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Hanging Out, Messing Around, and Geeking Out

Kids Living and Learning with New Media

By: Mizuko Ito

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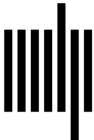

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4 FAMILIES

Lead Author: Heather A. Horst

Trudy lives in a working-class neighborhood on the outskirts of Silicon Valley, where she attends middle school (Horst, Silicon Valley Families). At the time of her interview with Heather Horst in the spring of 2006, Trudy and her other twelve-year-old friends recently had taken an interest in MySpace. During the course of the evening, Trudy decided to show Heather her MySpace page and all the things she was learning to do, which included creating a page that she thought would express her personality. She also talked about how she used MySpace to stay linked to her friends and said that in the past few months she had managed to "Friend" forty-two people. As each Friend appeared on the page, she proceeded to describe each person and the various aspects of that person's MySpace profile that she liked or disliked. Eventually she came to the profile of her friend Amanda, whose picture was an uploaded image of Hello Kitty. As Trudy talked more about Amanda's page, Heather asked if she knew why Amanda decided to place Hello Kitty as her main picture. Before Trudy could answer, Trudy's mother, who was washing dishes nearby, chimed in and reminded Trudy that one of the conditions of Amanda's participation on the site was that she agreed to use unidentifiable pictures or images; Amanda's mother did not want any real pictures of her daughter on the Internet. However, during the course of browsing through her profile, Trudy discovered that she still possessed a picture on her page "tagged" (labeled) with Amanda's name. Trudy's mom, who was still looking over her shoulder, reminded her daughter that she should delete or replace Amanda's residual picture out of respect for Amanda's parent's wishes. Annoyed with what Trudy felt represented an invasion of her privacy, she rolled her eyes and said she would take down the photo "later."

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This book focuses on new media engagement, peer-based sociability, and learning from a youth perspective, with particular attention to learning with new media that takes place outside of traditional learning institutions, such as schools and families. As noted by Christo Sims in his summary of large quantitative surveys of new media use in the United States (see box 1.1), however, the vast majority of American households—89 percent—now possesses some form of access to the Internet at home. Alongside the Internet, many families throughout our study also owned mobile phones, portable music players, and gaming systems, although it is important to note that the latest gaming systems (e.g., PlayStation 3, Wii, Xbox) and devices such as BlackBerrys and iPhones remain out of economic reach for the vast majority of our study participants. In effect, a large share of young people's engagements with new media—using social network sites, instant messaging services, and gaming—occurs in the context of home and family life.

Parents, the guardians of the home and family, take seriously their role as guides and regulators of their children's participation in this new media ecology. Just as young people engage with new media based on friendship-driven and interest-driven genres of participation, parents and adults' attitudes toward new media reflect their own motivations and beliefs about parenting as well as their personal histories and interests in media. Indeed, parents often frame their purchase of new media in relation to the educational goals and broader aspirations they hold for their children. From this vantage point, computers, video cameras, and digital cameras as well as related software, education, and training become meaningful to many families because they represent an investment in their child's future, one that they hope will ensure their children's success in education, work, and income generation (Bourdieu 1984; Haddon 2004; Lally 2002; Livingstone 2002; Sefton-Green and Buckingham 1996; Seiter 2007; see also chapter 7 in this book). Parents also leverage new media as motivators or rewards for good grades and behavior; graduation or a good report card may result in a new game, mobile phone, or digital camera. While parents make efforts to embrace their kids' interest in new media, they admit that new media also incite anxiety and discomfort, which are often tied to moral panics surrounding media as well as what Ellen Seiter (1999b) has referred to as the "lay theory of media effects," or the belief that media cause children to become antisocial, violent, unproductive, and desensitized to a

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variety of influences, such as commercialization, sex, and violence (Alters and Clark 2004b; Cassell and Cramer 2007; Clark 2004; Lusted 1991).[1] Even the most media-immersed parents in our study described a deep ambivalence about the prominence of new media in their children's lives and their role as parents in influencing their children's participation in the media ecologies that structure their sons' and daughters' lives.

This chapter considers the home and family as an important structuring context for informal media engagement[2] and, in turn, explores how parents and other adults negotiate the incorporation of media in young people's lives. Drawing research materials from a wide range of studies—primarily Christo Sims (Rural and Urban Youth), Heather A. Horst (Silcon Valley Families), Katynka Z. Martínez (Pico Union Families), Lisa Tripp and Becky Herr-Stephenson (Teaching and Learning with Multimedia), C. J. Pascoe (Living Digital), danah boyd (Teen Sociality in Networked Publics), Patricia G. Lange (YouTube and Video Bloggers) and Dan Perkel and Sarita Yardi (Digital Photo-Elicitation with Kids)—we examine parenting strategies surrounding new media, with particular attention to the structuring and regulation of family life in the home and through new media. The three numbered boxes in this chapter illustrate the ways in which the use of new media in homes and families differ regionally. We begin by concentrating on the spatial and domestic arrangements that shape new media use in the home, such as the placement of computers. We then turn to the creation of routines and other forms of temporality, including the amount of time and the textures of kids' media use. In the final section, our analysis centers on parents' and kids' rules, and the creation, bending, and breaking of rules. We conclude by considering how parents and young people transform, negotiate, and create a sense of family identity through new media.

Parenting in the New Media Ecology

Home and family environments reflect the values, morals, and aspirations of families as well as beliefs about the importance and effects of new media for learning and communication. Writing in the moment of the first home computers, Silverstone, Hirsch, and Morley (1992) observe:

> Media pose a whole host of control problems for the household, problems of regulation and boundary maintenance. These are expressed generally in the regular cycle of moral panics around new media or new media content, but on an everyday level,

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in individual households, they are expressed through decisions to include and exclude media content and to regulate within the household who watches what and who listens to and plays with and uses what. (20)

As research on youth and the family reveals, the anxiety surrounding the integration of new media into the home also reflects concerns about independence, separation, and autonomy that, at least in the context of Western societies, occur during the teenage years. Parents throughout our studies worried about the amount of time that kids spent online and not "with real people," as one mother described her son's "addiction" to networked gaming. Some parents lamented that they felt they had lost control, or that their kids had become too dependent upon their portable games, iPods, and mobile phones. Still other parents expressed concern over the extent to which their kids were spending "too much time" talking with their friends over instant messaging, on social network sites, or on the mobile phone. While these concerns over dependence and independence as well as control and autonomy appear to be a persistent family dynamic (Spigel 2001), Alters (2004) argues that during the past forty or fifty years there has been a shift in the nature of parenting in American family life;[3] "Since the 1960s, parents have become uneasy about how to raise children in light of increases in drug use, delinquency, pregnancy, and suicides among children and adolescents" (Alters 2004, 59) as well as broader societal changes, such as the entrée of women into the workforce and the increase in divorce rates during the past three decades. Alters further contends that parents now feel aware and accountable to themselves, and to society at large, regarding the decisions they make in the domestic sphere, a phenomenon she refers to as "reflexive parenting."

The particular *expressions* of this sense of responsibility or reflexivity—present among most, if not all, of the families we interviewed—remain closely intertwined with the cultural, social, economic, and educational capital associated with class dynamics. In a seminal ethnographic study of parenting in the United States, Annette Lareau (2003) explores parenting strategies and the implications of different approaches to parenting for children's chances in life, what she terms the "transmission of differential advantages to children."[5] Examining the ways these patterns of parenting, or the "dominant set of cultural repertoires," are traversed in everyday life, Lareau outlines two approaches to parenting that, she argues, correspond with class positioning. According to Lareau, working-class parents

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in the United States believe in what she terms "the accomplishment of natural growth," a parenting strategy that emphasizes informal play, often in and around the house. Lareau outlines how working-class parents, using what she considers a more hands-off approach than their middle-class counterparts, believe that kids will grow and develop naturally as they navigate the world. By contrast, middle-class parents operate with a belief that it is their responsibility to develop their children through sports, music lessons, and other activities, a practice Lareau terms "concerted cultivation." One of the main differences between the two parenting strategies revolves around the organization of children's daily lives as well as the extent to which parents think they should be involved in the inner workings of their children's activities in schools and other institutionalized settings. Lareau suggests that whereas middle-class parents tend to advocate for their children in institutionalized settings, working-class parents value respect for authority, particularly of teachers and principals, and prefer to give their children the autonomy to navigate their own relationships with peers and the outside world.

The dynamics that Lareau describes in school settings and nonmediated environments also emerge in parents' approaches toward managing media in the home. For example, Ellen Seiter's *Sold Separately* (1993) explores the role of parenting styles and attitudes toward children's media culture.[4] Conducting her research on television and the use of kids' videos and cartoons, Seiter draws connections between class, education, and aspiration in her analysis of children's media and family life in the United States. In particular, Seiter focuses on the relationship of the media industry, parents, and kids in shaping values and attitudes toward particular forms of media consumption and participation. Based on her textual analysis of children's toy advertisements and the ways in which parents interpret and attempt to control children's use of commercial television characters in their everyday play, Seiter reveals how middle- and working-class parents externalize their values through the toys and media they encourage their children to play with and ultimately demonstrates how class biases toward toys and media are reinforced (cf. Chin 2001; Livingstone and Bovill 2001; Roberts and Foehr 2008; Seiter 2005; Thorne 2008).[5]

Whereas much of the early literature on parenting and media attributed differential adoption of new media in the family to class dynamics, a recent study by Hoover, Clark, and Alters (2004) attempts to situate family modes

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of media incorporation in relation to the construction of family identity (see also Matsuda 2007; Spigel 1992). Building on their work based in the metropolitan areas of Colorado, the authors focus on how religious and other sociomoral beliefs, values, and worldviews (and to a lesser extent educational, social, and cultural capital associated with class dynamics) influence parenting styles and attitudes toward new media. Mirroring Silverstone and Hirsch's[6] (1992) notion of the moral economy of the household, Hoover, Clark, and Alters (2004) contend that many parents feel the pressure to restrict and control their children's use of new media due to the cultivation of their family identity, or reputation.[7] Throughout this chapter, we examine how these different discourses and parenting approaches become embedded in the strategies parents employ to regulate and maintain control over media and media uses among the family. In the following section, we describe the ways in which parents and families craft media spaces, the first of three strategies we observed being employed through the course of our research.

Crafting Media Spaces at Home

The decision to acquire new media means making decisions about where new media will fit within the current domestic ecology of media objects.[8] These decisions may revolve around the affordability of a particular medium, as well as infrastructural issues, such as the potential location of a desktop computer, laptop, or gaming system in the home (Alters 2004; Lally 2002; James, Jenks, and Prout 1998). Holloway and Valentine (2003) contend that where families place computers and other new media in the home often shapes whether they are used individually or collectively as well as how long and how frequently new media might be used. For example, when parents put a computer in their children's bedroom, kids tend to associate its presence in their bedroom with ownership. As a result, kids often take on a role as a person who can restrict the amount of time that others can access "their" digital camera, iPod, gaming machine, or other new media (Holloway and Valentine 2003; Livingstone 2003).

