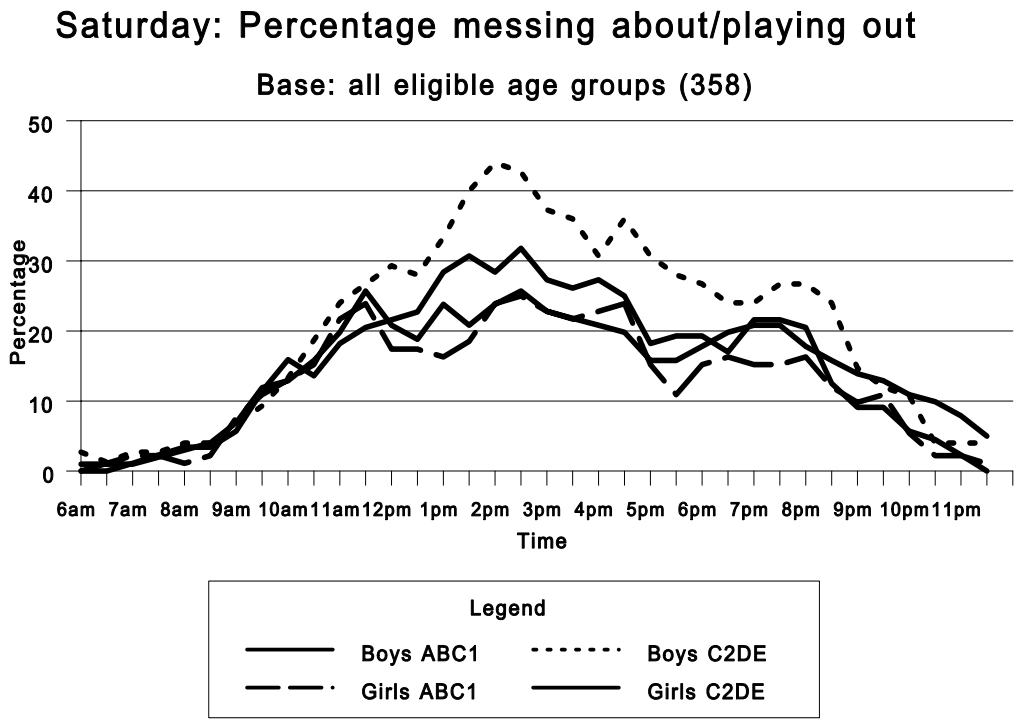

Saturday: Percentage messing about/playing out
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
50
40
30
20
10
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Boys ABC1
Boys C2DE
Girls ABC1
Girls C2DE

