

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Parental Mediation Theory for the Digital Age

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This article describes the theory of parental mediation, which has evolved to consider how parents utilize interpersonal communication to mitigate the negative effects that they believe communication media have on their children. I discuss the strengths and weaknesses of this theory as employed in the sociopsychologically rooted media effects literature as well as sociocultural ethnographic research on family media uses. To account for the emotional work that digital media have introduced into contemporary family life, I review interpersonal communication scholarship based on sociologist A. R. Hochschild's (1977, 1989) work on emotions, and suggest L. Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory as a means of rethinking the role of children's agency in the interactions between parents and children that new media affords. The article concludes by suggesting that in addition to the strategies of active, restrictive, and co-viewing as parental mediation strategies, future research needs to consider the emergent strategy of participatory learning that involves parents and children interacting together with and through digital media.

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Since the earliest days of communication research, scholars have been interested in parental efforts to mitigate negative media effects on children (see, e.g., Barcus, 1969; Brown & Linne, 1976; Hochmuth, 1947; Mcleod, Fitzpatrick, Glynn, & Fallis, 1982; Schramm, Lyle, & Parker, 1961). Researchers recommended limiting television viewing time (Maccoby, 1954), cautioned that television informs children's desires for commercial products (Burr & Burr, 1976; Caron & Ward, 1974), and noted that parental role modeling was an important aspect of a child's socialization into media use (Banks & Gupta, 1980; Webster, Pearson, & Webster, 1986). Scholars began employing the term *parental mediation* as a means of recognizing that parents take an active role in managing and regulating their children's experiences with television (Dorr, Kovaric, & Doubleday, 1989; Kaye, 1979; Lin & Atkin, 1989; Logan & Moody, 1979; Nathanson, 1999; Valkenburg, Krmar, Peeters, & Marseille, 1999). What today is referred to as parental mediation theory has therefore long been a hybrid communication theory that, although rooted primarily in social/psychological

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media effects and information processing theories, also implicitly foregrounds the importance of interpersonal communication between parents and their children.

Parental mediation theory has some limits, however. First, because it is rooted in the media effects tradition, scholars have tended to be concerned primarily with the negative effects of media on information processing and cognitive development. They have therefore largely overlooked the ways in which parents attempt to utilize media for positive familial and developmental goals that may not be directly related to the media, and have not always paid sufficient attention to the social pressures shaping parental decision making in regards to mediation (but see Madianou, 2006; Nathanson, 2010; Yang & Schaniger, 2010). Second, because the theory is oriented toward cognitive development and concerns about children's vulnerability, research has tended to skew toward younger children with less attention to the changing demands of the parent/child relationship as the child enters the preteen and teen years (but see Nathanson, 2010). And third, because researchers have been primarily oriented toward the investigation of television, there are gaps in how the theory might be applied in relation to digital and mobile media, as Livingstone and Helsper (2008) have observed (see also Eastin, Greenberg, & Hofshire, 2006; Livingstone, 2007; Livingstone & Bober, 2006; Oswell, 1999).

Digital and mobile media, defined as mobile phones, laptops with Internet connection, and other devices that deliver entertainment such as television programming, films, games, and music, have changed the landscape of family media use. Thus, it has become necessary to rethink the role of media in family life. Whereas some viewed television as a communication technology that provided a venue to the world outside the family, for instance, digital media such as mobile phones not only connect young people to that outside world, but also provide means for family members to connect with one another. Personal computer systems similarly might be viewed as technologies that can provide access to undesirable material, but they have also become essential to the educational experience for most young people and a vital part of the work environment for many adults. And whereas the television was largely a medium placed in fixed locations in the family home, the cell phone and laptop are much more mobile and less easily shared. It is also worth noting that in several instances these technologies come embedded with their own technologies for mediation. GPS-enabled cell phones, net nanny and similar Internet filters, and online shopping regulations each privilege certain kinds of mediation over others and may lull parents into thinking that the task of mediation can be delegated to (and through) the technology itself.

As these media offer enhanced opportunities for interaction, enable unprecedented access to information and feedback, and enable multiple modalities, they both potentially solve, and potentially exacerbate, many dilemmas of family life. Mobile phones can enable young people to check in more frequently with their parents and can make it easier to keep track of young peoples' activities and interactions (Wellman, Smith, Wells, & Kennedy, 2008). Programs like Skype, interactive Wii-enabled gaming, and participation in online worlds can make new opportunities for