Public Media Spaces: Halls, Dens, Kitchens, and Recreation Rooms

Given parents' concerns over the ability to control and monitor their children's media use, many parents elect to place larger media objects, such as gaming systems and desktop computers, in the public spaces of the

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home. Bakardjieva (2005) finds that many Canadian families place media in the living room and construct family computer rooms as well as "wired" basements, which are designed for new media usage (Lally 2002; Livingstone 2002). Like many of the families in Bakardjieva's study, the families who participated in the Digital Youth Project situated computers in kitchens, hallways, and other spaces of the home where parents possessed the option to monitor what their kids were doing. This pattern was particularly common in many of the Los Angeles households with space constraints, as well as in Silicon Valley households, where families used kitchens and dining rooms to eat together and complete homework. Other families, such as those who live in the suburban-style developments of rural California (Sims, Rural and Urban Youth), prefer to place their computers in a shared family "den" or "study" (Bakardjieva 2005; Clarke 2001).

In some of the wealthier households in Silicon Valley (Horst, Silicon Valley Families), families designed new spaces to house new media, such as home offices, playrooms, and recreation rooms (Clarke 2004, 2007; Gutman and de Coninck-Smith 2007; James, Jenks, and Prout 1998). For example, the Chens, an Asian-American family in Silicon Valley, lived in a large five-bedroom house and were in the process of remodeling their home to integrate a recreation area as an extension on the back of their garage. The Chens planned to add a Wii to their existing media collection, which included a large-screen TV, speakers, and a PlayStation 2, so the kids could practice tennis and play other "physical" games with their friends; their dad also expressed excitement at the prospect of practicing his golf swing. Mrs. Chen hoped that this new entertainment space apart from the main house would become a gathering place for her two teenage sons and their friends. She thought that the space would enable her to know and monitor where they were as well as what they were doing. Indeed, Mrs. Chen's plan to create a house-based entertainment center for her two sons and their friends reflected the centrality of kids' engagement with games and gaming in their everyday social lives. While the full-scale reconstruction of a garage was an extreme example of household modifications to accommodate new media,[9] most families opted to modify or convert existing spaces (e.g., playrooms or family rooms) into media rooms.

Private Media Spaces: The Bedroom

While some parents prefer to place media in the public spaces of the home, the bedroom holds a special place in the imaginations of many youth. As

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McRobbie and Garber ([1978] 2000) argued three decades ago, girls typically view bedrooms as important spaces where they feel relatively free to develop or express their sense of self, or identity, particularly through the decoration, organization, and appropriation of their bedroom space (Clarke 2001; Kearney 2006; Mazzarella 2005; Steele and Brown 1995). In many homes, the arrival of relatively affordable and portable media has solidified the importance of the bedroom as a space where one can use new media in these endeavors and assume individual control over one's own media world. As Livingstone and Bovill (2001) assert, "What is clear is that the media—particularly screen media—are playing an increasingly significant role within the more solitary, more peer-oriented space of the bedroom" (180–81). They further suggest that the more "media-rich" bedrooms are, the more likely it is that kids will spend time in their bedrooms using the media, away from the rest of the family and the more public spaces of the home.

As Livingstone and Bovill observe, many parents believe that when kids' bedrooms become the focal point of their activities at home, they lose the ability to monitor and guide their children's activities. For this reason, many parents fear what happens behind closed doors. Kira, a seventeen-year-old in Seattle who lives with her aunt and uncle (boyd, Teen Sociality in Networked Publics), describes the tension surrounding her bedroom and her aunt's regulation of her media usage:

> [My aunt] just always wants me to be involved with the family, but then when I'm sitting out [in the living room] I get completely ignored so I don't like being out there. I mean I'll sit out there because I know she wants me to, but then once she goes to bed at 8:00 I'm in my room where I can turn on my music and watch my TV or talk on my phone or whatever. I can't pretty much even look at my cell phone in front of her because she gets mad, thinks I'm on it all the time. I'm like I just ignored five calls. How am I on it all the time? She makes me so mad.

Kira continues,

> I have a TV in my room with cable and everything but my aunt flips out if I go in my room. She's like, you're always in there, you're always hibernating in there, and she thinks I'm smoking pot in my room because I light incense. Incense relaxes me; I mean I'm not stupid; I'm not going to smoke pot in my room. Like you guys aren't going to smell it?

Kira's desire to relax and be herself, what her aunt interprets as "hibernating" in her bedroom, appears to affirm Livingstone and Bovill's (2001)

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findings in the United Kingdom. However, Kira's own awareness that her room is not completely separated—that her family can smell what she is doing in her room—suggests that teens do understand that bedrooms are much less private in practice than they are in the popular imagination and discourse. For example, Sam, a seventeen-year-old in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, described to danah boyd (Teen Sociality in Networked Publics) that while he sees his room as relatively private, he still refrains from using media and technology while in his bedroom:

> When the door is closed, but I don't . . . I don't like talking on the phone in my house at all. Just because, it's not like a two-room shack, but it's not huge, and you never know what's going to go through those walls. What's going to make them think that something . . . this is happening or whatever, so, I don't.

Similarly, fourteen-year-old Leigh in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, told danah boyd that her house does not feel private to her "just because my family is just . . . I don't know. My mom comes and looks in my room and stuff. I don't really like that" (Teen Sociality in Networked Publics). Sixteen-year-old Melissa of Marion, Iowa, complained to danah that while her room may be nominally private, her mother possesses the freedom of movement to come and go as she pleases:

> Because there are a lot of things that my mom does that make me feel like it's not private. I can be taking a shower and she'll come in, go to the bathroom, and leave. She has no respect for my personal privacy. I can be sitting on the computer talking to a friend and she'll be reading over my shoulder and I don't want her to. That's not really private to me. . . . Private is kind of like a place where I can kind of go and just be by myself and not have to worry about anyone doing anything. . . . My most important thinking goes on when I'm either in bed, in the shower, or in my car. (Teen Sociality in Networked Publics)

As becomes evident, parents sometimes assert their status in the family hierarchy by moving through the home freely, even when a space is deemed to belong to their kids. In addition, sharing a room or a computer with a sibling has an impact on the sense of privacy teens feel and, in some instances, renders privacy almost impossible. Numerous teens discussed how their siblings used their computer or accessed their accounts to talk to their friends through IM or social network sites while pretending to be them. Ana-Garcia, a half-Indian, half-Guatemalan fifteen-year-old from Los Angeles (boyd, Teen Sociality in Networked Publics), described how her brother

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hacked onto my AIM and my MySpace, and he just started talking to people, and then the next day when I went on, they were like, "What was wrong with you yesterday? Why were you acting all mean to me?" I was like, "It was not me. It was my brother," so he does that a lot.

Ana-Garcia explained to her friends that her brother was the one responsible for being "mean." While many of her friends believed her, she worried that one day he might take his pranks too far. In an effort to make her brother stop, Ana-Garcia told her parents, but, she said that because he is the boy in the family, her brother rarely gets punished. The lack of privacy surrounding Ana-Garcia's new media usage reflects a general frustration Ana-Garcia holds about being a girl and the lack of freedom, privacy, and control this entails, at least in her family.

Alongside age and gender dynamics, the size and infrastructure of homes also contributes to the negotiation of privacy in domestic spaces. As Katynka Martínez suggests in her description of Maxwel Garcia and his family (see box 4.1), for many other low-income families who live in tight quarters, the retreat into the bedroom and the creation of bedroom culture is simply not an option.

Box 4.1 The Garcia Family: A Portrait of Urban Los Angeles

Katynka Z. Martínez

Maxwel, a fourteen-year-old seventh-grade boy, lives in a studio apartment with his mother, Lydia, and two older sisters. The tight living quarters make Bovill and Livingstone's (2001) concept of a "bedroom culture" difficult to apply to these kids' digital-media environment. Since the family's living quarters do not include traditional bedrooms, the increasing availability of media in such rooms becomes a nonissue. This is not to say that digital media are absent from the kids' home environment. Maxwel's oldest sister owns a digital camera and he owns a Game Boy. In addition, there are two television sets in the apartment, one hooked up to a VCR/DVD player and one hooked up to a Nintendo 64. Maxwel's favorite TV shows are *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and *Lilo and Stitch,* but the family makes joint decisions about what to watch on television. On the day of my interview with the family, the television was set to the local news on Spanish-language television. By the time the interview was over, Maxwel and his sister had watched Spanish-language news, the local news on an English-language television station, *X-Men 2*, and *Bend It Like Beckham*. The family does not pay for cable television or satellite service so both movies were viewed as broadcast television programming.

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In the case of this family, the television set is the media object that has been used to create a shared family time-space. For example, Maxwel often watches *telenovelas,* Spanish-language soap operas, with his mother. Maxwel mentioned watching "the one at seven," and when I asked if he was referring to the telenovela *Peregrina*, Maxwel and his mom immediately answered with an enthusiastic "yes." During the interview with Lydia, she struggled to remember the title of an English-language television program that she likes. She asked her son for the title and he asked her *"el de los que siempre están fumados?"* ("The one where they're always stoned?") This description of *That '70s Show* resonated for Maxwel's mom and she said that she enjoyed watching the program because *"Cuando uno esta joven, todo se te hace fácil."* ("When one is young, everything seems easy.") Lydia does not understand the English language but says that she can follow the physical humor used in English-language sitcoms. She also enjoys watching wrestling with her kids. The theatricality and physicality of World Wrestling Entertainment make it easy for a non-English speaker to follow the television programs.

Lydia was able to attend school up to only the fourth grade in her hometown of Mexico City. She came to the United States with her then husband and two daughters. Maxwel was born in the United States a few years after the family arrived in the country. Lydia explains that while she encourages her kids' use of computers, she hasn't tried to incorporate computers into her own life. She says that she often joins her children on their trips to the public library or the local community center and looks on while they use computers. However, she does not actually use them herself because, as she explained, her first goal is to make sure that her kids have everything they need to succeed in school and her second goal is to learn English.

Lydia was unemployed at the time the interview was conducted. Her last job had been as a garment worker using embroidery machines in a factory. She brought out a hat and showed it off as both an example of the work that she did and also to draw attention to her favorite Mexican soccer team. When Lydia was employed at the sewing factory she often worked nights and did not see her children in the morning or immediately after school. When she worked into the early morning she used her mobile phone to call her kids and remind them to eat breakfast. She also expected them to call her mobile phone when they came home from school. She explained that her phone recorded the time and place from where the call was made and that she returned her kids' phone calls during her break.

Maxwel and his sisters have asked their mom for mobile phones but she does not have the funds to buy them. Her eldest daughter is twenty years old and bought her own mobile phone. This daughter sells carpet cleaner door-to-door and is the owner of the family's digital camera. When Maxwel was asked what he used the camera for, he explained that it was used

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“on my confirmation, or on my sisters’ birthdays, or my birthdays, or my mom’s birthday or special occasions.” In addition to snapping pictures on these “special occasions,” Maxwel had recently used the camera for a science experiment and his mother used the camera to take pictures at the march for immigrants’ rights that was held in Los Angeles, and nationwide, on May 1, 2006.

