

Popular Culture

Popular Culture:
A Reader

Edited by

Dr. Otto F. von Feigenblatt
and Dr. Beatriz Peña Acuña

**CAMBRIDGE
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P U B L I S H I N G

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PREFACE

The present volume deals with popular culture from an interdisciplinary perspective. Popular culture, as an important part of the public sphere, has attracted the interest of social scientists for many decades, however most studies tend to rely on the anthropological perspective or less commonly on the sociological perspective. This edited volume aims to break down disciplinary barriers to bring together a plethora of methodological and theoretical approaches to the study of popular culture. Moreover, the volume aims to foster dialogue between international scholars conducting research on the topic.

As a result of the previously stated goals and aims, the present volume includes chapters written by scholars from several countries including, but not limited to, Spain, Costa Rica, the United States, Portugal, Italy and Japan. Diversity is not only achieved through the participation of international scholars but also through the varied disciplinary backgrounds of the contributors. Anthropologists, political scientists and sociologists have contributed to the volume and attempt to shed light on some of the most visible yet ignored phenomena in contemporary society.

Popular culture includes a vast array of phenomena and material culture such as music, film, cartoons, architecture, modern art *inter alia*. The present volume reflects the diversity of the subject matter in terms of the topics covered in its chapters. One chapter deals with a popular festival in Japan, another with music in Italy, while other chapters cover topics such as online chatting *inter alia*.

This volume can be used as a course companion in the fields of cultural anthropology, sociology and the humanities. It can also be integrated into courses in applied fields such as human resource management and negotiation. Readers are encouraged to begin the text in the order they consider interesting and useful for their particular needs, and the chapters can be used as standalone case studies or grouped according to subject matter and methodology. Both editors hope that you will find this text both useful and enjoyable.

Dr. Otto F. von Feigenblatt and Dr. Beatriz Peña Acuña,
Everwise Hall, Florida and Murcia, Spain
November 27, 2012

CHAPTER ONE

ONLINE MUSIC LISTENING AND CONSUMPTION, AND THE RE-DEFINITION OF PERSONAL IDENTITIES IN OUR RADICAL MODERNITY¹

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Music belongs to everyone. Only publishers think it belongs to them
John Lennon, 1940–1980

Through the analysis of the uses of the new devices for listening to music it is possible to reflect on their function of redefining personal and collective identities to better understand the relevant role played by music in young people's lives. Above all, we are able to comprehend a piece of the “puzzle” they have been progressively building using a metaphor of identity proposed by the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman.

Their final picture (who they will be, what they will do ...) is unknown, but, by putting the pieces together, young people learn how to deal with the complexity and uncertainty of their lives, and are able to see the shape of their identity more clearly.

In this chapter the main findings of a qualitative methodology-based research will be presented. This research was carried out on 29 young people whose main characteristics will be illustrated in the following pages. Here, it is important to say that I will not talk about *what* these young people listen to (music genres and/or specific artists), but *how* they listen and consume music via the internet, through relevant devices and what they do with downloaded music in their everyday (real) lives.

¹ This chapter was originally presented at the Nemla Annual Conference 2011 held in Brunswick, NJ, USA.

Before going into detail, it is necessary to briefly underline the main peculiarities of the present social and cultural context, and the main communication problems caused by the change of media environment. These preliminary considerations will help to better define the framework these young people try to live in.

Radical Modernity and Relations and Effects with/on Individuals

Our modernity is extremely dynamic and complex. The modern world we live in is a “running world,” characterized by rapidity much more than pre-modern times. This speediness has a deep impact on social practices and human beings’ behaviours; we, as humans, in everyday life are more and more obliged to make choices that affect the social and cultural dimensions of our identities.

According to Anthony Giddens (1994; 1999, 20–36), we can argue that there are three main features that describe the so-called “radical” or “radicalized” modernity, in the sense that all the elements shown by the modernity are now radicalized, i.e. dramatically changed in comparison with recent times. These are: separation of time and space, disembedding of the social systems, and reflexivity.