Figure 5.25

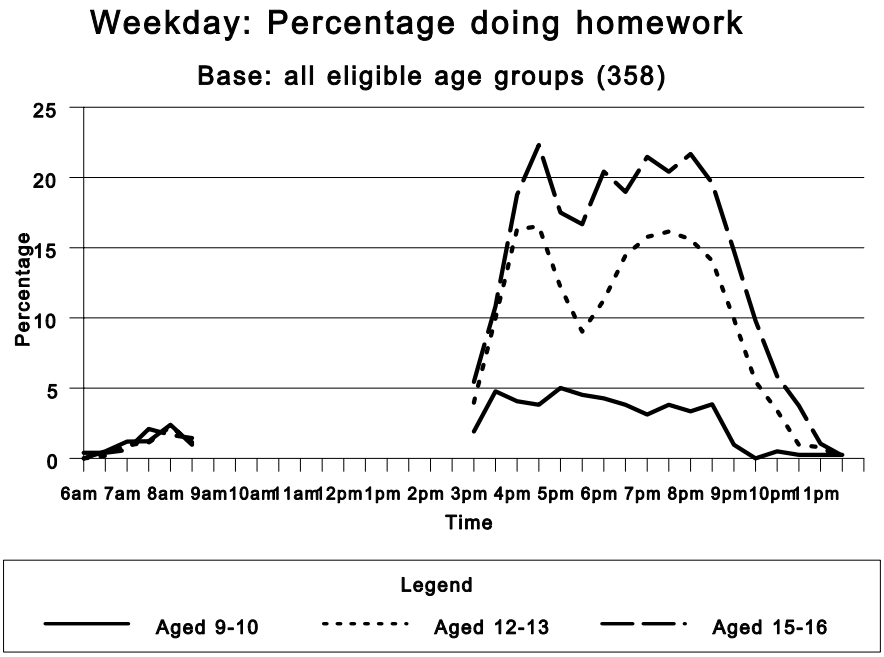

Weekday: Percentage doing homework
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
25
20
15
10
5
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Aged 9-10
Aged 12-13
Aged 15-16

Figure 5.26

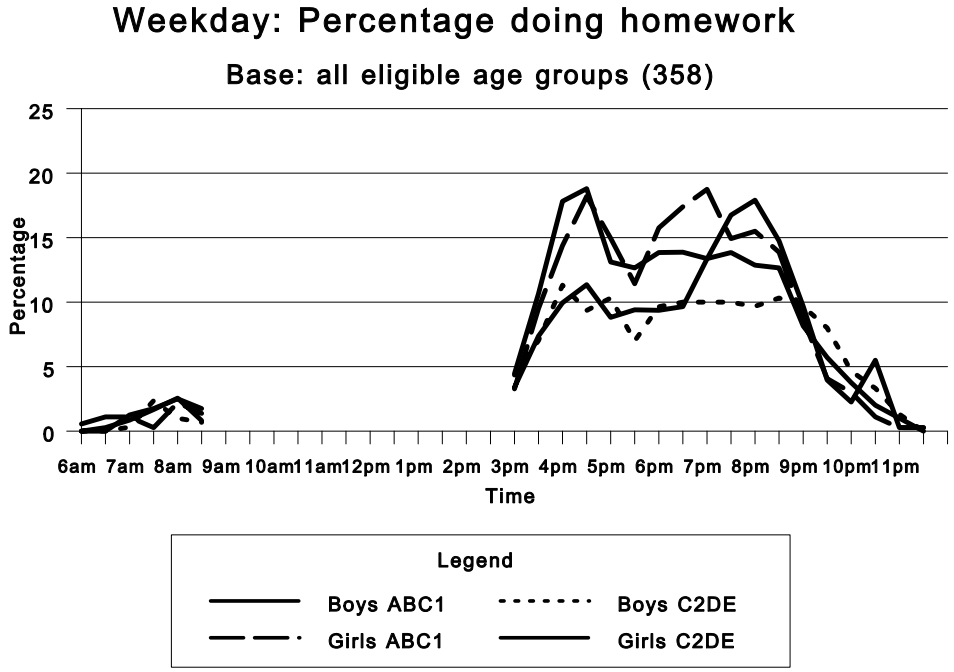

Weekday: Percentage doing homework
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
25
20
15
10
5
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Boys ABC1
Boys C2DE
Girls ABC1
Girls C2DE