intergenerational interactions possible and even desirable (Bleumers & Jacobs, 2010; Horst, 2009; Lim & Clark, 2010). But such technologies can also lead to problems of “co-presence” in which parents feel that their young people are paying more attention to the people on the other end of the cell phone conversation than to those in the same room (Ling, 2008; Ito & Okabe, 2005). Other dilemmas involving issues of authority, autonomy, trust, risk, and connectedness and individuality are similarly emotionally laden. They include the problems of managing the uses of differing communication technologies among differently aged siblings and the balancing of technological needs and wants across divorced and two-household families. Another problem is, the need to grant more decision-making authority to young people as they age, and the need to negotiate the constantly changing demands of children whose peers often set the expectations for what media are appropriate and necessary at different stages in life (Livingstone, 2009). Additionally, the economically challenged parents are more likely to be uninformed about digital and mobile media than those who utilize such technologies in their workplaces every day (Clark, 2009; Herring, 2008). And dilemmas also emerge as parents are increasingly expected to police appropriate uses of technologies in varying settings, even as their own lives are, by their own accounts, busier than ever (Darrah, Freeman, & English-Lueck, 2007; Hochschild, 2001). Each of these challenges goes into the emotional calculation of how parents might approach parental mediation, and each is part of a broader project of emotion work within families that is spurred and necessitated by digital and mobile communication technologies, and that suggests new areas for study. There is thus a need to revisit the theory of parental mediation in relation to the emergent digital environment and in relation to bodies of scholarship this theory has overlooked.

This article builds upon the theory of parental mediation by foregrounding the assumptions of interpersonal family communication embedded in the theory. It does this by considering the work of sociologist Arlie Hochschild and developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky, as both foreground the social and interpersonal contexts in which parental mediation occurs. After a review of how the family media landscape has changed with the introduction of digital media that offer enhanced interactivity, information accessibility, and possibilities for multiple modalities, the article then suggests a fourth parental mediation strategy that is emerging in relation to digital media and is evident in the research area of digital media and learning: that of participatory learning. We begin with a review of parental mediation theory.

Parental mediation theory

Parental mediation theory posits that parents utilize different interpersonal communication strategies in their attempts to mediate and mitigate the negative effects of the media in their children’s lives. It also assumes that interpersonal interactions about media that take place between parents and their children play a role in socializing children into society. In a sense, then, although the theory grew out

of an interest in the negative effects of the media, it also sought to explore the *positive* ways in which other factors within a young person's environment—namely, the child's parents and their intentional efforts at mediation—might mitigate the negative effects that television was presumed to have on young people's cognitive development.

In several influential studies, Valkenburg et al. and Nathanson developed a scale to measure three different strategies of mediation and the outcomes that resulted from those parental practices: *Active* mediation, or talking with young people about the content they saw on television; *restrictive* mediation, or setting rules and regulations about children's television viewing; and *co-viewing* (simply watching television with children) (Nathanson, 1998, 1999; Valkenburg et al., 1999; see also Eastin et al., 2006). Although active mediation assigns an importance to dialogue between parents and their children and co-viewing involves primarily nonverbal communication and co-presence, restrictive mediation tends to involve parent-to-child communication in the form of rule-making, rule-stating, and following through with consequences when rules are not followed.

Researchers following in the tradition of parental mediation have found that *active mediation*, or parent/child discussions about the television that young people view, can mitigate possible negative outcomes such as aggressive behavior or the cultivation of a skewed worldview (Austin, Roberts, & Nass, 1990; Desmond, Singer, & Singer, 1990; Nathanson, 1999). Similarly, discussions between older and younger siblings about media use can also mitigate negative outcomes (Haefner & Wartella, 1998). Moreover, when teenagers hear from parents about their own interpretations of television programs, this increases the teens' ability to be skeptical about television content and to be interested in public affairs media use (Austin, 1993).

These findings about active mediation echo similar work in interpersonal communication that has found that through dialogue, parents can promote critical thinking and provide a moral compass for thinking about aggression (Beck & Wood, 1993). They also echo work in family communication that has found that families high in conversational orientation experience less unproductive conflict and foster a more positive climate for children than those low in conversational orientation (Isaacs & Koerner, 2008; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002, 2006). Placing the research of active mediation in relation to interpersonal and family communication research suggests, therefore, that conversations about media can meet not only cognitive goals about media education, but may also be viewed as part of wider parental strategies that emphasize the importance of parent-child conversations in socialization (see also Hoover, Clark, & Alters, 2004).

Parental mediation researchers have also found that children whose parents engage in *restrictive mediation* experience more positive outcomes than those who engage with their parents in co-viewing (Nathanson, 1999). This echoes the finding that firm behavioral control correlates with socializing children to social competence (Peterson & Hann, 1999). However, very low and very high levels of restriction of media were associated with more aggression, suggesting that parents

who create either no strategies or highly restrictive strategies may create hostilities in their children, a finding that echoes studies that find adolescents resist overly strict parental rules (Nathanson, 1999; Peterson & Hann, 1999; see also Hoffman, 1970). Parental mediation researchers have also found that among adolescents, restrictive mediation was related to less positive attitudes toward parents, more positive attitudes toward the forbidden content, and a greater likelihood that the adolescents experiencing restrictive mediation would view the content with their peers (Nathanson, 2002). Children need to accept and internalize media rules in order to abide by them willingly, as previous research has suggested with regard to rules restricting risky behavior (Baxter, Bylund, Imes, & Routson, 2010).