The digital camera also has been used to document apartment fixtures in various stages of decay. Lydia explained that she took classes at a local community center and learned about her rights as a tenant. She also learned about how to use photographs to record landlord negligence by watching *La Corte del Pueblo* (*The People’s Court)*, a Spanish-language program that presents reenactments of actual court cases. She said that the ceiling in her bathroom was inflated and one day caved in, almost hitting her daughter. Another time, the kitchen ceiling caved in and released rat feces all over the room. This happened on Maxwel’s birthday. Lydia said that she had made multiple pots of tamales and that she was lucky the ceiling did not fall apart while she was cooking. She took pictures of both the bathroom- and kitchen-ceiling incidents and then used these photos to argue against having to pay a full month’s rent.

Lydia explained that she can barely afford to pay the rent for her apartment, let alone buy the kids video games. The family buys video games, which cost about thirty-five dollars, on credit at a local indoor swap meet. The Nintendo 64 that Maxwel owns was a gift from a friend with whom they shared an apartment. The family computer was also a gift. Maxwel’s godparents gave him this computer for his birthday but it broke and his godfather took the computer to be repaired. This was a year ago. Lydia explained that Maxwel’s godfather *“llevó la cabeza o el monitor, cómo se llama? Y no lo ha traída”* (“took the brain or the monitor, what is it called? And he hasn’t returned it”). The godfather had taken the hard drive and Maxwel’s family was left with only a printer and monitor. The monitor has been laid to rest with a plastic cover and is kept in a walk-in closet that also functions as a small bedroom (see figure 4.1). The desk that the monitor was on now serves as a table for stuffed animals and knickknacks. Although the printer is not connected to a computer, it is still kept on the bottom shelf of the desk.

While the Garcia family does not represent a media-rich household, the family was eager to share stories and artifacts related to their media practices. During the course of the interview Maxwel and his mom brought out photo albums with pictures of graduations, first communions, baptisms, and birthday parties. They also brought out their digital camera and displayed the photos of the immigrants’ rights march that were still stored on the device. Lydia was asked how the immigrants’ rights march compared to these family events. She explained:

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Figure 4.1
The Garcia family's closet/makeshift bedroom also stores a broken computer. Photo by Katynka Z. Martínez, 2006.

Nosotros decidimos sacarles fotos de toda la marcha porque para mí fue un día . . . gracias a Dios . . . especial. Todos los días son especial. Pero de ver de que si todos de nosotros estamos apoyandonos va a cambiar todo. Entonces, para mí esos fotos me sirvieron en lo personal para decir de que si yo apoyo a mi hijo él puede llegar más arriba. Para bien. No para cosas malas. Pero si yo no lo apoyo, es como . . . está solo. No hay quien lo escucha, quien lo va a ayudar, quien lo va a apoyar, quien le va a decir, "Sigue adelante." Entonces esas fotos que saqué con tanta gente allí me hizo ver que la unión hace la fuerza para cada persona para lograr lo que queremos para bien. No para mal.

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(We decided to take pictures of the entire march because for me it was a day that was . . . thank God . . . very special. Every day is special. But to see that if all of us support each other everything is going to change. So, for me those photos served a personal purpose because they say that if I support my son he can achieve something higher. For good. Not for bad things. But if I don't support him, it's like . . . he's alone. There is no one to listen to him, who will help him, who will support him, who will say, "Continue moving forward." So those pictures that I took with so many people there made me see that unity brings strength and makes it possible for every person to achieve what we want for good. Not for bad.)

By using the family's digital camera to collect visual evidence of landlord neglect and by also taking her kids and the camera to an immigrants' rights march, Lydia is demonstrating the multiple ways that this simple device can be used as a tool of empowerment for the whole family and even for a larger immigrant community.

Moreover, and as much of the work on domestic space and childhood reveals (Aries 1962; Clarke 2004; Miller 2001), homes and bedrooms are not static entities. Just as families upgrade media or shift the ownership of new media objects among parents and kids, homes also change through time as children grow older and families disperse. Indeed, going off to college remains an important landmark. For example, Ben, a participant in Megan Finn, David Schlossberg, Judd Antin, and Paul Poling's "Freshquest" study, described how he shared his first computer, a hand-me-down from his parents, with his brother in their bedroom after his parents bought a "new, fancy computer." Later, he managed to acquire his own computer. Ben explained:

When my sister moved out and went to college, my half sister, yeah, she went to college, then I moved into her room. And the computer was, I mean, then there were three people in different rooms and the computer was going to be in one of our rooms. And obviously we can see a lot of frictions building up, whose room is, whose room is it gonna be? Right, [my twin brother] wanted [the computer] in his room, I wanted [the computer] in my room, and finally my parents caved and just bought [a] new computer all together.

As Ben suggested, parents often expect siblings to share computers and bedrooms when they are younger. However, when Ben's sister moved out and went to college, Ben and his brother each received their own bedrooms. To resolve the conflict over where to put the shared "kids' computer," Ben's parents decided it was simply easier to buy a new computer

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than mediate between arguing siblings. As this example illustrates, youth are constantly struggling to gain privacy and autonomy to engage with media and online communication, and this often plays out in negotiations over the location and ownership of media in the home.

Mobility and Other Media Spaces

While homes continue to be viewed as the nexus for modern family life, families are certainly not restricted to the bounded space of the home. Parents work outside the home, and kids attend school and participate in after-school and enrichment programs. Young people also hang out at their friends' houses. These spaces provide kids with opportunities to use media not available, and sometimes not allowed, in their own home(s). As Dominic, a sixteen-year-old from Seattle, explained to danah boyd (Teen Sociality in Networked Publics) while sitting with two of his friends, "I don't play [World of Warcraft], because I don't have the money for the monthly fee, but these two do, and I . . . I'll watch them sometimes when I go over to their house, and some, maybe, occasionally I'll play with them." As Dominic suggests, many teenagers and kids learn about new media while hanging out with friends whose parents make different rules about the type and extent of media their kids can play, watch, or use. With a few exceptions, parents acknowledge that their kids do use and gain access to new media elsewhere. While they might prefer that their kids follow the same guidelines they outline at home, typically to not play first-person shooters or watch sexually explicit movies, they also recognize that what happens outside their own domestic domain remains largely out of their control. Moreover, an awareness of the potential social implications of enforcing these restrictions also play a role in parents' decisions about the extent to which they attempt to impose their own rules at other families' homes.

Young people also take advantage of opportunities to operate under a different set of rules when they visit family members whom they do not regularly live with. Andrew, a ten-year-old elementary-school student who lives in Berkeley, California, told Dan Perkel and Sarita Yardi (Digital Photo-Elicitation with Kids):

> At our house we only have computer games . . . where you learn stuff. We don't have fighting games. . . . The only game that doesn't have to do with adding or subtracting or dividing or multiplying or anything that's really close to math is called Sim Theme Park, which is where you make a theme park on the computer.

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While games at home are restricted to the computer and the genre of edutainment (Ito 2007; see also chapter 5), Andrew's grandmother's house is a place where "we get to watch TV, watch movies, play video games . . . once a month for a weekend. And we just came back from spring break, ten days with them." In fact, Andrew's uncle and grandparents bought a variety of game systems and games for Andrew and his brother, Nick, over the past few years, including a GameCube, Super Nintendo, Nintendo 64, PlayStation, PlayStation 2, Game Boy, Game Boy Color, Game Boy SP, Game Boy DS, and Sega Dreamcast, as birthday and holiday gifts. Out of respect for their parents, the boys' grandparents store all the games at their home, the only place where the boys can play. In fact, when their uncle buys games for Andrew and Nick on holidays and birthdays, he sends them directly to the boys' grandparents' house. Andrew and Nick's parents may not like the fact that they play games during the visits to their grandparents' house, but they also recognize that it is a different domestic space and therefore out of their control.

In this section, we outline the physical and social contexts that structure where young people access media, whether that is in the public spaces in the home, more private spaces such as the bedroom, or in the homes of friends and extended family. In all these settings, youth may desire autonomy and independence from the rules and regulations of their everyday home and family life. However, given parents' concerns about and sense of responsibility over their children's lives and activities, most parents do not grant their sons and daughters full autonomy and control over their media and communications. Rather, and as we continue to see throughout this chapter, young people's attempts to maintain privacy and ownership over their media usage and the media spaces where their engagement with new media takes place remain an ongoing struggle in their everyday lives.

Making, Taking, and Sharing Media Time

In addition to structuring the place of media in the space of the home, the family context also shapes how and when family members spend their time using new media. The temporal rhythms of the family and the household take a variety of forms, from media engagements that are shared among family members to the varied ways in which parents regulate how and what forms of media their children use. As we demonstrate, the rou-

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tines that guide new media use and family life are closely intertwined with the organization of domestic space.

Spending Time Together

Almost all the families we spoke with explicitly expressed how much they valued spending time together as a family, although many teenagers noted that they still preferred to spend time with their friends, boyfriends, and girlfriends. In Heather Horst's study "Silicon Valley Families," parents who possessed disposable income noted that their family holiday represented a time to "unplug" from the mediated environment and busy-ness of everyday life (see Darrah, Freeman, and English-Lueck 2007). However, even in the families who idealized unplugging, scheduling time to watch television shows, movies, or videos together also emerged as a time to relax and take a break from the fast pace of life. Many families came to view using media as a way to facilitate communication and bonding.

Within some families, games can become the primary vehicle for parents and kids, and particularly fathers and sons, to connect (see chapter 5). Miguel, a ten-year-old who lives in the San Francisco Bay Area, described the relationship with his dad to Dan Perkel and Sarita Yardi (Digital Photo-Elicitation with Kids) that developed over playing games. Perkel and Yardi write in their fieldnotes:

> The only time Miguel talked about his father during the interview (his parents were separated) was in reference to the fact that he and his dad used to play PlayStation together. He recalled a time some years prior when his dad and older cousins all played the PlayStation together and teased him for how he used the controller. These "motivators" seemed to be a powerful, good memory for him.

Miguel explained this to Dan Perkel in their interview:

Dan: Where did you learn to play all of the games on your PlayStation?
Miguel: Well, my dad, we used to play like every night . . . every Friday night, Saturday night, Sunday night, whatever.
Dan: You used to play with your dad?
Miguel: Yeah, and he would invite my cousins to come over and stuff. We'd borrow games from my uncles.
Dan: Were they all older than you?
Miguel: Yeah.
Dan: And did they teach you how to play or did you figure it out for yourself?

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Miguel: They taught me how to play. Like, I used to . . . you know how when you play car games the car moves to the side and stuff? I would go like this with the control [moves arms wildly from side to side simulating holding a game controller as if he were racing]. So . . . they taught me how to keep still and look at the screen . . . hand-eye coordination.
Dan: Hand-eye coordination? Where did you here that term from?
Miguel: TV.
Both: [laugh]

Other families view gaming as a more persistent site of family togetherness that they move in and out of fluidly (see figure 4.2). Patricia Lange (YouTube and Video Bloggers) interviewed Akmalla, a twelve-year-old white girl in Los Angeles, who regularly plays World of Warcraft with her parents.