Figure 5.27

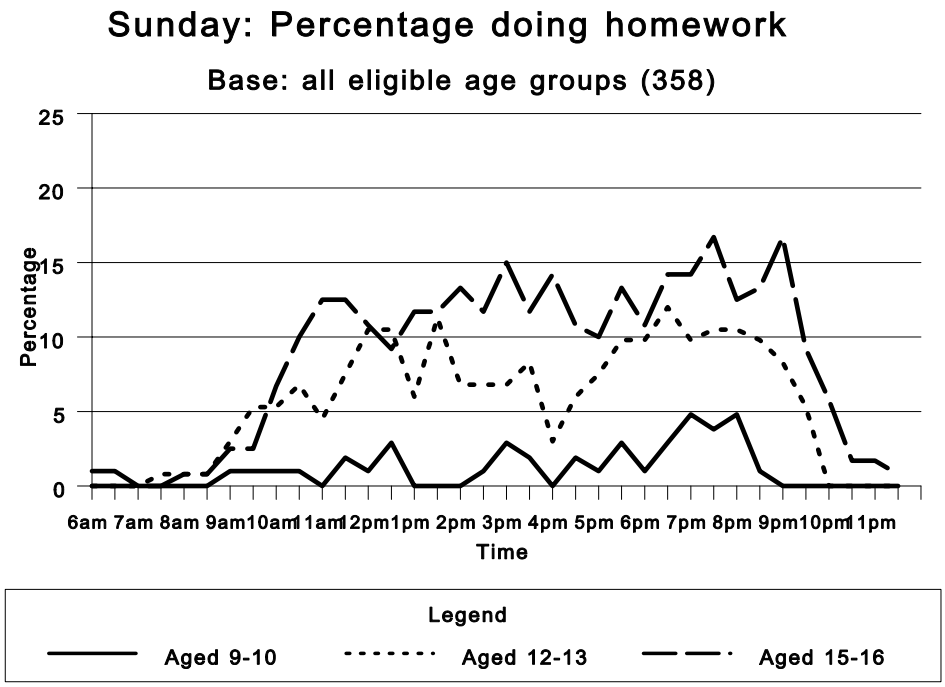

Sunday: Percentage doing homework
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
25
20
15
10
5
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Aged 9-10
Aged 12-13
Aged 15-16

Figure 5.28

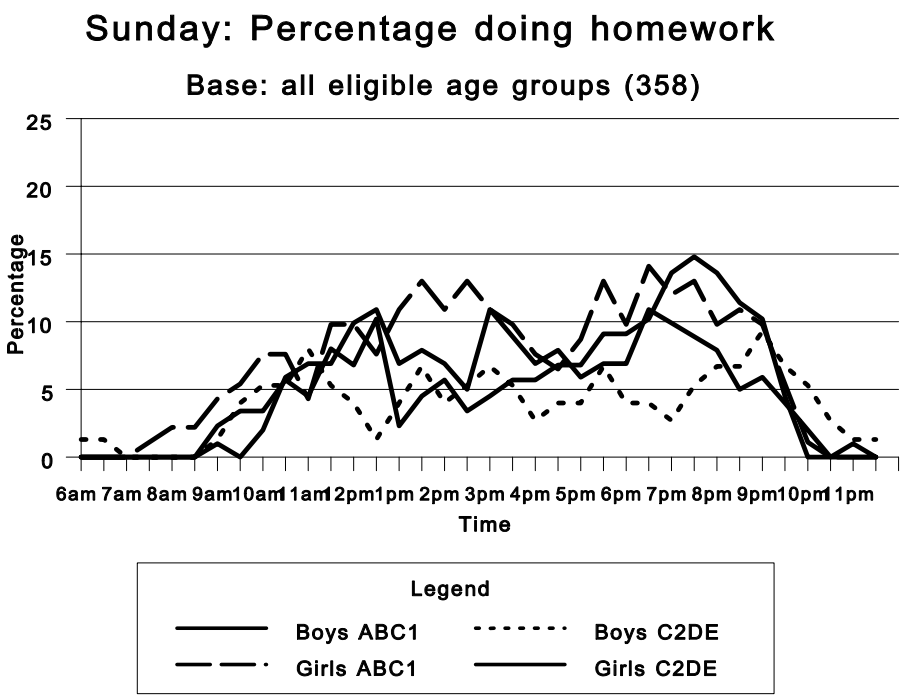

Sunday: Percentage doing homework
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
25
20
15
10
5
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Boys ABC1
Boys C2DE
Girls ABC1
Girls C2DE