Previous research into parental mediation has found that mothers, more educated parents, higher-income parents, and parents of younger children engage in more parental mediation strategies than fathers, less educated parents, lower-income parents, and parents of older children (Eastin et al., 2006; Valkenburg et al., 1999; Warren, 2005). According to parent reports, in the United States active mediation is most common, followed by co-viewing (Austin et al., 1999), whereas in the Netherlands parents prefer co-viewing (Valkenburg et al., 1999). And the perceived need for parental mediation decreases as children age, meaning that parents of older children are likely to report less engagement in parental mediation strategies than parents of younger children (Bocking & Bocking, 2009).

Previous research into parental mediation also offers several clues as to why parents may not be as engaged in parental mediation practices as researchers might expect or desire. Consistent with the notion of third-person effects, parents often underestimate the influence of media on their children when compared with how they estimate the influence of the media on other people's children (Davison, 1983; Hoffner & Buchanan, 2002; Meirick, Sims, Gilchrist, & Croucher, 2009; Nathanson, Eveland, Park, & Paul, 2002; Tsfari, Ribak, & Cohen, 2005). A parent may view her own child as more mature than most, and thus may be overconfident in that child's ability to discern for herself either television's or the Internet's nefarious messages (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Robinson & Kim, 2004). Family interactions and family environment offer another explanation for lower levels of parental mediation, as the amount of time young people spend alone with media increases as parents' availability decreases, suggesting that parents with heavier work schedules may be less available for discussions and less capable of enforcing restrictions (Austin, Knaus, & Meneguelli, 1997; Brown, Childers, Bauman, & Koch, 1990; Warren, Gerke, & Kelly, 2002). Attempts to explore when parental mediation fails, or when parents are unable to engage in parental mediation to the extent that either the parents or the researchers would like, suggest a greater need to attend to the contexts in which parental mediation occurs. This attention to context has been central within ethnographic media studies conducted in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere.

Ethnographic family media studies

Although the tradition of research into media effects dates back to 1930s' studies of radio and cinema, ethnographic studies of how media came to play a role in family life, which serve as an important complement to parental mediation research, first emerged prominently with the "ethnographic turn" of the 1970s. During that decade, James Lull in the United States and Roger Silverstone and David Morley in the United Kingdom each embarked on extended interview and observation-based studies that considered how families integrated media, and primarily television, into their daily lives (Lull, 1980, 1990; Morley, 1986; Silverstone, Hirsch, & Morley, 1990; see also Lindlof & Traudt, 1983). In each case, these studies generally defined their families as those who lived in the same household and were engaged in what Bochner (1976) described as an "organized, naturally occurring relational interaction system, usually occupying a common living space over an extended period and possessing a confluence of interpersonal images which evolve through the exchange of messages over time" (p. 382; in Jordan, 1992, p. 375).

In contrast to the common assumption at the time that television served primarily as a disruptive force in family life, Lull (1980) observed that television sometimes contributed to family harmony, linking this observation to differences in parental styles and goals. He found that family members structured the family routines of mealtime, bedtime, and other activities around television schedules. Silverstone et al. (1990) were similarly interested less in media as a disruptive force than as an organizing force. They described the ways in which two different families in their study structured their time together according to the schedules of television programming and parental work lives. Drawing contrasts with the earlier emphases on media effects, these researchers were especially interested in how media and especially television programs provided content for discussions about how their families fit into the larger public realm. As television provided these resources for negotiation of family life, it contributed to what Silverstone, Hirsch, and Morley (1991) termed the "moral economy of the household," which Silverstone (1991) later described as a term that encompassed both the cultural and economic functions of contemporary families. Like many other studies of family media use since, they observed that the economic backgrounds of families correlated with differing approaches to media use, with lower-income families viewing television as an accompaniment to everyday life, whereas higher-income families expressed more concern about television's negative influence (see also Brown et al., 1990; Jordan, 1992).

Lull, as well as Silverstone and his colleagues' study of the "moral economy of the household," offered the first of many studies exploring the ways in which the family television helped to organize the spatial and temporal routines of family life in Western societies. They set the framework for Bovill and Livingstone's (2001) study of teen "bedroom culture," which identified the privatization of television, music, and computer use in the home, and for Bird and Jorgenson's (2002) study that explored the ways in which lower-income parents viewed computer supervision as

a domestic duty and hence saw it as women's work to be performed in conjunction with other routines of homework. Studies of how communication technologies such as mobile phones and laptop computers influence temporal and spatial relations between family members continue in several strains of research into digital and mobile media today, such as a study by Wellman et al. (2008) that documented how family members increasingly employ mobile phones, texting, and e-mail to foster connectedness and to stay in touch with one another throughout the day despite spatial separation, and Horst's (2009) study of private and public media spaces of the home and of how parents negotiated making, taking, and sharing media time involving primarily television and laptop computers. Ethnographic studies of media use in families have also focused on how communication technologies including television, iPods, laptops, and mobile phones become a part of everyday life through the domestication of technologies (Lim, 2008; Silverstone & Haddon, 1996).