Patricia: So for weekends you're pretty much at your computer?
Akmalla: Yeah, weekends I'm at my computer in front of the TV screen with a couple sodas in front of me. But my mom and dad play World of Warcraft as well.
Patricia: Oh, do they?

Figure 4.2
Two sisters playing games together. Photo by Heather A. Horst, 2007.

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Akmalla: So we're usually just sitting in the same exact room on the same couch playing the same game going, "Oh, what are you doing?" "Oh, that's nice."

Patricia: And so do you play with, like, do you play by fighting your mom and your dad?

Akmalla: Yeah, we can play alongside each other. We can fight each other.

Patricia: Do you usually fight each other or do you band together and fight like others?

Akmalla: Well, we try to get in a group to do a quest or something and we usually end up yelling at each other because it's just a family thing. It's like we're walking and it's like, "Where are you?" "We're on the beach." "Which beach?" "This beach." "What? You ahhh!"

Rather than a forced family gathering (e.g., "family time"), the social atmosphere as well as her parents' own interest in and skills playing World of Warcraft enable the family to be together by participating in an activity that the entire family now shares as an interest.

Whereas some families spend time together hanging out playing games or watching television, other families gather around a variety of media to make websites and videos and edit digital photographs while together. In these spaces, kids are often given the opportunity to work alongside their parents (typically their father), and parents continue to support their kids' interests by buying new media for the next project. In middle-class homes, such as that of the Millers (see box 4.2), families gather around a variety of media in effort to learn about and gauge interest, practices that parents describe as taking an interest in or, in the words of many parents, "staying involved with" their kids.

In many of the studies in Los Angeles (e.g., Tripp and Herr-Stephenson, Los Angeles Middle Schools; Martínez, Pico Union Families), kids play an important role as the technology expert or broker in the family, translating websites and other forms of information for their parents. Twelve-year-old Michelle in Lisa Tripp and Becky Herr-Stephenson's study "Teaching and Learning with Multimedia" noted what she taught her mother, a single parent, from El Salvador:

> How to send emails, but sometimes, I check it first, because she does it wrong. And I taught her how to like . . . sometimes, she wants to upload pictures from my camera, and I show her, but she doesn't remember, so I have to do it myself. Mostly, I have to do the picture parts. I like doing the pictures.

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Box 4.2 The Miller Family: A Portrait of a Silicon Valley Family
Heather A. Horst

The Miller family lives in a leafy-green suburb of Silicon Valley in a four-bedroom home with a yard, dog, and basketball hoop at the bottom of the driveway. Like other middle-class professional parents in this study, Eli and Miriam Miller work in the technology industry and view themselves as the producers of software, code, and other systems that fuel the literal and figurative engine of the Silicon Valley economy. This close relationship with technology and the technology industry shapes the ways that families such as the Millers think about, use, and imagine the possibilities of technology and digital media.

In the construction of their family identity, the Millers decided to develop a family website that includes photographs, descriptions of family vacations (their "trip log"), as well as details about key family events, such as birthday parties, anniversaries, graduations, and bat and bar mitzvahs for their three children. The front page of the family website consists of the beaming family gathered in the water in wet suits around a dolphin after a recent visit to SeaWorld, Mom and Dad on the left of the dolphin and the three kids gathered in birth order on the right. Each family member created a funny quote typed in different-colored ink next to his or her picture—Dad typed "I think I might be touching something I shouldn't be" above his head; Iraina wrote, "I have salt watter in my mouth!!! Can we PLEESE gett this over with?"; and Jonathan commented, "I feel like a dork in this life jacket." Originally Eli Miller, who is a consultant with training and experience in engineering, created and maintained the site. Each of the kids has his or her own webpage, where Eli encourages them to express and explore their individual interests, which include information about the Darfur conflict, the youngest son's development of a podcasting site called Reality, and Iraina's recent trip to Israel.

Along with creating the family website, the Millers like to mess around with digital media. Iraina explained the use of new media when they are at home:

> My brother just got a digital video camera for his birthday; it was his big present this year. And I was like . . . like I was having fun with it. I always thought it's kind of cooler in theory because for me I don't want to actually take the time and sit down and edit a whole movie because for me that's just not worth it. I love to come up with the basic concepts and then give people advice if they do it. . . . But to actually sit down and hear someone say the same words over and over and over again while you're trying to get the right cut would drive me crazy. I heard my dad trying to do it for my grandparents when we filmed them for their anniversary and we were talking about their wedding. And it was kind of a little documentary thing. Only we forgot to bring a stand that day

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and my mom let us kids film them. And so my dad was trying to edit it and put pictures in where it was really bouncy and stuff. . . . It would just drive me crazy because you have to hear the person say the same words over and over and over again. . . . I don't think I would ever be able to do that.

Another thing is Daddy, for his birthday, just got kind of from himself, kind of from myself—he told everyone he wanted one. He got a professional radio mic [microphone], so we've been playing around with that. And he's been tampering with it [also for Jonathan's podcasting] and you can put the sound through headphones and you can sing around with your own voice. We were just playing with it before and he got a sound board and a mic so it's really cool.

As a family, Iraina and her family's collaboration strategy involves an egalitarian-expertise model in their incorporation of digital media. Each family member—Iraina and her brother, sister, mom, or dad—develops an interest and, in turn, gets involved in the use and/or process of using the digital media that he or she enjoys. Other family members, usually their dad, then tries to develop the technical expertise that will enable everyone to experiment and play with the media objects. Eli Miller, in particular, sees the maintenance of this expertise as a way to make sure the kids extend their knowledge and interests. However, despite the relatively egalitarian ethos of creating websites and videos, there are times when the development of expertise for the family turns competitive. Jonathan suggested this when discussing his new podcasting project:

Jonathan: I think with podcasting is one of the first things I kind of gotten my dad into. He doesn't actually subscribe to podcast, but he's thinking about maybe making his own podcast or thinking of ideas even. So it's . . .
Heather: You're the one who influenced?
Jonathan: I'm the one who's doing it. So it's kind of a cool thing.

When families work together, the leadership continues to come from parents, and particularly fathers, at the beginning and end of the collaboration process, sometimes regardless of experience or expertise. But when talking to kids about the role of their parents in this process, we find that the kids who engage in these familial collaborations discover that there are opportunities to subvert the normal power dynamics in the family by becoming particularly good at or interested in a technology or practice. In such families, the proliferation of new media and technologies in the household provides kids and parents with a space to explore the possibilities of these tools. Rather than learning skills for specific educational outcomes, upwardly mobile middle-class families such as the Millers view these tools as contributing to the wider development of their kids as individuals as well as the construction of a family identity.

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Similarly, Lisa Tripp talked to a mother named Rita about her motivation for spending time on the computer with her middle-school-aged son Andrew. Rita, a single parent in Los Angeles, explained:

Se me hace más para estar cerca de él, estar jugando con él, porque él es un niño muy serio. De repente es más separado. Es bien tierno, pero es de repente separado. Entonces, a él le gusta, de repente que yo esté con él. O él me dice: "mami: esto;" o "¿me ayudas a buscar palabras?" "¿Me ayudas?" Que le dejan muchas letras y le gusta buscar palabras. Y a mí como me encanta eso, y de rompecabezas también, es la forma de acercarme a él y estar más cerca con él, y que él me tenga confianza y ganas de estar siempre ahí. . . . Casi siempre me gusta estar más cerca de él, porque él tiene carácter de repente más explosivo. Y, a veces, la computadora nos sirve para quedar más en una zona de acuerdo.

(It is to be close to him, to be playing with him, because he is a very serious quiet kid. He can be very sweet, but tends to hang out by himself. Sometimes he grows distant. And then, suddenly, he'll want me to be with him but sometimes he likes me being with him. Or he might say, "Mommy, look at this," or, "Would you help me look for words?" "Would you help me?" Sometimes he gets an assigment to study several new letters at once. He gets many letters, and he likes looking for words. And since I like all that, and I also like puzzles, it is a way for me to get closer to him and be together. It is an opportunity for him to get to trust me, and continue enjoying being together for him to know that I am always there. . . . In general, I try to get I have always liked to be close to him because he has a strong temper. And sometimes the computer helps us get along better.) (Translation by Martin Lamarque and Lisa Tripp)

As Rita suggested, this give and take surrounding media is a way to become closer and feel connected; the computer mediates between the generations.

Whereas watching DVDs together on Sunday evening, helping out on the computer, or editing recordings of matches or family events structured many of our participants' use of media as a family, we also observed the importance of new media for families separated by vast geographic distances. For example, transnational families take advantage of the possibilities of new media, including cassette tapes, videocassettes, DVDs, and online media, to intensify their sense of connection and communication, such as producing videos of graduations, weddings, funerals, and other events to circulate among family members living abroad (Basch, Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc 1994; Horst 2006; Panagakos and Horst 2006; Wilding 2006). Among Silicon Valley families with transnational connections, one of the most popular ways of feeling like a family involved the exchange

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of emails, which were typically written by the mother in the family. Family websites and online photo albums, including photos shared through public sites such as Kodak Gallery and Shutterfly, emerged as important spaces for families to share information and pictures of one another. Families without regular or reliable Internet connections, such as in the studies of families in urban Los Angeles, viewed mobile phones and phone cards that catered to the Central American market as an important communication medium.

In addition to various forms of personal media sharing, online conversational media are increasingly used by transnational families to communicate. Transnational families with greater economic means also use new media such as Skype and webcams to enhance their sense of connection and communication.[10] Raj, a freshman who participated in Megan Finn and colleagues' "Freshquest" study, noted:

> It's pretty neat to be able to see my brother, my family twelve thousand miles away over the sea. . . . I just use Skype [Internet telephony software] for the voice capability and my webcam has some inbuilt software. . . . It's nice to be able to see each other and talk at the same time.

Voice and vision are often viewed as the ideal modes of communication because they mitigate the distances in time and space that typically plague transnational families.

Although the particular expressions of sharing media and knowledge between parents and kids vary with parents' own technical expertise, education, gender, time, and command of English, many parents expressed the desire to create spaces and times for hanging out, messing around, and, as we see in box 6.2, geeking out with their kids. Much like after-school programs that attempt to harness the passion for media in the name of learning, families may also try to leverage media in their everyday interactions. While it is promising that parents and kids can come together around interest-based practices (see chapters 5, 6, and 7), the gendered dimensions of spending time together with media—from a kids' perspective, mothers are often described by kids as "clueless" or "hopeless" outside the domain of communication technologies and fathers as being the ones who play or tinker with technology alongside their kids—suggest that new media continue to contribute to the production and reproduction of class and gender inequities in American society.