Figure 5.29

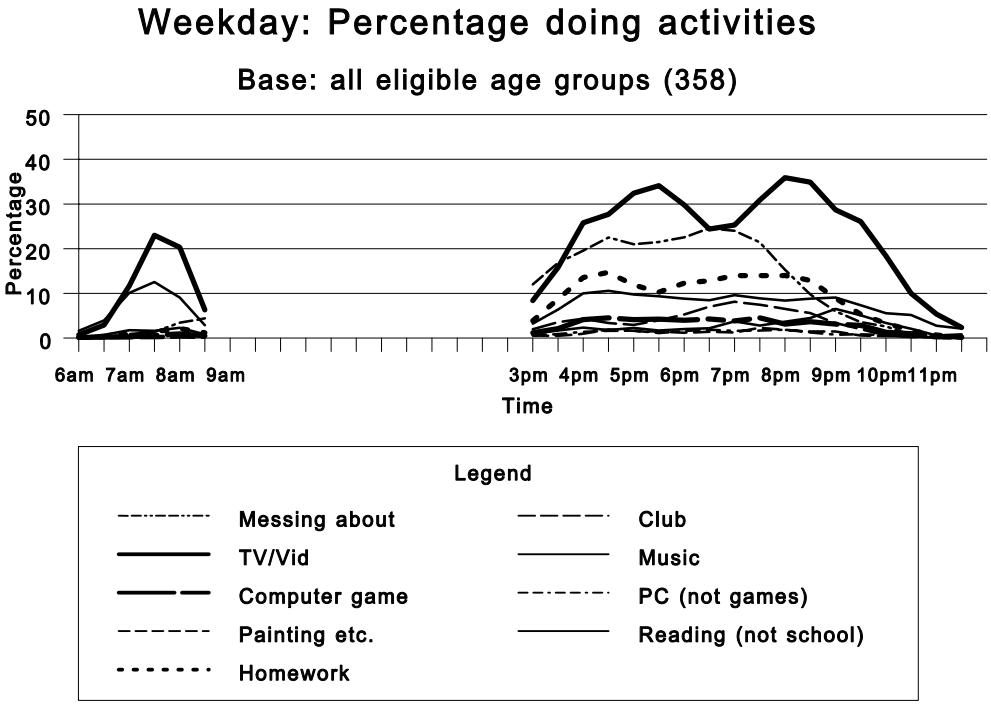
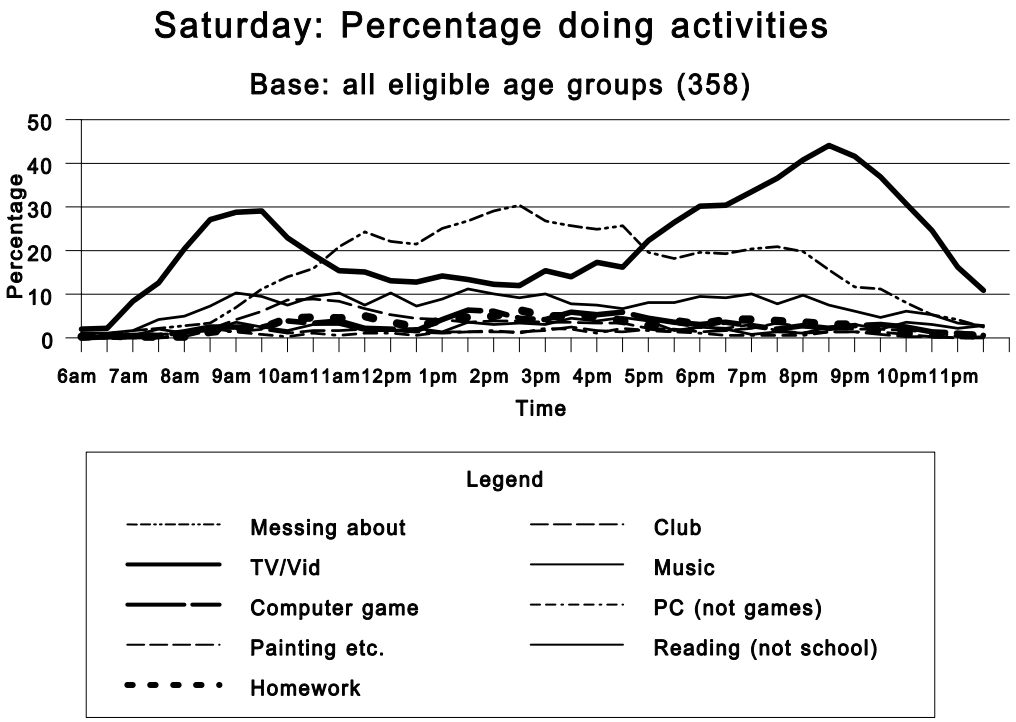