Although studies of the role of media in structuring time and space tell us about how some families operate, such studies have not always focused on how this relates to the anxieties parents have regarding children's media use, how media might be experienced differently in differently situated families, or how families negotiate the changing developmental and identity needs of children (but see Abu-Lughod, 1997; Ang, 1996; Hoover et al., 2004; Seiter, 1999, 2005). Fortunately, these latter questions have been addressed more directly within emergent strains of research known as the sociology of emotions, the sociology of childhood, and situated learning theory, and are therefore important complements that can expand the theory of parental mediation. We turn first to the sociology of emotions.

Sociology of emotions and the problem of parental intention

The study of emotions is far from a neglected area in media audience studies (see, e.g., Bryant & Cantor, 2005; Dovel, von Scheve, & Konjin, 2010; Zillmann & Vorderer, 2000). Yet perhaps because the tradition of media audiences and emotions draws more directly upon the psychology rather than the sociology of emotions, these studies have tended to approach emotions as the province of *individuals*: People watch horror films because they enjoy feeling scared, or they play games because they want to feel triumph and satisfaction. What this area of research has not addressed is the fact that emotions are the province of *social groups*.

Emotions are deeply social, and they can be managed, as sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1979, 1989) argued. Like her mentor Erving Goffman, Hochschild has been influential within studies of interpersonal communication, family communication, and language and social interaction (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009; Fowler, 2007; Green, 2007), as well as in production of culture studies (see, e.g., Andrejevic, 2003, 2005, 2007; Baym, 2000; Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, 2007; Gregg, 2009; Gregg & Siegwirth, 2010; Grindstaff, 2002; Harrington & Bielby, 1995; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2008; Terranova, 2000; Ytreberg, 2002). Hochschild's approach, as well as that of other cultural sociologists, intentionally offers a contrast to the

“rational actor” and “social exchange” models that assume that behavior grows out of intentional and rational decision making (for critiques of these models, see Planalp, 2003; Swidler, 1986). Her work therefore offers a different lens through which to consider how and why parents engage in mediating the media as they do.

How parents establish rules or guidelines in relation to communication technologies, such as mobile phones, laptop computers, iPods, and television is not always easy to explain in relation to what researchers have defined as good intentions or rational choices, as previous research has suggested. Decision making has to be understood in relation to a number of contextual factors, including both the desire to be “good” (or “good-enough”) parents and the desire to balance family and economic needs effectively, both of which are emotionally charged issues (Alters & Clark, 2004; Pugh, 2009). And parents and young people experience different emotions when it comes to media themselves: Parents feel *anxious* not only about television content, but also about how mobile phones and social network sites provide more freedoms and hence more possibilities for risk and connections to unknown others. In contrast, young people (especially teens and preteens) feel *happy* about how media provide these things (see, e.g., Livingstone, 2009). Thus parents, and especially mothers, are charged with the tasks of negotiating the domestication of technologies in a dynamic system where the needs of various children and relationships between those children, their parents, and their economic environment are constantly changing, and in relation to various, often conflicting goals (Silverstone et al., 1990, 1991). Thus, it is not the case that parents are acting irrationally by seemingly providing less consistent strategies regarding media use than experts would advise. Rather, their decision making when it comes to media overwhelmingly involves their emotions, and specifically their feelings about parenting and about their children. These emotions are triggered in relation to their desires to be “good” parents as they balance the family’s emotional and economic needs with digital and mobile media technologies that can both solve and exacerbate family dilemmas.

In Western cultural contexts, discourses of the “good parent” have shifted both over time, moving from norms of more “strict” to more nurturing styles of parenting (and to a more highly commercialized environment in which parenting occurs), and they also shift as individual children’s developmental needs change through their lifecourse (Mintz, 2006). Psychologists, parenting experts, and parents themselves have contributed to the formation of this discourse, describing a “good parent” of the young child as one who is consistent, involved, and focused on assuring the well-being of the child, whereas a “good parent” of the older child is the one who is flexible, available, and focused on allowing the child both the freedom to take risks and the responsibility for dealing with the consequences of her mistakes (Steinberg, 1985, 1990; Steinberg & Steinberg, 1994; Weiss & Schwarz, 1996). Yet every child and every parenting situation is different, and the movement from one type of parenting style to another does not happen instantaneously, nor at a certain predefined moment in the lifecourse. Moreover, parents and young people almost always have some disagreements about when and how those changes in parenting

that afford greater freedoms should come about. Gauging these changes in parenting in relation to the affordances of digital and mobile media technologies takes a certain kind of work; work that is rooted in the sometimes-competing demands of relationship maintenance, economic necessity, and self-identity that characterize life in modernity (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). It is *emotion* work because it evokes strong, culturally learned emotions: sadness at the perceived end of childhood innocence and the increased importance of peers in a child's life as represented in increased texting, social network site use, and references to youth culture; pride in the young person's ability to manage risks on her own; anxiety about the unknown and unfamiliar, especially in the online and digital realm; frustration with young people who circumvent parental authority; anger at parents who would not give freedoms that young people want and feel they need; and happiness at continued positive connections within one's primary relationships. Parents and children may choose to express or not express emotions given the situation and its relationship to the competing goals of relationship maintenance, economic necessity, and self-identity. But it is work that comes about in relation to feelings rather than solely in relation to a cognitive and intentional process of cost/benefit analysis.