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Routines and Rhythms

Although parents value the potential of new media to bring families together, they also recognize that young people's use of new media causes disruptions to school and family life. Parents attempt to counteract the possibilities for distraction from activities that they believe are more important by restricting their kids from playing games or going on IM and social network sites before schoolwork, household chores, and other productive activities are completed. In addition, they set time limits on media use, such as thirty minutes or one hour per day. Peter, a thirteen-year-old participant in Matteo Bittanti's study "Game Play," explained, "My parents let me play between four and ten p.m. during the week, but the schedule is more flexible during weekends." Twelve-year-old Akmalla notes that her parents have set controls on World of Warcraft so that she will go to bed. As she described to Patricia Lange (YouTube and Video Bloggers), "like if you try to log on after a certain hour when your parents have said no, it'll say, 'You cannot log on because your parents are controlling it.'" Such external control features are used by parents who possess a more sophisticated knowledge of computers.

In some cases, parents prohibit their kids from using new media altogether during the school and workweek, saving weekends for unstructured, nonproductive play. Nineteen-year-old Torus, who is an Indian-Italian from the Los Angeles area, discussed with Patricia Lange (YouTube and Video Bloggers) how his parents structured his time for gaming:

> Before I kind of got to college and my senior year of high school, it was pretty much you play on weekends for just a couple of hours, but you have to study, all the rest of the time. So, even when we were very young . . . even when I was like eight or nine, my dad required us to study for two hours before we could play two hours of games, so it was those kind of . . . it was very clear to us that our parents thought of it as definitely a reward system, not a privilege, not a right, sort of thing. Like I could never play during the week and I hardly watched TV during the week, but on the weekend, I could usually play. Me and my brother would play.

Such routines changed seasonally. Many of the young people we interviewed noted that their parents closely monitored their use of new media during the school year, but summers and breaks remained relatively unstructured. Kids report playing games or checking social network sites up to five or six hours a day during summer breaks and other less structured times of the year. Many young people value this time because it enables

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them to play games that require more strategy and time investment, what is described in chapter 5 as recreational gaming.

The time allotted for media use also varies in relation to economic and other family circumstances, such as divorce or separation (Clark 2004). In Heather Horst's study "Silicon Valley Families," seventeen-year-old Archibald compared his media ecology at his mother's house with that at his father's house. Archibald spends most of his weekdays living with his mom and sister in a three-bedroom townhome on the periphery of a wealthy area of Silicon Valley; Archibald's mom works two jobs to support Archibald and his sister's attendance at a well-respected school. Archibald's father, a doctor who lives about two hours away, pays for train tickets for Archibald and his sister to visit him each weekend. They spend part of their summers with their father, at least when Archibald is not busy with soccer and volunteer activities in Latin America. Archibald described his media environment at his dad's house as well equipped with the latest computers, software, and other media, but his access is restricted since his dad always wants to spend time with Archibald and his sister during their limited time together. By contrast, at his mom's house, Archibald's media environment is more limited, but Archibald and his sister possess relatively unfettered access to the computer and other media because of his mother's busy work schedule. While the two media environments provide opportunities for accessing different media, the kids must also navigate two different series of time restrictions and rules.

One of the most striking aspects of the role of new media and technology in the home is that mothers bear most of the responsibility for upholding the morality of the family, especially in nuclear and extended families. In her study of American families, Hochschild (2003) notes that since the 1970s women carry out most of the care work within the family, a practice she terms "the second shift." Where the integration of new media and technology into the home is concerned, mothers tend to be the parent who maintains the temporal rhythms of the household, structuring what kids should be doing with their time, when kids should and should not be watching television, playing games, and going online. The exception to this rule is in single-parent families where the father is the primary caretaker and, to a lesser extent, in places such as Silicon Valley, where fathers are familiar and reasonably fond of these tools. For example, kids note that their fathers tend to be much more lenient about games, and in some cases,

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spend time with their sons and daughters messing around with new media. As Heather Horst discusses in box 4.2, some fathers become heavily invested in their kids' interests, such as music making and podcasting, expressing their support by buying accessories for these activities. Yet, much like the liberal fathers Hochschild describes in her study, fathers tend to restrict their control to the technological capacities of their home computer networks and tools, leaving mothers to be the enforcers of the family rules and regulations. Java, a twelve-year-old white middle-school student who lives in one of the wealthier areas of rural California, described to Christo Sims (Rural and Urban Youth) who is in charge of restricting new media: "My mom. Most of the time my mom comes up with the rules." By contrast, Java depicts her dad as a person who is into music and technology:

> Well, we're basically allowed . . . that's actually my dad's thing. The music and the computers are his thing. But if they don't know the artist, the person, the CD is, then they like to listen to a few songs or they'll ask people, different people, about it before they let us buy it. But normally the mix CDs are fine. . . . Well, 'cause my dad's more into the technology and stuff. And he . . . well, he works with computers obviously so he's more into that.

In some instances fathers join forces with their kids to actively subvert the mother's rules. Kim, a participant in Megan Finn and colleagues' "Freshquest" study, described how her father bought games for her behind her mother's back:

> My dad. And every time he went to Costco, he'd surprise me with just a little game without my mom knowing. My mom would get so pissed that he waste[d] money on that. "Ooh, a game." So I'd go ahead and play. After a while I think he hit upon a couple that really got me into gaming. Either it was Warcraft or something else. So he got me really into gaming and then I forced my parents to buy me a game afterwards. Like every day, I'd be, "Can we go to Computer City? Can we go [to] Electronic Boutique in the mall?"

The relatively playful nature of dads' engagements with media in domestic settings often results in negative characterizations of moms either as nagging enforcers or "hopeless," as a twenty-five-year-old AMV creator described his mother's technical skills to Mizuko Ito (Anime Fans). One Los Angeles mother named Anita (Tripp and Herr-Stephenson, Los Angeles Middle Schools) explained:

> *Pues . . . como le digo yo . . . casi no conozco la computadora; yo no sé usarla . . . casi yo no conozco. . . . O sea, entonces, por eso me preocupo; porque como yo a veces no sé lo que están haciendo.*

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(Like I said, I barely know the computer. I don't know how to use it. I don't know it. So, that is why I am worried, because sometimes I don't even know what they are doing.) (Translation by Lisa Tripp)

Although parents, particularly mothers, feel responsible for monitoring and regulating their kids' media engagements, they are often hampered in their efforts by their children's resistance to control, their own lack of technical expertise, and the subversion of their rules by other family members.

Growing Up

The rules and boundaries surrounding new media typically begin to change as kids grow up and develop judgment, "a process of critical evaluation that develops as one matures, with help from parents" (Alters 2004, 114). As Liz's mother explained to C. J. Pascoe (Living Digital):

She's going to be seventeen. She's going to graduate next year. I think she needs to be responsible. . . . Her dad would have it differently, but since I'm in control, and they're lucky that I am because I pretty much . . . I just look at them more as adults. They can figure things out. They're not doing anything against the law. They're home. She's a great student. You know?

While there is a sense of a loosening of control tied to allowing teenagers to exercise their own judgment, it is clear that parents expect their teenagers to know and, to some degree, internalize their parents' values. In the case of games, parents typically allow kids to engage with different gaming genres depending on how capable they think their children are in making these judgments. Somewhere between the ages of five and eight, kids (typically boys) tend to shift away from the edutainment genres of Leapster and other desktop computer games and upgrade to the Nintendo DS or PSP, a transition that tends to occur when the family plans a lengthier car or plane journey (see box 7.2). A few years later, in the kids' preteen and early teen years, middle-class parents "give in" (as kids describe it), or determine that their kids are mature enough to exercise judgment (see Alters 2004; Clarke 2004). As thirteen-year-old white teenager named Peter discussed with Matteo Bittanti (Game Play), "I was not allowed to play Grand Theft Auto when I was eleven because my parents felt that the content was inappropriate for me." As Peter suggested, violence and violent video games remain a particularly important preoccupation, especially first-person shooters (see box 5.2). Another gamer, twenty-two-year-old

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Earendil, reflected upon his parents' boundaries concerning violent genres of video games with Mizuko Ito (Anime Fans): "Ah! But when we all hit about thirteen years old, mom didn't worry about whether we could distinguish fantasy violence with real violence and allowed more computer use!"

As has been well established in the literature on youth and mobile phones (Baron 2008; Goggin 2006; Horst and Miller 2006; Ito, Okabe, and Matsuda 2005; Katz 2006; Ling 2004, 2008; Matsuda 2005; Miyaki 2005), giving kids possession of a mobile phone also involves a determination of kids' judgment. As a general rule, few elementary-school students owned mobile phones and there was a general sentiment among parents that they should avoid buying a mobile phone for children while they are in elementary school. An exception to this rule was single parents and working-class parents who buy their kids phones in the interest of safety, since they tend to navigate independence at an earlier age (Chin 2001; Lareau 2003). Families who could not afford the cost of after-school and other enrichment programs also felt compelled to give their children mobile phones, or access to a mobile phone, while they were away from home. As CrazyMonkey, a fourteen-year-old white middle school student who lives in a single-parent household in Silicon Valley (Horst, Silicon Valley Families), recounted, "I've had a cell phone since fourth grade because I had to start figuring out my rides home . . . to and from school . . . well, just from school to home almost on a daily basis, and so my mom wanted to be able to reach me easily." But rather than owning the swanky new mobile device desired by most teenagers, CrazyMonkey had a thick, black phone that she used as her mobile to arrange for rides and check in with her mom, who could not be physically present to take her from point to point. In such cases, the mobile phone becomes a safety gap when kids take the train or bus or walk to and from school, work, or home.

In middle-class families, the decision to give kids a mobile phone typically occurs during middle or high school as teens start to invest more time in their peer worlds. As Jennifer, a white seventeen-year-old in Lawrence, Kansas, recounts to danah boyd (Teen Sociality in Networked Publics), "'Cause junior high you start, you do more stuff, your parents let you do more stuff so they were like, well, we're not gonna know where you're at all the time, so you should have a phone just in case something happens, so their reasoning was." Kids in middle-class families tend to acquire

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mobile phones when they are deemed old enough or responsible enough to take on the responsibility of using or owning a phone. Parents also provide their kids with mobile phones when they obtain a driver's license or a car, in the interest of safety should they run out of gas or have car trouble. Jordan, a biracial Mexican-American fifteen-year-old in Austin, Texas, recalled (boyd, Teen Sociality in Networked Publics):

> Well, I got my first phone in seventh grade so looking back, it might have been too early, but it's important now. Like starting driving, like you go out a lot more, and I think my parents feel better that I have one. Also, so I can call them at any time and if I need them, we're connected.

In these cases, the mobile phone represents a symbol of freedom, one that is used by kids to justify movement outside the home and outside the purview of their parents; when they want to go somewhere, they remind their parents that they will call and check in to let them know they are safe and parents provide their kids with the phone and freedom as an opportunity to exercise judgment.

