Internet mediation and the family gap: explorative ethnographic interviews in new family forms in Belgium

# Details

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## Topics

* Social mediation
* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Content-related issues

## Sample

Two Belgian families, the Montgomery family and the Mansour family, spread over five households, participated in the study. The Montgomery family is a stepfamily of ten, formed 14 years ago out of two families of divorce, and consisted of three different households. The Mansour family is a divorced family of three, with the child moving between two households in a part-time co-parenting.

## Implications For Parents About

Parental practices / parental mediation

# Abstract

While studies have examined how parents organize, manage, or
mediate children’s internet use, perspectives of non-traditional, new
forms of family remain largely neglected in the research. Presenting
the initial findings of explorative ethnographic work within one multi\_x0002\_household stepfamily and one divorced one-parent household in Belgium, this article points to the challenges of internet mediation
in new family forms as it involves complex interpersonal dynamics
that are the result of major changes in family life, and the fact that
parenting is distributed between parents in different households with
their own media use norms. Specifically, this study found that children
in multi-household families experience different mediation regimes
and navigate relatively easily between them, but also that postdivorce family life can generate dynamics that mitigate the outcomes of parental mediation, as well as intensify the role of peer-siblings in
internet mediation. Methodological implications and suggestions for
future family media research are discussed.

# Outcome

"In new family forms, it shows that parental mediation was mainly characterized by a combination of active and restrictive forms of mediation. Belgian families are more likely than other European parents to turn to restrictive mediation. After a divorce, parents devised different rules for their children, related to their different relations to technology. This is not specific to new family forms, younger children are often monitored more intensively and restricted more often. Yet, this can cause perceived injustice and can cause increased risk for developing social and emotional maladjustment and eventually mitigate the outcomes of internet mediation and children’s well-being.
For parents, it becomes difficult to know what the child is doing when they are at the
other house since they do not have a complete picture of their children’s lives, as. This can create gaps in parents’ awareness of children’s online activities and experiences, and can be challenging for parents who want to actively mediate their children’s internet use. Family researchers have suggested that some degree of communication
between parents in regard to the well-being of their children is necessary, for instance through a “parent communication notebook” that passes between the parents." (Mostmans, 2016, pp. 488-493)