Planalp (2003) has helpfully distinguished the role of emotion in interpersonal relationships, offering a counter to the social exchange theory that suggests people make rational decisions with regard to interpersonal relationships:

With feelings as currency, people would not audit the relational books; they would register the feelings they get from other people. Relationships would not be assessed by computing rewards . . . but rather they would result from experiencing things that promote or detract from well-being, resulting in positive or negative emotion. For example, love can be a reward received from another, but it is more fundamentally a feeling that one gets from being with another. (pp. 80–81)

In the situation of familial relations, therefore, parents and children make decisions regarding how they will approach media and parental mediation not only based on an intentional awareness of cognitive outcomes, but based on the fact that they are interested in both promoting and experiencing well-being. Being a self-conscious parent is touted throughout self-help literature for parents: “think and then respond,” or engage in “love and logic,” as several popular parenting texts geared to middle-class Americans exhort (Cline & Fay, 1990). This approach does not assume that people are rational, but rather it assumes that they are guided by emotions and must self-consciously *adopt* a rational position. Hence, parenting advice books may be good indicators of the emotion work that parents engage in with relation to parental mediation, and would be an interesting future area for research.

One limitation that remains in relation to incorporating sociology of emotions into studies of parental mediation, however, is that these studies still tend to take as their starting point the viewpoint of adults rather than the experiences of the

children. We turn now to the ways in which children's experiences have come to the forefront in sociology of childhood and in situated learning theory.

Sociology of childhood and situated learning

Parental mediation theory, studies in the sociology of childhood, and situated learning theory all owe a debt to developmental psychologists of the early 20th century who were interested in how interpersonal communication guided child development. Yet, whereas parental mediation theory drew upon Bandura's (1977) social learning theory that viewed parents as role models and explored the role of television in modeling aggression, scholars in the fields of education and sociology developed situated learning theory and sociology of childhood research in relation to the work of Russian psychologist Vygotsky and his antecedents, Hegel, Marx, and Engels, in German social thought (Daniels, Cole, & Wertsch, 2007; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985).

Vygotsky (1978) theorized that children became enculturated into the social world as they interacted with their parents and with other significant people in their lives. Unlike Piaget, Vygotsky did not believe that development occurred in relation to universal stages, but rather he placed great emphasis on the role of cultural context and social factors in shaping development. Children's potential for cognitive development depended upon access to what he termed the "zone of proximate development," or the opportunity for children to engage in experimentation beyond their current capabilities. In order for children to develop, they needed access to more knowledgeable others; therefore, adult guidance and peer collaboration were viewed as key aspects of development.

The difference in theoretical foundations is reflected in the questions that scholars take up in relation to these theories. Whereas parental mediation has focused on the intentions of parents and on the problems of negative modeling of behavior, work in situated learning and in sociology of childhood has developed models that place at the center of the investigation the child and her interactive experiences with influential adults.

Research in the sociology of childhood emerged in the 1980s as an attempt to better understand the experiences of childhood from the perspectives of children themselves. In many ways, sociologists and historians writing in this tradition sought to challenge the assumptions of social learning and developmental psychology frameworks that viewed children from a universalizing perspective and that focused on desirable future outcomes (Thorne, 2003). The field has therefore historicized the concept of "childhood," exploring how that concept has been mobilized by differing groups in society, and has also considered how experiences of childhood are constructed in relation to gender, economics, race and ethnicity, and other aspects of difference (see, e.g., Fass & Mason, 2000; Mintz, 2006; Zelizer, 1994). Situated learning theories have similarly foregrounded the experiences of childhood, considering how children learn through "cognitive apprenticeship" (Brown, Collins,

& Duguid, 1989). Perception and action mutually shape one another, situated learning theorists argue, following Dewey (1896, cited in Bredo, 1994). Learning becomes less about accepting a transmission from one person to another (as a parent to a child), and more about participating in a jointly constructed activity of creating meaning.

In media studies, scholars following in the sociology of childhood tradition have explored how children create their own cultures, with particular emphasis on how they draw upon consumer culture yet sometimes also resist the intentions of mass consumer culture in their unexpected creativity (Buckingham, 2000; Jenkins, 1998, 2006; Seiter, 1995). Girl and boy cultures have also been explored separately, and comparatively, among young children, preteens, and teens (Cassells & Jenkins, 1998; Kearney, 2006; Mazzarella, 2005; Mazzarella & Pecora, 1999). Differences in socioeconomic backgrounds have also been considered, as have cross-cultural differences in children's experiences with the media that are targeted to them (Fisher-Keller, 2002; Lemish, 2006). Much of the sociology of childhood literature in media studies, like that of the parental mediation and family ethnographic studies, has grown up out of a desire to reimagine "the isolated encounter between individual child and the all-powerful screen that characterizes a great deal of academic research," as David Buckingham has pointed out (1993, p. 19).