However, it is also clear that kids do fail to exercise judgment and, when major indiscretions occur, parents place temporary restrictions on computer access, gaming, and other new media as a form of punishment. A white sixteen-year-old named Liz and her mom discussed with C. J. Pascoe why she was grounded from instant messaging (IM) (Living Digital):

Liz's mom: Well, what happened with the IMing thing is that the kids have a tendency to type things in that they normally would not verbalize to anyone. And it can get pretty vulgar and disrespectful within themselves. And it got to that point, of arguments and things happening in that aspect. So we took it away because we saw the vulgarity coming out and didn't like it. It shouldn't happen. We took it away. And then she lost interest, obviously.

Liz: No, I got it back. And then I was like, okay, I have to have it because I haven't had it in a long time. But then I started losing interest.

For Liz and her mother, being grounded was recognition of Liz's lack of judgment, her failure to meet the behavior expectations that her mother had for someone Liz's age. As Liz's mother noted, the secondary effect of being grounded helped Liz lose interest in instant messaging, a process that Liz's mother attributes to growing up. In the following section, we focus more explicitly on the negotiation of rules between kids and parents.

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Making, Breaking, and Bending the Rules

As we have outlined, parents use space and time to help guide their kids' use of new media at home. Throughout many of our interviews, parents readily articulated the various rules they attempted to establish as well as how these rules reflected their beliefs about new media. Kids, by contrast, often claimed to forget rules, or stated that their parents made rules but that they were either open to negotiation or not regularly enforced. Hood et al. (2004) found in their Colorado-based study that the family discourse surrounding new media reflected the parents' *intentions* rather than actual practices. Rather than defining this discourse as failure or irony, Alters (2004) argues that rules are "part of the family's project of building and maintaining a family identity" (128) and, for this reason, parents become invested in the rules and the importance of having rules, although they acknowledge that breaking and bending the rules regularly occurs. These "media transgressions," or points at which the normal, discursive rules are bent, were pervasive among all families who struggled to uphold their own rules on a daily basis (Alters and Clark 2004a; Clark 2004). In this section, we focus on young people's engagements with mobile phones and online spaces, with particular attention to the ways in which parents and kids make, break, and bend the rules.

Plans, Minutes, and Cards

The decision to give a son or daughter a mobile phone is often motivated by the desire to maintain a sense of control over kids' movements and activities. While parents value the leash function of mobile phones, they also struggle with the day-to-day management of their kids' phone use. Typically, parents of younger kids attempt to restrict the number and types of people entered into their kids' phones. Indeed, companies such as LG, which makes the Migo, and Firefly Communications, which sells the Firefly mobile phone, have attempted to capitalize on parents' desires in their design and marketing of a phone that restricts calls to a small number of people or places (in these phones "Home" is marked as the most important number in the phones). Other parents try to control the extent to which their kids make calls on the mobile phone by providing the phone on a need-to-use basis, such as buying a "kids' phone" to be shared among siblings. This often results in conflicts, particularly if one sibling decides to assume ownership

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of the phone. A seventeen-year-old Mexican-American named Federico recounted the trials of sharing a phone with his sister to Dan Perkel (MySpace Profile Production): "Because my parents can't afford to pay too much money, so we have to share a phone most of the time. So she's pretty hoggy about the phone, so if I get a text message or a phone call she'll be like . . . oh, I don't know that person. Delete." Depending on the economic situation in the family, the shared-phone strategy works for only a year or two before the parents give in and buy each child his or her own phone.

By far the most effective form of parental control emerges through the selection of mobile phone plans. In many cases, parents regulate their kids' use of the phone by limiting the number of calls they can make. Nini, a thirteen-year-old Latina in Christo Sims's study of teenagers in Brooklyn, New York (Rural and Urban Youth), reflected upon her use of the mobile phone:

> To call my mother, to call my father, or other important people like my grandmother to tell her to come pick me up if I need to come . . . leave out of school early, or whatever. Then I had a phone . . . like my father . . . I lost the one when I was seven, so my father didn't let me get one until I was ten, and then he gave me another one that he uses it, so I used it to call my mother. Like I only had certain friends' number, but my father says to not use my minutes, 'cause I have prepay, so he said not to use it, just put the number in if anything . . . so I always had their number in my phone. Then I lost that one, and then my father gave me one last year. I call . . . I put all my family numbers in, and then he let me put certain friends in that I really hang out with, and I could call them, but he says to make it fast so then all my minutes don't run out, and then I just got a new one because the old one . . . it got messed up, like the memory was all blurry, or whatever, so he bought me a new one.

As Nini suggests, her father imagined that the preprogrammed and prepaid phone card minutes would encourage Nini to preserve the minutes, facilitating her ability to use the phone for what he perceived to be essential calls to family. As with many other parents, over time Nini's father began to make exceptions to the rule, allowing certain friends' names and numbers to be entered into the phone.

Parents' attempts to shape kids' phone usage therefore involves a range of strategies, such as buying basic phones that come with a family plan and avoiding upgrading features, such as multimedia messaging service (MMS) or short messaging service (SMS). Middle-class families take advantage of their reliable credit history and the ease of paying bills by

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enrolling in family plans for their cell phones, which allow two or more phone subscribers to share a finite pool of minutes that are are billed to a single person or address. Family plans usually include phones for three to five family members and offer cheaper rates for calls within the networks and, in the United States, typically require a two-year commitment with companies such as AT&T, Verizon, Sprint, T-Mobile, and others. Many kids complained about their parents' selection of phones or plans without the latest or desired features. However, within the family plan model, parents effectively acknowledge that at least some amount of time will be used talking to friends. While there are other negatives for kids, such as parents' having access to the times, dates, and numbers that kids call, family plans make it easier and cheaper to keep in touch with family (and others on the same network) and it also guarantees that their kids will be able to call should they find themselves in difficulty.

One interesting implication of the different plans is that kids on family plans tend to have less awareness of how these plans work, or what a call or text message costs, unless their parents make them pay for certain features, such as SMS. In fact, many teens do not generally know what their parents pay each month or what the different mobile-phone plans offer until they "go over." Gabbie, a seventeen-year-old Chinese girl living in a middle-class suburb in the San Francisco Bay Area, described her experience of "going over" to C. J. Pascoe (Living Digital):

Gabbie: I have, actually. On text messages. Because we don't have that plan. And then my mom is like, "Why are we over two dollars this month?" And I was like, "Because I was text messaging."
C.J.: But only like two dollars. I've heard stories of like eight hundred or nine hundred dollars.
Gabbie: I think I've gone over fifty dollars once. And then that didn't go over very well.
C.J.: Did they make you pay for it?
Gabbie: No. They just got mad for a couple of days. After that they were fine [breathy giggle].

By contrast, many of the kids who lived in urban New York were aware of and adept with the various plans and possibilities of mobile phones. Dana, a Latina fourteen-year-old in Brooklyn, discussed with Christo Sims (Rural and Urban Youth) the way she tries to balance her mother's selection of a mobile-phone plan with her relationship with her boyfriend.

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Dana: Yeah, but you . . . like when I first . . . uh-huh, when I started talkin' to 'im, when I started with my man, I was like, "You got Sprint, right?" [laughter] 'Cause I got worried, because then I'm the one that gets in trouble because I don't work, you know, and I gotta be careful with my mom, and text messages . . . they be like fifteen cents per message, and when my mom finds out that the bill is more, I'll be like, "I don't know, it's probably because my phone is modern," and that's my lie because my man'll be like, "Well, I miss ya," and I'm like, "Yo, stop text messaging me, 'cause they charge," and then he'll keep on, but . . .

Christo: So you don't have a text-messaging plan?

Dana: Nah.

Christo: Who . . . your boyfriend will text message you?

Dana: Yeah, all the time, and my mom will . . . he always sends me pictures, too, and my mom she'll be killin' me. Like she don't know it yet, but I told her that, "Oh," I lied, "Oh, I was talkin' to my friend from Georgia, and she sent me a text message and I had to write back to her." "All right, don't do it again," so I haven't been using text messages.

This situation differs dramatically from that of low-income and working-class kids such as Elena, a sixteen-year-old of Armenian descent, who is not on her parent's family plan and therefore must maintain a continuous cycle of credit on her own. Elena clarified her situation to C. J. Pascoe (Living Digital):

> We are all independent kind of thing because we don't have jobs kind of thing. My sister has a job. And we won't be able to afford if there's a plan kind of thing. But my mom and my dad have a plan. But all the kids, like me, my sister, and my brother, have pay-as-you-go cell phones.

When she ran out of money, her phone number could not be renewed and she lost the number. After losing her phone, which in many low-income families can be akin to losing one's identity (see Horst and Miller 2006), Elena started negotiating with her brother to buy his old mobile phone. In contrast to kids in middle-class families, working-class and low-income kids such as Elena are often acutely aware of the cost of calls (Chin 2001).

Alongside controlling and managing costs, owning a phone gives kids and parents more freedom to control how and when they use their phones and their private communication. One mother named Geena in Silicon Valley mentioned that she bought a keyboard-enabled phone on which

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she has learned to "type." Now that she uses SMS to communicate with her son, she thinks it is easier to keep abreast of her son's activities and movements throughout the day when she just wants to know where he is and if he is all right. She believes that the increase in communication actually improved their relationship. Geena also discovered that texting over SMS makes it easier to parent her son. As she described it, texting "takes the emotion out of" the moments when she is checking on her son's whereabouts or telling him to come home when he is out too late or somewhere she doesn't think he should be (Horst, Silicon Valley Families). By contrast, voice conversations typically lead to arguments because she can "hear" the tension in her son's voice or potentially distracting sounds on the other end of the phone. Indeed, many teens acknowledged that if their parents called when they were out late, they would answer but "I make excuses. I'm like, 'I'm at my friend Cathy's house and they really like Cathy' so they go with that [giggle]" (boyd, Teen Sociality in Networked Publics). Hearing the excuse is something Geena thinks she can avoid, or at least circumvent, via texting.

Going Online: Bandwidth, Passwords, and Privacy

Parents, guardians, and other significant adults in kids' lives spend a great deal of time managing their kids' opportunities to go online at home. At the lowest income levels, such as in urban Los Angeles, the lack of access to computers and online spaces at home, as well as the public nature of domestic life, often mitigated the issues of privacy that were available to people in better economic circumstances. Many low-income families we interviewed did not have a working computer or Internet connection in the home. In cases where computers and the basic infrastructure were present, connection speed remained a central issue. For example, Lou, a sixteen-year-old white student who lives with his grandfather and aunt in a suburb on the fringe of an upper-middle-class area in the San Francisco Bay Area, felt frustrated by his family, who refused to upgrade their dial-up connection. Lou described his Internet connection as "not even fifty-six; it's thirty-two on a good day," and he perceives his inability to obtain a quality connection at home as a severe restriction on his social life (Pascoe, Living Digital).