About the separation of time and space, we can see that the media has a crucial role in this sense, since its deeper presence in our lives asks us to re-think the concepts of time and space. Time and space are often less connected than in the past (think about the internet and new media—we are able to communicate via Skype from a room in Florence, exchange information and have a mediated experience with a friend or a relative located overseas). This first aspect of radical modernity involves most of us who have learned the use of new media and who are socialized to the use of new technologies, but it also involves people who have a lower level of new media knowledge and lower levels of cultural background (TV audiences, for example, who watch news about a war happening in a distant place).

Disembedding of the social systems means that social relations—primarily based on face-to-face communication—are often rooted in local contexts and re-articulated into indefinite spans of time and space. This change affects our modernity because it may prevent human beings from being fully aware of what is happening far away from them. We are therefore obliged to build a kind of “faith or trust system,” and keep our trust in the so-called “expert systems” (Giddens 1999). Regarding the topic of this chapter, these expert systems can be, for instance, the media

and the media system. Lack of time and space leads us to believe in the media and the opinions or information it spreads, and we tend to think that we don't need to check it, taking for granted that media can help us to live better, saving time and even money.

Reflexivity is the most important aspect I would like to underline, since it is connected to the formation of self identities and the re-definition of the latter. Being reflexive means, for us as human beings, the capability of not accepting everything as natural and predetermined, but on the contrary being able to pose questions to ourselves about our lives, our social relations, our relatives' and friends' lives and the world we are living in; in other words, being reflexive means being human, being able to understand that we can and must learn. Moreover, we have to be more and more reflexive in the use and consumption of the media, especially new media. We have to monitor and observe ourselves in an active way. Content spread by the media can help us to find our way in our lives, to comprehend our role in our society, and to show ourselves to others.

Beside these Relevant Changes, the Media System has also changed

The development of media creates new types of action and interaction and new forms of social relations, and these types and forms are very different from those previously known. For this reason it is very hard to understand these new types and forms and it is difficult to understand whether a real sharing actually exists and if individuals communicate themselves when they upload and download music on the internet. It can be said that individuals communicate their identities when they listen to music, in solitude or with others, since in all those moments of careful or distracted listening they are working on themselves and their identities, investing in themselves; and so they change, very often "just" because they are listening to music. We can say that the offline and online dimension of music listening and consumption are strictly connected and interpenetrated.

Thompson (1998, 121–127) presents three types of interaction:

(a) Face to face interaction (or communication): individuals who interact in the same place at the same time; interaction is characterized by dialogue and specific recipients can easily be identified in this "alive" communication, an unmediated process.

(b) Mediated interaction (or communication): interaction via letters and telephone, in which people are distant in time or space or both. Also, in this case interaction is characterised by dialogue.

(c) Mediated quasi-interaction (or communication): all kind of social relations set up by the mass media (books, newspapers, radio, TV, cinema). People are distant in time or space or both, and interaction is based on monologues; here, we have one sender to an indefinite series of potential recipients. Content producers and content receivers are separated, and the latter have no possibility to give immediate feedback to the former.

Besides these three types of interaction, I propose a fourth that can better explain the new kind of communication processes activated via the internet and through new media, and the new types of actions referring to music file sharing—I call it “Beyond mediated quasi-interaction.”

Information and content producers, and information and content receivers, are often on the same level, have the same power of influence and, above all, their positions are often not clear and distinct. Since information production (music content uploading on the web) is done by non-professional producers (we could say self-made producers), the role of producers and receivers is played out in a social context based on the potential absence of hierarchy. Receivers are active and not passive, and so they can even become info producers.

Information, in the digital music space, is based on music file management. These files are uploaded and exchanged on the internet, and from this point of view we can see a sharing community of producers/users. But, the first and main question I would like to pose is does this type of interaction create a real type of shared experience? Or, is it only a way to exchange information?