Recent research into the digital and mobile realm within the sociology of childhood has explored how young people's own cultures are reshaped in relation to the emergence of social network sites and mobile phones (Boyd, 2006; Ito & Okabe, 2005; Jenkins, 2006; Watkins, 2009). Ito et al. (2009) have extended this argument further into the realm of situated learning, arguing that young people's uses of digital and mobile media are playing an important role in shifting understandings of how young people learn. Educators interested in rethinking learning in relation to formal and informal settings advocate considering how children learn through play (see also Gee, 2007; Marsh, 2010a,b; Wohlwend, 2008). Theories of participatory learning have thus emerged that propose adjusting models of learning from a top-down model that privileges the intentions of the educator—or in this case, the parent—to an open and conversant model that privileges the learner (or child) and opens dialogue from her perspective. This direction promises to be especially fruitful as scholars explore parent/child interactions and parental mediation as they occur during the older child and younger adolescent years, when most families adopt these new media into their home lives (Lenhart, 2008).

Participatory learning

Central to the idea of participatory learning is learner-driven inquiry, free experimentation, and play (Salomon & Perkins, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) theorized that through play, children learned to develop abstract meanings separate from the objects of play, which is a critical feature in the development of higher mental functions. Play, he argued, creates the "zone of proximal development"

mentioned earlier, in which children can move beyond their current set of skills or level of knowledge (Wertsch, 1985). In recent years, a number of scholars have been arguing that scholarship needs to pay greater attention to children's play in order to learn more about how children themselves participate in learning and experiencing life through play (see, e.g., Gee, 2003; Greenfield, 2009; Ito, 2005, 2009; Marsh, 2008; Wohlwend, 2007).

As life in Western societies has become "busier than ever," both structured and unstructured play has become an important topic among parents who must negotiate such play in an increasingly commercial environment (Lareau, 2003; Pugh, 2009). And "quality time" between parents and children has become equally important, thereby shifting notions of the "good parent" to encompass more child-centered activities. As such, some parents have come to embrace a role as participants in co-learning with young people, particularly in relation to the Internet, interactive games, and mobile devices (Horst, 2009; Salen, 2010; Takeuchi, 2010). Through virtual environments, such as wikis, social network sites, and other online immersive experiences, new technologies enable and encourage people of all ages to contribute, participate, and collaborate (Gauntlett, 2011; Jenkins, 2006). Yet, participatory learning is not just learning that occurs *through* these media, but it also includes learning that is facilitated *by* these media as the sharing of ideas, comments, and goals take place in everyday interactions. Thus, new technologies have made digitally enhanced collaborative learning possible just as interactions between adults and children have become more two-way, child-centered, and less defined by hierarchical authority arrangements. This presents scholars with several new areas of inquiry in the area of parental mediation. How often do parents spend time learning from and playing with their children in mediated environments, for instance? Under what circumstances and in which family settings are children permitted to select the family's media-driven leisure activities and purchases? In what settings do parents learn from their children about mobile devices, social network sites, games, and YouTube videos—and what difference does an attitude of interest in such things make in how a young person perceives a parent's authority?

Additional research could also explore the emotion work that occurs around media texts in various settings of social interaction. Ho (2010) offered a promising study of how fans discuss baseball together and how such interactions are mediated by their feelings for one another and for the game itself, and Pigeron (2008) has explored how parents utilize discussions of media texts for socialization into morality. These represent interesting new directions that consider the emotion work of parents when it comes to parental mediation in the digital and mobile era.

Participatory learning might be viewed as in some ways similar to the parental strategy of active mediation in that it emphasizes the need for positive parent-child relationships rooted in dialogue. Yet, a strategy of participatory learning has implications for the direction of that dialogue, as is clear in the questions posed above. Participatory learning encourages parents to be listeners and co-creators who invite their young people to serve as leaders and guides into experiences with gaming,

mobile phones, and social networking, among other things. In participatory learning, rather than advice, insights, or moral judgment, parents provide prompts to continue conversations, and aim to learn *from* as well as *with* their children (Salen, 2009). This article therefore argues that it is important to consider participatory learning as a fourth strategy of parental mediation that has emerged as the interpersonal relationships between parents and children shift to become less authoritarian and more collaborative, and as digital and mobile media have facilitated a change in how we relate to one another in this emergent environment.