While in Lou's case the slow connection speed reflects apathy or lack of appreciation for the importance of going online for many teens, in other

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families the lack of high-quality infrastructure is intentional. Mic, a fifteen-year-old of Egyptian descent in Los Angeles, noted that his parents will not allow him to have the Internet at home: "I don't really have access to the Internet at home because my dad always hears bad things happening on MySpace and he doesn't think I'm mature enough to get the Internet at this point" (boyd, Teen Sociality in Networked Publics). The media access of one of Lisa Tripp's interviewees is restricted for similar reasons; she reported that her mother will allow her online only if she is in the same room, and that her mother often hides or takes the ethernet cable and modem with her when she leaves the house (Tripp and Herr-Stephenson, Los Angeles Middle Schools). In their "Teaching and Learning with Multimedia" study, parents consistently expressed concern about child predators' using sites such as MySpace to find kids.

Whereas concerns over child predators preoccupied some parents, others struggled with the Internet's ability to distract kids from the main work of childhood: education. Juan, a working-class Mexican immigrant supporting his two daughters as a single parent, described this dilemma:

No, no. Hay que tener Internet pero quitar esos programas. Porque muchos los quitaron, ¿verdad? Porque si no ya no se van a dedicar al estudio sino a lo demás.

(No, no. It is okay to have Internet, but you have to remove those programs [pornography and MySpace]. Many parents have removed them, right? Otherwise kids won't study, and are only going to be doing that.) (Translation by Lisa Tripp)

As Juan suggested, many parents feel compelled to be very strict about websites that are oriented to entertainment or communication with friends. Juan, and other parents like him, feels it is important to send a clear message to his kids about the value of the computer for education. Anita, a Mexican immigrant in a working-class family in Los Angeles, talked to Lisa Tripp about how she routinely argues with her thirteen-year-old daughter Nina about going online (Tripp and Herr-Stephenson, Los Angeles Middle Schools 2006).

Anita: *[Mi hija] se pone en la computadora y le digo que la computadora es para hacer tarea, no es para estar buscando cosas en la computadora. Y a veces [mis hijas] se me enojan por eso. Y les digo: "No, la computadora yo se las tengo para que hagan tarea." A veces les pregunto: "¿tienen tarea?" O: "estás haciendo tarea." Pero a veces tengo que estar lista a ver qué es lo que están haciendo. Se meten a la Internet y tantas cosas que sale salen ahí. Y se ponen a mirar*

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sus amigas y eso. . . . Entonces, es lo que no le gusta a ella que yo le diga: "¿sabes qué? La computadora no es para que andes buscando; es para lo de la escuela."

([My daughter] sits in front of the computer and I tell her that the computer is for doing homework, not for looking around. And sometimes [my daughters] get mad at me because of that. And then I say, "I got this computer so you could do your homework." Sometimes I ask, "Do you have homework?" Or, "Are you actually doing your homework." ?" I have to keep a close eye on them to see what is going on. They get on the Internet, and with so many things there. They look for their girlfriends and all. . . . They don't like me saying, "You know what? The computer is not for you to be looking around. It is for schoolwork.")

Lisa: *¿Qué es lo que más le preocupa a usted acerca de la Internet y sus hijas?*

(What is your main concern with the Internet and your daughters?)

Anita: *Lo que me preocupa . . . ya ve . . . es que salen muchas cosas ahí que se meten con niños, y a veces platican con ellos, y a veces no saben ni qué gente es. Es lo que me preocupa, porque digo "no." Y a ver qué es lo que están mirando ellos y uno tiene que estar siempre listo con ellos. A veces estoy que les quiero quitar la Internet, pero a veces me dice él: "por su tarea está bien. Porque después van a andar que 'me voy a hacer tarea,' 'que no tengo computadora,' 'que no tengo esto.'" Pero es por lo que más peleo ahorita con ellos.*

(My main concern is . . . you see . . . you hear all the time that people try to reach kids and talk to them. Sometimes [kids] don't even know who they are talking to. That is my concern. That is why I say, "No." I need to. And I keep an eye on what they are looking at. One always has to stay alert. I always need to be attentive. Sometimes I feel like canceling the Internet, but my husband says, "It is good to keep it because of their homework. You don't want them saying 'I need to go somewhere else to do my homework,' or 'I don't have a computer,' or 'I don't have this.'" But this is mostly what I fight about with them these days.) (Translation by Martin Lamarque and Lisa Tripp)

Given the economic burdens that they take on to obtain a computer in the first place, many parents in low-income households and in working-class homes believe that the primary purpose of a computer and the Internet should be educational pursuits, such as homework.

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While parents may be in control of basic access, once young people go online kids assume much of the responsibility for structuring their online worlds. In much the same way that teenagers now hang out with their friends at the local Starbucks, the parking lot at In-N-Out (a popular fast-food restaurant in California), and the mall, kids define social network sites, online journals, and other online spaces as friend and peer spaces; adult participation in these spaces is problematic or "creepy." With the ability to control who can and cannot view one's profile or page with passwords, nicknames, and other tools, kids use new media to facilitate and reinforce the segmentation of their peer-driven worlds and their familial worlds (see chapters 2 and 3). Fourteen-year-old Leigh, a white teenager living in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, said, "My mom found my Xanga and she would check it every single day. I'm like, 'Uh.' I didn't like that 'cause it's invasion of privacy; I don't like people invading my privacy, so." When asked why Leigh does not want her mom to read her Xanga, Leigh responded, "I don't know, 'cause I just put stuff on there that maybe I don't want her to know" (boyd, Teen Sociality in Networked Publics).

The expressions of tensions surrounding going online varied across socioeconomic class, geographic location, and even religious background. As Christo Sims discusses in box 4.3, many rural kids who are home-schooled connect to their friends in front of their parents using sites such as Bebo. Parents in middle- and upper-middle-class families varied from parents who completely restricted their kids from going on MySpace because of the fear of, if not panic over, child predators to those who saw new media as a space to mess around and learn. Many of the parents in the latter category religiously followed the advice of parenting organizations to navigate the changing media ecology. These parents typically monitored and regulated their kids through the placement of computers and laptops in the home. Although there are a range of sites, these organizations tend to offer rules and guidelines (e.g., no more than one hour of television per day) for families to adopt. Other parents tried to educate their kids about the dangers of digital personhood. For instance, by the time many of the kids in Silicon Valley were in high school, their college applications loomed large (Horst, Silicon Valley Families). In the competitive academic environment that constitutes this particular region, many parents, teachers, and guidance counselors had successfully convinced

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students that a “bad” profile on MySpace or another site represented a potential threat to their record, and that this could be the difference between Stanford, Berkeley, or one of the private Claremont colleges and a less prestigious California State University school. Still other parents emphasized independence, discipline, and the need for instilling judgment. Although their particular practices differed, many of the Silicon Valley parents were quite comfortable with the role of technology in their own lives and, therefore, did not fear it in the same way as those who did not or could not use computers, mobile phones, and other new media. By contrast, many of the parents who were strict or overtly tried to ban their kids from going online often acknowledged that their own lack of familiarity with computers contributed to their anxieties.

Box 4.3 The Milvert Family: A Portrait of Rural California

Christo Sims

At first glance, Lynn Milvert’s use of digital media seems to resemble the image of the wired white fifteen-year-old so often portrayed in popular culture. She spends hours each day in her music-filled bedroom, sitting in front of a computer and effortlessly switching between a social network site, multiple instant messaging applications, and even a little homework. At this level of detail her routine seems quite similar to those enacted by teenagers featured in Heather Horst’s study “Coming of Age in Silicon Valley,” C. J. Pascoe’s study of suburban northern California teenagers (Living Digital), and many of danah boyd’s teenage participants from various urban and suburban contexts (Teen Sociality in Networked Publics). What makes Lynn’s case unique, however, is that she lives in a remote region of the upper foothills of California’s Sierra Nevada range. And while on its surface her use of technology looks similar to that of many other youth, both the local geography and her family’s unique relations to the local community—its schools, its churches, and its politics—shape the particularities of her practices with new media in quite distinct ways.

Lynn lives at the end of a meandering driveway, which branches from a single-lane private road, which, in turn, forks from a quiet two-lane county road. Homes are few and far between in this high region of the Sierra Nevada foothills. Lynn lives in a single-story three-bedroom house with her father, mother, and seventeen-year-old brother, Nate. Lynn’s father grew up a quick walk down the road from where they live now. He built their current house on a part of what used to be a family ranch. Lynn’s grandma, aunt, uncle, and cousins all live within walking distance. This geographic closeness affords frequent family-centered social time for Lynn. At least once a week Lynn’s

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family tries to have meals with members of the extended family. Almost daily Lynn walks down to her grandmother's house to watch satellite TV. During the summer, she babysits her infant cousin between roughly 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. four days a week.

While most local kids attend the regional public schools, Lynn has been homeschooled since sixth grade, largely with a group of other kids from her church. Lynn's particular form of homeschooling is not conducted alone, with a parent as the tutor, but instead with a group of roughly twenty kids who share a tutor and even attend class together for three hours three times a week. Lynn's class consists of both boys and girls, ranging in age from twelve to twenty-two. She considers everyone to be friends with everyone else's friends and few people have joined or left the group since Lynn was a young child. As Lynn put it, "Most of us have known each other all our lives."

Her family's participation in the local First Baptist church reinforces the group's durable composition. While the homeschool program is administered by a separate organization, many kids in her school program also belong to the church. The church, in turn, sponsors opportunities beyond school for the homeschooled youth to get together in social settings. Every Friday the church youth group organizes a social event. Out-of-town trips are planned for roughly one weekend a month. And every Sunday afternoon the youth group holds its own session after the regular service.

At the time I visited her, Lynn's engagement with new media usually took place at home, in her room, with the door open. The computer that she and Nate share—her mom, who works from home, has her own laptop—sits on a desk with its back pressed against the wall directly across from where the bedroom door opens to the hall (see figure 4.3). Lynn's parents moved it from Nate's room after he got in trouble. Most of Lynn's practices with digital media align with her participation in, and the relations between, family, school, and church. As with many teenagers, her favorite digital technology is a social network site. But unlike most teenagers who attend the regional high school "down the hill," she chose Bebo instead of MySpace or Facebook. She perceives it as safer. And unlike some teenagers who participated in various studies for the Digital Youth Project, she doesn't use social network sites and instant messaging to build new relationships at school or to maintain weak ties across expansive networks. Instead, she uses them to participate in her existing peer group. Her friends on Bebo match her densely interconnected friends from homeschool and church almost exactly.

Contrasting with the dense composition of Lynn's social network is the geographical dispersion of homes in her neighborhood. Being an "up-the-hill" family means much greater distance between homes; in most cases, it is not possible to walk or bike to the house of a friend. This is particularly true in the snowy winters. Without a driver's license, Lynn's collocated social activity with peers either requires routine, formalized group activities—such

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Figure 4.3
Lynn's bedroom with the computer she shares with her brother. Photo by Christo Sims, 2006.

as school sessions, sports practice, work, and church—or convincing a parent, or other older person, to transport them to a common location. In both scenarios, spontaneous collocated peer gatherings are difficult to achieve.

