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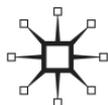
Technology, Culture, Family

Influences on Home Life

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*To Yara Silva-Tolliday, my daughter, and
Natalina Bortolaia Silva, my mother, whose
company I enjoyed while doing final revisions
of this book by the beach in Ubatuba, Brazil,
in December 2009, and for them being in
my future and my past, with love*

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Series Preface

The remit of the *Palgrave Macmillan Studies in Family and Intimate Life* series is to publish work focusing broadly on the sociological exploration of intimate relationships and family organisation. As editors we think such a series is timely. Expectations, commitments and practices have changed significantly in intimate relationships and family life in recent decades. This is very apparent in patterns of family formation and dissolution, demonstrated by trends in parenting, cohabitation, marriage and divorce. Changes in household living patterns over the last 20 years have also been marked, with more people living alone, adult children living longer in the parental home and more 'non-family' households being formed.

There have also been important shifts in the ways people construct intimate relationships. There are few comfortable certainties about the best ways of being a family man or woman, with once conventional gender roles no longer being widely accepted. The normative connection between sexual relationships and marriage or marriage-like relationships is also less powerful than it once was. Not only is greater sexual experimentation accepted, but it is now accepted at an earlier age. Moreover, heterosexuality is no longer the only mode of sexual relationship given legitimacy. Gay male and lesbian partnerships are now socially and legally endorsed to a degree hardly imaginable in the mid-twentieth century. Increases in lone parent families, the rapid growth of different types of stepfamily, the de-stigmatisation of births outside marriage and the rise in couples 'living-apart-together' (LATs) all provide further examples of the ways that 'being a couple', 'being a parent' and 'being a family' have diversified in recent years.

The fact that change in family life and intimate relationships has been so pervasive has resulted in renewed research interest from sociologists and other scholars. Increasing amounts of public funding have been directed to family research in recent years, in terms of both individual projects and the creation of family research centres of different hues. This research activity has been accompanied by the publication of some very important and influential books exploring different aspects of shifting family experience. The *Palgrave Macmillan Studies in Family and Intimate Life* series hopes to add to this list of influential research-based texts

published in English (both new texts and new translations), thereby contributing to existing knowledge and informing current debates. Our main audience consists of academics and advanced students, though it is our intention that the books in the series will be accessible to a more general readership who wish to understand better the changing nature of contemporary family life and personal relationships.

In *Technology, Culture, Family: Influences on Home Life* Elizabeth Silva examines a set of important, yet largely under-explored issues concerning the ways in which developing technologies influence how people's home and family lives are constructed. Sociologists have long recognised that the material conditions of the home are significant in structuring the patterning of domestic life. In particular, changes in housing densities, household amenities, domestic facilities and the like often provided a framework for understanding processes of change in marital and other family relationships, particularly in the decades following the Second World War. In recent family sociology though, the impact of different technological developments on the organisation of family and domestic relationships has been rather neglected, with few scholars directly addressing how technology in general, and particular technological innovations more specifically, influence family practices and the construction of domestic relationships.

Elizabeth Silva is an exception here. In various projects developed over more than 15 years, she has explored the different ways in which technologies – some common, some more radical – used within the home connect with and help shape family organisation and the relationships of domestic life. As series editors, we are delighted to include her book in the *Palgrave Macmillan Studies in Family and Intimate Life* series. In it, she draws on material from her different studies to examine the impact of technological developments on various spheres of domestic and familial activity, including cooking, cleaning, caring work, domestic divisions of labour and sexual activity/expression. Importantly, her analysis goes beyond exploring how different technologies have been used in the respective sets of activities and practices; it also locates the use of technological developments within the relational 'architecture' of the family lives that those involved construct.

Moreover, Silva's book seeks to develop a theoretical understanding of how technology infuses family and domestic relationships. Drawing on the work of a broad range of theorists concerned with different aspects of technology, consumption and family dynamics, she successfully provides an integrated theoretical analysis of how the personal and familial is connected to the material and technological within the

home. This, as well as its opening up of questions about the uses made of technologies within family life, marks this book out as particularly novel. It is a welcome addition to the series and will contribute significantly to scholarly understandings of the role of technology in patterning people's everyday home experiences.

Graham Allan, Lynn Jamieson and David Morgan
Series Editors

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