Weekday: Percentage doing activities
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
50
40
30
20
10
0
6am 7am 8am 9am
3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Messing about
TV/Vid
Computer game
Painting etc.
Homework
Club
Music
PC (not games)
Reading (not school)

Figure 5.30


Saturday: Percentage doing activities
Base: all eligible age groups (358)
Percentage
50
40
30
20
10
0
6am 7am 8am 9am 10am 11am 12pm 1pm 2pm 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm 10pm 11pm
Time
Legend
Messing about
TV/Vid
Computer game
Painting etc.
Homework
Club
Music
PC (not games)
Reading (not school)

APPENDIX 5.3

Simultaneous use of multiple media

(Diary data)

Recognising that our respondents may do several activities within the half-hour periods measured by the diary, we allowed more than one activity to be coded per time slot. This opportunity was taken for a sizeable minority of time slots.[1] For Saturday, of all time slots coded across the diary sample for all 10 activities (N=13875), 13% were double coded. For Wednesday, of the total of 9548 time slots coded, again 13%, were double coded. While this is a modest proportion, it is interesting to note that of the entire diary sample (N=358), 68% of respondents double coded at least one time slot on the Saturday and 67% on the Wednesday.

Without attaching too much significance to the actual frequency of double coding - for the diary is so onerous a task that we must assume that 1:8 time slots double coded is an underestimate of actual multiple activities - we can ask two kinds of questions of the patterns in the data (rather than the absolute numbers).

First, who double coded the time slots? This may reflect either conscientiousness in completing the diary or actually doing several things at once. Second, which activities were most often reported in combination - in other words, which activities are more likely to be conducted as the sole activity and which combine effectively with others?

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Table 1 shows overall that two in three respondents double coded at least one time slot in their diary, demographic variables make relatively little difference to double coding. The two days of the week compared here offer a very similar picture: girls, older respondents, and higher social grade respondents were all more likely to double code time slots when completing the diary. This suggests an explanation in terms of conscientiousness as a respondent.

More interesting, perhaps, is what the pattern of double coding tells us about how activities are conducted simultaneously. Table 2 shows which activities are combined with which others.

The most frequent combination of activities, by far, is that of watching television/videos at the same time as doing something else (1 in 3 of sample). Music plus something else comes next (1 in 4), followed by messing about plus something else (1 in 5). Thus, if media activities are combined with a second activity, it is most likely that the second activity will not itself involve the media.

Far from being glued to the screen, children and young people do other things at the same time as using the media, and this is particularly true for television/video and music. It is interesting to note that using a computer - whether or not for games - is rarely combined with any other activity. And while our qualitative material suggests a strong association between reading magazines and listening to music, this also showed up rarely (c. 5%) in the diary data. As commonly observed, homework is combined with watching television - especially on a weekday - or with music.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

[1] In what follows, we take Saturday and Wednesday as two days which capture the main trends in the diary data.

TABLE 1

Who double coded diary time slots (% of sample)?