Through music (above all popular music), belongings are set up, and for this reason it can be argued that music unifies or unites. But we also can say that music divides and distinguishes us from others (Bourdieu 1983). Music choices, tastes and practices connected to music listening and consumption have a deep sociological meaning for the comprehension of cultural practices *tout court*, of life choices, and of complex pathways regarding the construction and re-definition of youth identities. Today, this is more evident than ever in life contexts characterized by strong and deep processes of mediatization of reality, which incorporate the music field and make it one of the leading characters. Inclusion and exclusion, distinction and imitation, self-recognition and hetero-recognition ... these processes involve groups of young people who, through music tastes,

choices and practices, are able to go into and out from the social dimension of their existence.

Re-Mediation Process

New media has not “broken” with the past, but it continuously redefines and converts the methods of media production, distribution and consumption, entering an existing media system in such a way to create a re-mediation network (Bolter & Grusin 1999; Sibilla 2008). We can easily see that music is part of this re-mediation network. Therefore, re-mediation means to create a new communication channel, renovating material practices and social conventions of an existent communicative network.

In the music field,² material practices (technologies of production, diffusion, consumption) and their social conventions (the ways music is “used” individually and collectively) have been deeply renovated.

Digital Music in Italy

Some figures on the situation of digital music in Italy in 2010 are presented below to better contextualize the kind of work I have tried to do.³

Legal digital music is 16% of the whole Italian music market (15% in 2009, 9% in 2008); illegal digital music is 27% of the whole Italian music market (the average percentage in the EU is 23%); besides these figures, purchasing on online music stores and video streaming practice have increased and are now part of the regular music consumption in Italy. YouTube is becoming more important than iTunes (music consumption is not only music purchasing, but also music viewing and listening via YouTube). Online (Facebook and YouTube) and offline media environments (the iPod and other Mp3 devices, the iPad, CDs) are more and more connected, causing a media-convergence process.

My Research on Young People

As stated above, 29 young people were interviewed, comprising 9 males and 20 females, with an average age of 25 years, living in Tuscany

² The word “field” is used here according to the meaning proposed by Bourdieu.

³ Digital Music Report, 2011, IFPI. It presents the situation in 2010 since the research was carried in that year.

(Italy). All of them were studying for (at the time this research was carried out in April 2010) an M.A. in communication.⁴ So, this group is characterized by high cultural and education levels, good theoretical skills and knowledge in communication and media fields, with potential vocation to reflexive and intellectual work on themselves. I used a qualitative method, sending them (via email) a questionnaire mainly with open questions so they could report and describe their relations with music, their ways of listening and consumption, and other relevant and useful elements for my aims. I proposed the following topics that they were invited to think about and to comment on:

- Do you purchase music in stores? When do you listen to music? How long do you listen to music for? Where do you listen to music? With whom do you listen to music?
- Try to list devices and technologies you mainly use for music listening.
- Could you say how your online music consumption happens?
- If you usually download music off the internet, could you describe what you use to do that?
- What do you think about music file sharing and downloading activities?
- Can you identify with the following statement? “Music is something extremely intimate and personal that makes the construction of social relations possible, and makes the redefinition of personal and group identities possible”

The average time of music listening per day is 116 minutes (almost 2 hours) and there is no substantial divergence, on the quantitative side, between males and females in music listening and consumption; most of them prefer recorded music, while very few go to live music concerts.

What was I looking for, and what are the main findings?

I was trying to understand the way or the ways these young people consume and listen to digital music, their point of view on the usefulness of websites dedicated to music downloading, the relations between online music and offline music listening and consumption, and what role music

⁴ Corso di Laurea Magistrale in Comunicazione Strategica, Facoltà di Scienze Politiche “C. Alfieri,” Università degli Studi di Firenze. I teach in this Corso di Laurea.

plays in their lives regarding the narration of their identities as individuals and as young people living in a complex society.

I have tried to analyze the answers using the five thematic areas introduced below followed by synthetic findings.

Is File Sharing a Real Type of Shared Experience, or a “Simple” Way to Exchange Information (Music)?