Conclusion: Emotions, agency, and participatory learning

This article has aimed to further develop the theory of parental mediation to incorporate insights from ethnographic family media studies, interpersonal and sociological approaches, and studies that place the children's needs and interests in the center of consideration. The article suggests that participatory learning has emerged as a parental mediation strategy that, like active mediation, emphasizes the interactions that occur between parents and children in, through, and in relationship to various forms of digital, mobile, and more traditional media. The article has addressed three weaknesses in parental mediation theory as it currently exists: the theory's tendency to foreground parental intentions and interests in cognitive development at the expense of considering other parental motivations in engaging (or not) in parental mediation; the theory's focus on younger children with less attention to how the trajectory of development changes the parent/child relationship as the agency of the child increases; and the television-focused basis of the theory that has posited the child as a passive recipient of inputs from family and from television rather than as an active participant in learning and relationship-building. The revised theory that introduces the fourth strategy of parental mediation as participatory learning aims to recognize that although children might encounter risks in the digital and mobile media environment, they might also engage with parents in activities that foster strengthened interpersonal relationships, individual and collaborative creativity, and even cognitive development. In light of the rethinking presented here that proposes foregrounding children's agency, parent and child emotions in family negotiations related to media, and affordances of digital and mobile media, the article proposes that future research into parental mediation should consider how parents and children engage media in processes of participatory learning so as to better understand how parents and children negotiate interpersonal relationships in and through digital and mobile media.

Viewing the new participatory media environment of enhanced interactivity through the lens of "old" media may speak to a sense of loss and nostalgia for our own mediated childhoods more than anything else (Collier, 2010). New research is needed to consider how parents and children participate together in collaborative learning within emergent digital environments. This is consistent with arguments by Buckingham (2000), Buckingham and Willett (2006), and Livingstone (2002,

2009) that have encouraged stakeholders to move beyond the dichotomy of either abject pessimism about the negative influences of media or halcyon optimism about the “digital generation.” New strategies of exploration are needed that take into consideration the identity and developmental needs of children, the social and emotional decision-making processes of adults, and the affordances of digital and mobile media.

This article has suggested that attention to the sociology of emotions, sociology of childhood, and situated learning theory can help to correct for the limitations in parental mediation research. But this article represents just a first step in taking seriously the roles of emotions, interpersonal relations, and child-centered informal learning in how people incorporate media into our collective and individual lives. Future studies of parental mediation promise to offer us insights not only into how parent/child relationships are mediated, but into how all kinds of relationships are mediated. They promise to provide better ways for accounting for how children’s creativity can be encouraged in familial settings through participatory learning strategies even as parents also engage in emotion work to employ active mediation, restrictive mediation, and passive co-viewing of television in relation to familial and interpersonal goals of well-being. Only by paying attention to all of these dimensions of parental mediation in this way can we speak to the concerns about media that lie not only in people’s minds, but in their hearts, as well.

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数字时代的父母调解理论

【摘要：】

本文介绍

“父母调解”理论。该理论讨论家长如何利用人际沟通以减轻传播媒体对其子女的负面影响。该理论已经在社会心理学的媒介效应文献和社会文化人种学对家庭媒体使用的研究中得到应用，文章讨论了该理论的优势和劣势。为说明数字媒体给现代家庭生活所带来的情绪上影响，本文在社会学家Arlie Hochschild (1977, 1989)对情绪的论述的基础上回顾了人际传播的文献，并提出将Vygotsky (1978)的社会发展理论作为重新思考儿童机构在父母和孩子互动中的作用。文章最后建议，除了积极调解、限制性调解和共同观看电视节目作为主要的父母调解策略，将来的研究需要考虑正在兴起的“在参与中学习”策略，该策略能够使父母和子女通过数字媒体互动。

Une théorie de la médiation parentale à l'ère numérique

Cet article décrit la théorie de la *médiation parentale*, qui a été développée pour réfléchir aux façons dont les parents utilisent la communication interpersonnelle pour mitiger les effets négatifs qu'ont, selon eux, les médias de communication sur leurs enfants. L'article commente les forces et les faiblesses de cette théorie qui a été employée dans la littérature socio-psychologique des effets médiatiques ainsi que dans la recherche ethnographique socioculturelle sur les usages médiatiques familiaux. Pour rendre compte du travail émotionnel que les médias numériques ont introduit dans la vie de famille contemporaine, l'article fait une revue de la littérature sur la communication interpersonnelle basée sur les travaux sur les émotions de la sociologue Arlie Hochschild (1977, 1989) et suggère que la théorie du développement social de Vygotsky (1978) aide à repenser le rôle de l'agentivité des enfants dans les interactions avec leurs parents que permettent les nouveaux médias. L'article conclut en suggérant qu'en plus des stratégies parentales clés de médiation active, de médiation restrictive et de visionnement partagé, la recherche future devrait étudier la stratégie naissante de *l'apprentissage participatif* qui unit les parents et les enfants qui interagissent ensemble avec et à travers les médias numériques.