		GENDER		AGE			SOCIAL GRADE	
	ALL	Boys	Girls	9-10	12-13	15-16	ABC1	C2DE
Saturday	68	64	72	64	68	72	71	65
Wednesdays	67	65	69	57	67	76	70	64

TABLE 2

Percentage who double coded the combination of activities at least once
(lower triangle = Saturday, upper triangle = Wednesday)

	Messing About	Club	TV/ Video	Music	Cmp. Game	PC -not game	Paint etc	Read	H' Work	S'thing else
Messing about		2	7	3	1	1	1	1	3	14
Club	1		1	1	0	0	1	0	0	3
TV/ video	8	1		9	3	1	1	3	12	36
Music	6	2	9		3	1	1	4	12	22
Cmp. game	2	0	4	4		1	0	0	0	3
PC (not games)	1	0	1	1	1		0	1	2	2
Paint, etc	1	0	5	2	1	0		0	1	1
Reading	2	0	6	5	0	1	0		1	7
Home-work	2	0	4	8	0	2	0	1		7
S'thing else	20	4	39	24	6	3	2	7	2	.

APPENDIX 6.1

Combining media in everyday life: correlations: among media

TABLE 1

Combining media in everyday life. Correlations (p<0.05) among media for minutes per day, by demographic variables, for those with home access to the relevant media

		GENDER		AGE				SOCIAL GRADE	
CORRELATION BETWEEN...	**ALL**	Boys	Girls	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	ABC1	C2DE
TV &									
Video	.15	.19	.12		.15	.13	.32	.10	.17
Games machine	.19	.19	.23		.17	.25		.23	.16
Gameboy			.16						
PC (not games)				.30					
Internet									
Books (not school)	-.07	-.12							
Newspapers			.10						
Comics									
Magazines	.08		.14		.20			.16	
Music	.16	.16	.18		.13			.13	.18
PC (not games) &									
Games machine	.19	.22			.32			.18	.20
Gameboy									
Internet	.67	.68	.54		.69		.72	.73	
Television				.30					
Video	.12	.21			.29	.17			.16
Books (not school)									
Newspapers	.09		.14					.16	
Comics	.12	.17			.42				.17
Magazines									
Music	.15	.19	.12		.20	.17		.17	
Books (not school)&									
Newspapers			0.11						.10
Comics	.08				.13			.10	
Magazines	-.07	-.12							
Television									
Video									
Games machine						0.18			
Gameboy	.25								
PC (not games)		.32					0.71	.33	
Internet	.08	.14			.28				.16
Music									

Note 1: correlations for 6-8 year olds based on parent's estimates of time use; some media not asked about for this age group; hence 'all' figures for these comparisons are based on 9-17 year olds only.

Note 2: no measure of access for newspapers/magazines/ comics, so data for these media based on whole sample.

APPENDIX 10.1

Family composition and household structure

TABLE 1

Percentages of family type and working status compared with national figures

	SAMPLE 1997	UK 1995-1996 (Social Trends ONS 1997)
FAMILY TYPE (N=1289)		
Couple	9	16
Couple + sibs	74	64
Single parent	4	6
Single parent +sibs	12	14
(Other	1)	
WORKING STATUS (N=978)		
married mothers		
% in full-time work	22	24
% in part time work	42	42
Unemployed	3	5
Inactive	30	29
(DK	4)	
lone mothers		
% in full-time work	21	17
% in part-time work	23	23
Unemployed	9	10
Inactive	41	48
(DK	5)	

TABLE 2

Percentage of parents across categories of household income, social grade, and parents' education