I discovered three kinds of sharing activity: Direct sharing, Indirect sharing, and Symbolic sharing. Direct sharing means files exchanged by uploading and downloading actions. Indirect sharing is given by the fact that we know that other people are listening to the same kind of music or (more importantly in my analysis) are listening to music using the same technologies. Symbolic sharing means that the listening and consumption methods are not equal to music content sharing; in this case study, it means the sharing of a belonging to a world—the mobility world. These young people are mobile identities who say something about themselves through the actuation of a listening practice linked to mobility, because it refers to the use of an iPod or any other kind of new device that makes music listening possible.

This type of listening, a cultural practice, already existed (with the walkman, for example), but something is changing. This kind of mobile practice in music listening denotes a distinctive sign, and young people have this element in common, even if they don't listen to the same kind of music.

1. Is legal downloading a substitute for the “old” ways of music buying (for instance, going into record stores)?

The answer is almost certainly yes. The main reason is economic, since people prefer or are obliged to save money. They are not interested in searching for music in offline stores, and so music finds them, we could say. In this way, they discover music through the internet. The traditional experience of going into music stores, before the crescent role of new media in music listening and consumption took hold, now seems to belong to a distant past, and younger consumers and listeners prefer to stay at home or to listen to and buy online music via their new devices, saving time and money. Does this new practice mean a lack of “making experience”? No, it does not, as it is a different kind of experience. The old experience was qualitative and not individual, and people used to go into stores with peers and share their music tastes and their points of view

regarding artists and genres. Now it is a more quantitative experience and even more individual at the moment of the music choice; furthermore, through online practices they acquire more files and more music, and this is done through legal websites (iTunes) but also through illegal means (eMule and μ Torrent, for example). The choice to enter an “old style” record store was made by very few of my interviewees (usually they are both music listeners and performers). Downloading music can be a choice, but it can also be read as a routine activity—you can download a lot of music files for free even when you are not present (downloading works by itself after being given a command) and you can decide to maintain that music or to discard it with a simple click of the mouse.

2. How is this kind of downloaded music listened to by these individuals?

A hypothetical ranking of the most preferred devices and/or media used by these young people to listen to music is given below:

1. CDs (at home and in the car): CDs are sometimes purchased from online stores, but most frequently they are created from single tracks previously downloaded by legal means and, often, through illegal “torrent” websites. The CD is often a self-made compilation, created according to personal tastes and momentary feelings.

2. Radio (in the car): new car radios have a USB device, so downloaded music is copied onto a USB pen and listened to while driving. Radio stations are listened to, and Virgin Radio and Radio DeeJay (flow communication) are the most preferred.

3. YouTube: listening to and watching music by streaming and/or by video downloading. YouTube videos are shared on Facebook (the most popular social network in Italy at present), and in this sense we can talk about media convergence.

4. iTunes, E-mule and μ Torrent: in Italy, YouTube has overtaken iTunes in music listening and consumption, being three times more popular. This is also confirmed by the young people I have interviewed, meaning that free music is preferred to music which is paid for. This tendency has also affected the CD market.

5. The iPod (and other Mp3 players): the iPod is the “king” of music listening and consumption, and its multiple functions are celebrated by my interviewees. This device is used during sport activities, while walking, running, on the bus, the train, driving the car etc. It represents a mobile way of “using” music.

3. About the symbolic use of downloaded music by individuals

There is an ambivalence in music listening, as it is immaterial (as computer files) but also material (as CDs or vinyl). Music is seen as a source of inspiration, but it is always inserted into a set of cultural and social practices. From the interviews, it is clear that activities connected to music are many and different, most of them made during so-called leisure time (or “cultural time,” as a colleague of mine, Edoardo Tabasso, proposes). I won’t go deeply into this topic, but I wish to underline that leisure time is a typical category of modern societies (leisure time vs. work time) and that individuals “use” their leisure time to “do things.” They often try to run, avoiding “thinking” or reflecting, and so try to make their leisure time full to take care of themselves and their identities; they are not used to explaining things, especially about themselves. Music practices—online and offline—help these young people to take care of their identities mostly during their leisure time, during which time they live in specific social and cultural contexts, absorbed in their worlds of feelings and thoughts, and they transform music practices into special kinds of “narratives.” They operate many choices (to choose is a typical activity of our radical modernity and we all are “condemned” to it) when they decide to upload and/or download music, to record or to discard music, to share music or not, to take online music and put it on physical devices (iPod, a CD etc.). They work on their identities, they say something about themselves and this “storytelling” activity is crucial for their present time as well as their future.