Mots clés : médiation parentale, communication familiale, études ethnographiques sur la famille et les médias, domestication de la technologie, sociologie de l'enfance, théorie de l'apprentissage situé, sociologie des émotions, apprentissage participatif

Theorie zum elterlichen Umgang mit der kindlichen Mediennutzung im digitalen Zeitalter

Die Theorie zum elterlichen Umgang mit der kindlichen Mediennutzung beschreibt, wie Eltern interpersonale Kommunikation einsetzen, um die, nach ihrer Überzeugung, negativen Wirkungen von Medienkommunikation auf ihre Kinder abzuschwächen. In diesem Artikel diskutieren wir Stärken und Schwächen dieser Theorie in ihrer Anwendung im Kontext sozialpsychologischer Medienwirkungsliteratur und sozialkultureller ethnographischer Forschung zu Mediennutzung in Familien. Um der Bedeutung der Emotionen, die digitale Medien in das heutige Familienleben eingebracht haben, gerecht zu werden, betrachten wir Literatur zu interpersonaler Kommunikation basierend auf den Arbeiten des Soziologen Arlie Hochschild zum Thema Emotionen (1977, 1989). Darüber hinaus regen wir an, Vygotskys Theorie der sozialen Entwicklung (1978) fruchtbar zu machen, um die Rolle der kindlichen Agentschaft in den Interaktionen zwischen Eltern und Kindern zu beleuchten, die der Umgang mit neuen Medien mit sich bringt. Der Artikel schließt mit dem Vorschlag, dass sich zukünftige Forschungsvorhaben ergänzend zu Strategien der aktiven Mediation, restriktiven Mediation und dem Coviewing als zentrale Strategien des elterlichen Umgangs mit der kindlichen Mediennutzung auch mit der vermehrt vorkommenden Strategie des teilnehmenden Lernens befassen müssen, als eine Form des elterlichen Umgangs mit der kindlichen Mediennutzung, bei der Eltern und Kindern gemeinsam mit und durch digitale Medien interagieren.

Schlüsselbegriffe: elterlicher Umgang mit der kindlichen Mediennutzung, Familienkommunikation, ethnographische Familienmedienstudien, Domestizierung von Technologie, Soziologie der Kindheit, situative Lerntheorie, Soziologie der Emotionen, teilhabendes Lernen

디지털시대를 위한 부모중재이론

요약

본 논문은 부모들이 어떻게 미디어가 그들의 자녀에게 준다고 믿는 부정적인 효과를 경감하기 위해 개인간 커뮤니케이션을 이용하는가를 설명하는 부모중재이론에 대한 것이다. 본 논문은 이 이론이 가지고 있는 강점과 약점들에 대해 토의하였는바, 이는 가족들의 미디어 이용에 대한 사회문화적 인류학적 연구와 사회심리학에 근거한 미디어 효과 문헌에서 사용되어진 형태로 이루어졌다. 본 논문은 사회학자인 Arlie Hochschild 의 작업 (1977, 1989) 에 근거한 개인간 커뮤니케이션 전통을 검토하였으며, Vygotsky 의 사회발전이론 (1978)을 부모와 자녀간의 상호작용에서 어린이들의 역할을 제고하는 수단으로서 제안하였다. 본 논문은 활동적인 중재, 제한적인 중재, 그리고 상호보기를 주요 부모의 중재 전략으로 제안하였다. 본 논문은 미래연구 과제로서 디지털 미디어를 통한 부모와 자녀간의 상호작용을 포함하는 부모학습의 긴급한 전략을 고려할 필요성을 제기하였다.

La Teoría de la Mediación Paternal para la Edad Digital

Resumen

Este artículo describe la teoría de la *mediación paternal*, una teoría que ha evolucionado para considerar cómo los padres utilizan la comunicación interpersonal para mitigar los efectos negativos que creen tiene la comunicación de los medios sobre sus hijos. Este artículo discute las fortalezas y las debilidades de esta teoría como ha sido empleada en los efectos socio-psicológicos enraizados en la literatura sobre los medios, así como también en la investigación etnográfica sociocultural sobre el uso de los medios por la familia. Para considerar el trabajo emocional que los medios digitales han introducido en la vida de la familia contemporánea, este artículo revisa la investigación de la comunicación interpersonal basada en el trabajo sobre las emociones del sociólogo Arlie Hochschild (1977, 1989), y sugiere a la teoría de desarrollo social de Vygotsky (1978) como una forma de re-pensar el rol de la agencia de los niños en la interacción entre padres e hijos que los nuevos medios permiten. Este artículo concluye sugiriendo que además de las estrategias activas de mediación, la mediación restrictiva y la exposición de ambos a los medios son claves en las estrategias de mediación paternas, la investigación futura necesita considerar la estrategia emergente de *aprendizaje participativo* que involucra a los padres y los niños interactuando juntos a través de los medios digitales.

Palabras claves: mediación paternal, comunicación familiar, estudios etnográficos de los medios en la familia, domesticación de la tecnología, sociología de la niñez, teoría del aprendizaje situado, sociología de las emociones, aprendizaje participativo