	FAMILY TYPE			WORKING MOTHER	
	Single parent	**Couple**	**Reconst. couple**	**Yes**	**No**
Household income	***			***	
Under £5K	**35**	7	8	3	**25**
£5.000-£9,499	**34**	9	13	8	**22**
£9.500-£11,499	8	6	10	7	8
£11,500-ff14,499	4	**10**	**12**	9	9
£14500-£17,499	4	**11**	7	10	9
£14500-£24999	9	**22**	**27**	**24**	13
£25,000-£34,999	4	**18**	**18**	**21**	7
£35000+	2	**17**	5	**17**	7
Social grade	***			***	
AB	5	**21**	10	**22**	13
C1	22	27	27	**31**	20
C2	17	27	32	29	23
DE	**56**	26	31	17	**44**
Terminal age of education (TAE) of mother				***	
Under 16	15	18	14	15	**21**
16	46	38	52	37	**45**
17-19	24	27	23	**29**	**22**
20+	15	17	11	**20**	**11**
Terminal age of education (TAE) of father					
Under 16	21	23	14	20	24
16	40	35	55	37	38
17-19	23	23	23	23	23
20+	16	19	9	19	16

Note: *** $p<0.001$

TABLE 3

Working status of mother

	FAMILY TYPE***			AGE OF CHILD***				SIBLINGS***	
	Single mother %	Couple %	Recons. Couple %	6-8 %	9-11 %	12-14 %	15-17 %	Yes %	No %
Full-time	20	21	28	13	18	23	**35**	19	**38**
Part-time	25	**43**	**34**	**38**	**42**	**43**	32	40	32
At home	**37**	28	33	**36**	31	24	25	**31**	20
Unemployed	**9**	3	2	6	2	4	3	4	2
Student	**6**	2	0	3	4	2	1	2	3
N.A.	4	4	3	4	3	4	5	4	5

Note: *** p<0.001

APPENDIX 11.1

Rules about television

Fifteen questions about the mediation or regulation of their child's viewing were asked of parents of children aged 6-17 on the broadcasters' Television Opinion Panel. These questions was first asked in the U.S.A. and was subsequently repeated in the Netherlands (Bybee et al, 1982: Van der Voort et al, 1992). Researchers in both countries, using factor analysis of the items, had established three dimensions of parental guidance: *restrictive guidance* which involves placing restrictions on the child's amount of viewing, *evaluative guidance* which involves discussing programmes with the child with the specific intent of helping him or her to evaluate the material, and *unfocused guidance*, which involves non-specific guidance, such as co-viewing with the child and discussing programmes without the explicit intention of influencing the child's views.

A Principal Components analysis with varimax rotation similarly produced three factors in the British data (see Table 1), with clear *restrictive* and *evaluative* guidance factors. The main difference involved the third factor, *unfocused guidance*: in the British data the third factor is specifically focussed on talk, and has therefore been labelled *conversational guidance*.

TABLE 1

Factor Analysis: How often do you do the following kinds of things with your child? (Please use the scale where 4=Often, 3=Sometimes, 2=Rarely 1= Never)

	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2	FACTOR 3
Restrictive guidance			
Specify programmes that may be watched	**.83**	.15	.08
Forbid the viewing of a particular programme	**.78**	.21	-.02
Restrict the amount of child viewing	**.76**	.13	.08
Set specific viewing hours for the child	**.76**	.01	.16
Change the channel to avoid a programme you don't want them to see	**.64**	.35	-.20
Encourage the viewing of specific programmes	**.50**	.10	.38
Evaluative/moral guidance			
Point out good things characters are doing	.14	**.88**	.13
Point out bad things characters are doing	.19	**.85**	.15
Point out the difference between TV programmes or characters and real life	.21	**.64**	.35
Watch TV with the child because you think the child benefits if you do	.27	**.52**	.38
Watch TV with the child because he/she asks	.13	**.44**	.27
Conversational guidance			
Talk about a show while viewing	.03	.23	**.75**
Discuss a show just viewed or about to be viewed	.09	.16	**.83**
Discuss TV characters' motivations	-.06	**.50**	**.60**
Explain the meaning of TV adverts	.33	.38	**.49**
Percentage of total variance accounted for	37.5	14.8	7.1
Cronbach's Alpha	0.88	0.89	0.85