Therefore, we can say that these “simple” ways of music listening and consumption, originated by online practices, give a sense of continuity and coherence to them. Online activities have indirect effects on offline activities. However, we now have to re-think the relations between the online and offline worlds. Mediated lives are real lives, since the media (and new media is not excluded within this framework) is part of the real world—they are not outsiders, they are insiders, part of the “game.” For this reason it is necessary to rethink music listening and consumption activities, especially if they concern people who have high levels of cultural tools to move from online to offline and back, and are fully aware that the online and offline worlds are very connected.

It is true that a sort of ideology of sharing emerges from the interviewees. Some of them think that sharing activities are sufficient to connect people, to create real sharing environments; others are aware of the lack of these file sharing activities, and in fact these activities are not really considered as communication processes, but only as information transmission characterized by continuity and circularity.

But what they declare to be different is what they do with music—indeed, it can be discovered that through music listening and consumption (online and offline), they communicate their tastes, statuses and belongings (Bourdieu 1983).

Music is often listened to alone, in a constructive loneliness; in fact, music is listened to and consumed in their bedrooms (where a PC and/or a portable computer, plus several tech devices, such as a radio or CD reader, are available). The bedroom, the typical teenager's private place, is characteristic of these young adults, and it is the favorite place to freely express themselves, since no one can see them, and it therefore gives them intimacy and the time to dedicate to themselves.

4. Re-thinking youth identities in relation to new media presence in the world

Most young people use an iPod for mobility listening. Our society is faster than ever and more and more mobile, and we can easily move from one place to another. Therefore, individuals are mobile and use “self-entertainment strategies” to move from one place to another by using music (iPod for example); this is a metaphor for travel—the travel made by identities during their lives. From this point of view, mobile music is used as a tool of formation of identity.

Young people need to find their place in the world. Meyrowitz talks about social and cultural landscapes changed by Media, and he uses the following expression for the title of one of his more important books: *No sense of place*.⁵ This phrase is strictly connected to Giddens' and Thompson's perspectives on modernity, personal identities and media change. I think that new media, in combination with a particular kind of cultural product to communicate (music), has not produced “no sense of place,” as the young people I interviewed seem to give a relevant meaning to mobile music downloaded from the internet and shared with their peers. This relevant meaning is not a sign of emptiness of time and space, even if it can appear as a mechanical way of living their lives, without any engagement as individuals and socialized young people. On the contrary, young people recognize all the places they find from the mouse click of downloaded music in the morning until the last thought before falling asleep. These places are both physical and virtual, even if the word “virtual” is not so appropriated since the so-called “virtual” is real (as it

⁵ J. Meyrowitz, (1986), *No Sense of Place. The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

produces effects on real lives). Bedrooms, classrooms, squares, living rooms, canteens, cars, buses, trains, computers, the internet, iPods, iPads, smart phones, radios ... young people move, from one place to another, and sometimes they are symbolically in two places at the same time (physically they are in their bedrooms, and in their imagination they are outside). Through music downloading, listening, purchasing and sharing they cross different contexts and situations, and carry their experiences, feelings, thoughts, fears, love, anger, hopes, joy, solitude—all they have been constructing—with them to comprehend themselves and their role in this new, very chaotic and continuously changing world of our radical modernity. Therefore, young people think that music is one of the most powerful tools for defining their identities and building social relations. By being more and more mobile they learn to understand their place in the world by crossing “social and cultural crossroads.” They learn how to do this through the prolonged use of new media and the new devices created for music listening.

A short conclusion

*Only who observe, who thinks, who tell his life, is living: others are
lived by their lives*

Nicolas Gomez Davila (Colombian writer and philosopher,
1913–1994)

Young people use online music to connect the virtual world of the internet to the “real” world of physical elements, and they understand that music is one of the most powerful cultural tools to help them communicate their identities.