These constraints on her mobility lead Lynn to spend a good deal of time at home. As a social space largely defined by her parents, home has been a place for family, schoolwork, and, occasionally, planned socializing with friends. On the Internet, Lynn finds ways to redefine the social possibilities of time spent in the home, beyond family, beyond working alone, beyond planned sociability, and toward unplanned peer-based socializing. Yet this technological reach out of the home is not directed toward the distant, unfamiliar, and global world of the Internet; it is not even directed toward most of the other teenagers who pepper the local rural landscape. Rather, it hones toward the small, and well-established, group of friends from her homeschool and church. This dense group places each individual member in a uniquely central position, a position that contrasts with the geographic dispersion of their homes and neighborhoods, a position in relief with the group's marginal relation to the teenagers who attend the public high school down the hill. It is an inversion of geographic and social isolation, a counterpoint to their perception of living "in the middle of nowhere."

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As with locked diaries and closed doors, some parents admitted they simply could not resist the temptation to see for themselves what sites such as MySpace and Facebook are all about by sneaking around online behind their kids' backs. For example, Amy, a biracial (black and white) sixteen-year old in Seattle, described to danah boyd her mom's efforts to see what was on her MySpace account (Teen Sociality in Networked Publics): "My mom made [a MySpace], just so she could look at my page, so I made it private, and I won't let her on there." James, a biracial (white and Native American) seventeen-year-old in Seattle, noted:

> [Mine's private] just because of the fact that my dad made a MySpace, and there's things on there that I probably don't want my parents to see, so I set mine as private, so someone has to request me as a Friend before they can actually look at my profile. (boyd, Teen Sociality in Networked Publics)

Other parents waited until problems emerged. Gameboy, a white sixteen-year-old who participated in Heather Horst's study "Silicon Valley Families," was caught smoking pot. After Gameboy's parents found out, his dad sat down with Gameboy and went through his MySpace page to identify "the stoners," which his father claimed to identify through the pictures and images posted on Gameboy's friends' profiles, their music preferences (e.g., heavy metal), and comments on their profiles about drugs and drinking. After examining their MySpace profiles, his dad then proceeded to closely monitor Gameboy to see if he "got high" after he returned home from hanging out with the stoners.

Many kids reference similar "horror stories" of parents' breaking into their sites, pages, and profiles, acts that teenagers view as invasive and embarrassing. In some cases, parents' transgressions into their kids' media worlds are humiliating. For example, fifteen-year-old Traviesa, a Hispanic girl in Santa Monica, California, described her own horror story to danah boyd (Teen Sociality in Networked Publics):

> My mom, she found out [my password] one time. I was like, "Oh, shit." And then she wrote, "Oh, I'm sorry to everybody that's on here but my daughter is fourteen years old," or she didn't even know my age, I was fifteen at the time; she was like I'm fourteen. She was like, "Oh, yeah, she's fourteen years old and she doesn't need to be talking to all you old people and this and that, and she's not going to have MySpace anymore so bye." And then she wrote that on the About Me section and I read it. I was, "what is this? Oh my God, how retarded." I think it's funny, though. Parents are stupid. I don't know, most of the time they do it for our well-being, but sometimes they just don't know what they're doing. It's really sad.

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As Traviesa acknowledged, most of these parental acts are motivated by the protection of kids' "well-being" rather than harassment for the sake of harassment. However, kids view these acts as a violation of trust, much like parents' listening in on their conversations or coming into their bedrooms without knocking. They also see these online invasions as ill informed and lacking in basic social propriety. A small number of teens do share with one another what they do when they go online, such as seventeen-year-old Anindita, who told danah boyd that "[My mom] goes on [my MySpace] all the time. I even show it to her. She knows my password. I really don't care 'cause I'm not hiding anything" (Teen Sociality in Networked Publics). Yet, most families admitted that the issues of privacy and control were contentious. Teens noted that they tried not to do anything wrong, but they wanted to maintain their privacy and autonomy and felt that they possessed the skills to judge their own actions and behavior when using new media.

Conclusion

Throughout this project, we carried out research in a range of homes and communities across urban, suburban, and rural locations, revealing the ways in which the institution of the family remains a powerfully determining force in young people's new media practices. Resisting the urge to classify or evaluate families in terms of language such as "divides" and "gaps," we chronicle parental attitudes toward new media and technology as well as a broader set of beliefs about how learning and education continue to shape what becomes possible for youth of different backgrounds. The ways in which young people and their families take up new media in their everyday lives cannot be viewed as a simplistic equation between access or divisions such as "rich kids" and "poor kids." Rather, the need to balance independence and dependence, parents' values and beliefs, and parenting style shapes participation. For example, many parents worried about the allure of social network sites in their daughters' lives or the addictive power of video games for boys, but the tactics to control participation in these activities varied. While all families used time—restricting going online until kids completed their homework and giving kids more time to play on the weekend—parents who were economically well off tried to regulate their kids' participation by creating rooms specifically for

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playing games, homework, and socializing with their friends. By contrast, many of the less well off families in urban Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area took away the power cord, deleted programs, and kept low-speed access. However, these strategies were not just a matter of economic constraints; rather, beliefs about the correlation between computer ownership and education, and parents' anxieties about their own lack of experience with media, influenced their decisions and the type of regulation parents employed. Moreover, the extent to which parents were willing to give their kids autonomy over their day-to-day media usage also revolved around the assessment of whether parents thought their kids could or, in some cases, needed to exercise judgment, as was the case with many parents who gave their kids mobile phones. Parents noted that this decision involved a consideration of their children's gender, age, as well as maturity. For example, after Heather Horst's interview with Trudy, described in this chapter's introduction, Trudy's mother explained that she needed to create different rules for Trudy and her elder brother. Because she thought Trudy was more trusting than her brother, she believed Trudy was more vulnerable to answering messages from unknown solicitors. By contrast, Trudy's parents closely monitored the completion of their son's homework and even considered placing their son in counseling for what they felt was a video game addiction when his grades dropped. For Trudy's parents and others, the ever evolving media ecology compounds the challenges of parenting kids and teenagers.

This chapter examined how families deal with media and the internal dynamics that often structure the extent to which the use of new media is encouraged, restricted, and regulated. We began with a discussion of the role parents see themselves playing in their children's (and in some cases grandchildren's) use of media, and of the relative importance of rules in shaping family life as new media take on an increasing presence in the domestic ecology. In the first section, "Crafting Media Spaces at Home," we focused on the creation of public media spaces such as recreation rooms and of private media spaces such as the bedroom. The second section examined how parents make, take, and spend time with media by focusing on the ways in which families structure time for media use during the school year and summer as well as during the weekdays and weekends. We also explored instances of families' spending time together in and around new media, a practice not commonly discussed in much of the literature

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on the generation gap. This sense of capturing family time is closely related to the ever present sense that kids are growing up, and that there is only a limited amount of time to spend with family and to impart family values. Whereas the first two sections analyzed the spatial and temporal dimensions of new media in family life, the third section looked at the microdynamics of rule making and rule negotiation in families in relation to the debates and practices of using mobile phones and going online.

Unlike the other chapters in this book—which discuss peer-based sociability, communication, and expression—this chapter analyzes the influence of families in shaping new media practices. We aimed to provide an important piece of the overall contextual ecology of youth new media practices; other components of this new media ecology, such as the role of commercial industries, schools, and community institutions, are touched on in relation to specific practices of interest. With our attention to the role of new media in young people's everyday lives, we believed that families, and the domestic context generally, required an extended treatment because of the powerfully determining role that parents and siblings play in shaping conditions of access. In addition, families constitute one of the primary social contexts for ongoing informal engagements with new media. In many instances in our studies, new media represented a site of conflict between parents and children, and between siblings, over issues of access and control, and much of the social negotiation around new media centered on setting boundaries and rules of various kinds. In these settings, parents are often seen as clueless or incompetent in dealing with the norms and literacies of online peer culture. However, we also chronicled many instances of parents and kids coming together around new media, even for media production. These acts became moments for cross-generational communication as well as an expression of family identity. These antagonistic and cooperative forms of parent-child dynamics appear throughout this book as structuring contexts in our descriptions of peer-based practices.

Notes

1. While acknowledging the voluminous literature on media effects (Bryant and Zilman 2002; Gunter and McAleer 1997; Singer and Singer 2001; Strasburger and Wilson 2002), our work attends to the struggles around kids' participation with new media and, in this chapter, parents' use and regulation of new media.

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2. Although it is outside the scope of our work here to define "American families" or the relationship between families and the broader category of households (see Netting, Wilk, and Arnould 1984), we recognize that "family" is a mutable category that changes in relation to the social, historical, and cultural contexts (Alters 2004; Coontz 1992). The families in our study vary from the nuclear family and divorced and single-parent households to blended, extended, and transnational families.

3. Alters draws upon Mintz and Kellogg's (1988) study of parenting in American family life.

4. In the context of Europe, Sonia Livingstone (2002) argues that household income and education remain the key factors for the strategies parents take to control and manage new media in their kids' lives. For example, she argues that for individuals with high income and low levels of education, cable and satellite television, game machines, and camcorders are viewed as important. By contrast, the Internet and books are valued in homes with both high education and high income levels.

5. Recent survey work in the United States indicates that some of these dynamics may be shifting. While in the past, families with high education tended to consume less-popular media, comparisons between 1999 and 2004 indicate a changing trend. Today families with college degrees and those with less than high-school education are high media consumers and families in the middle socioeconomic brackets consume the least amount of media. Roberts and Foehr (2008) take this as evidence that economic barriers to media are no longer as salient as they once were, and that educated parents are less critical of media than in the past.

6. Silverstone and Hirsch (1992) also argue that media serve dual functions in the home, what they term "double articulation," in that media are both physical objects as well as objects that convey meaning. Lally (2002) and others have criticized Silverstone and Hirsch for attributing too much credence to the uniqueness of new media and technologies.

7. Reflecting their textual and discursive approach, Alters and Clark (2004b) use the term "public scripts" to account for the ways in which families describe how they relate to media.

8. While in the past, community and neighborhoods functioned as the locus of interaction (see Castells 1996; Lievrouw and Livingstone 2002; Low 2003, 2008; Miller 2001; Miller and Slater 2000; Morley 2000), today the home represents the primary space for family and community life and for engagement with media and public culture. We found that the home was the dominant context for youth sociability and for new media practice in almost all the regions where we were carrying out research. The one exception was the case study in Brooklyn, New York, in Christo Sims's "Rural and Urban Youth" study, in which he found that teenagers spend a great deal of time outside and on the street hanging out with friends and

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traveling on the subway system. We also found this to be the case among Dilan Mahendran's Hip-Hop Music Production study participants, who took advantage of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system to move from their residential locations in the hinterlands of the San Francisco Bay Area and into the city. We did not see this mobility among our Los Angeles study participants (see Martínez's study Pico Union Families), a fact we attribute, in part, to the lack of viable public transportation in the city.

9. In other parts of the United States, basements are often converted into recreation and media rooms. Given the potential for earthquakes, basements are not common in California.

10. As Benitez (2006) has argued for Salvadoran immigrants in Washington, DC, the ability to hear and see other family members during annual teleconferencing sessions helps to counter the distance and the difficulties of travel in the wake of difficult economic circumstances and undocumented status.

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