They observe (reflexivity), they think, and they explain their lives by using music in their usual social and cultural life contexts. They feel alive and active rather than passive, more closely connected to other young people and to the “outside” world. They have learned how to use music to show themselves and recognize that music gives pleasure but also reinforce their identities as individuals and as part of specific groups.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE PARADOXICAL “STATUS QUO” OF CONTEMPORARY WOMEN

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“My ambition in life is to be emotionally calm; I’m succeeding little by little, although sometimes I feel sadness in my heart.”

Laura Ponte, model

Introduction

The claim that women deserve equal treatment with respect to men seems to have conquered the general public in Western society. Founded on the late premise, it also supports the need to have women’s rights recognized and implemented along with the improvement of their statuses in the democratic countries of Western societies.

The context of Spanish women, for example, has in a few decades changed at a rapid pace, considering that for many centuries they remained anonymous at many professional and social levels. However, much still remains to be done. A recent study called “the Society at a Glance” from the Economic Organization for Cooperation and Development (OECD) concludes that Spanish males spend 187 minutes less than Spanish women doing unpaid work at home, exceeded only by Italy, Portugal, Turkey and Mexico with 223 minutes (publico.es 2011).

If we also take into account the international context, although the social conscience is clear and it is not disputed that women deserve an equal role to men in areas of legal rights, both socially and professionally the practice shows that we are still progressing.

At this point we can say that this study supports the thesis that patterns and customs are still maintained by men and admitted by women in countries considered to be civilized, and acknowledges that in the

countries of Latin America, Africa or Asia the disadvantages of women under machismo are even worse.

Also, we maintain the hypothesis that social change for women is improving but still needs to progress in the legal and social approaches, because suddenly the weight of housework and children in terms of professional competitiveness has become apparent. The consequences of this unhappy state of female oppression are also suffered by men in family life who must adapt to their roles and spend more time with their children and in household responsibilities.

Of all countries, perhaps the U.S. is the one where women seem to have a more recognized professional role today. In other European countries like Britain, for example, there have been changes from the 1950s onwards.

In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir enunciated the following: "One is not born a woman, but becomes a woman." Her reflection opened up a whole new field of intellectual inquiry into the interpretation of equality and sexual difference, with the suspicion that women's psychology was the product of subjugation and male dominance. In this chapter we start from a position that favours the woman, rather than a radical feminism which opposes men and produces an unproductive conflict. We start more from a moderate feminist standpoint; a humanism that defends the dignity of men in full, i.e. one which includes both genders. In this regard we note that a paradigm shift on what women should aspire to also affects the roles of men.

Thus, this study is concerned with how the theories and models of women have implications in practice where men and women coexist, and with what is most suitable for both.

We are concerned that women gain equal rights in a fair way and encourage their social participation positively for them to contribute to society, and for these good features to be of benefit to the social fabric.

Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to identify the major issues of female authors on the desirable state of women today when trying to reconcile work and family, the resultant lifestyle, and what emotional states women experience. We will also research the main studies in sociology and other disciplines regarding the scientific concerns of contemporary women.

The methodology aims to provide a theoretical framework for performing a critical review of contemporary international authors recently published, without claiming to be exhaustive on the subject of the

excellent condition of women in relation to lifestyle, in particular their satisfaction regarding work and motherhood, through the colourful approaches of the sociology and philosophy of Maria Benvenuti, Nicola Vasallo, Catherine Hakim, Lea Melandri, Cristina Morini etc. It also concerns an examination of scientific journals to discuss what issues are under consideration in this regard. Thus, we review the literature that women can read from the source of another woman.

Critical Examination of Authors on the Issue of Contemporary Women

Anneke van Doorne-Huiskes and Ingrid Doorten (Beets et al. 2011) think that institutional arrangements do matter when it comes to the question of how complicated it is to combine parenthood with paid work. Therefore, institutional support for parenthood is badly needed, as children are the promise and material for the future of society. The authors give us a European vision of family policies classifying five welfare state regimes:

a) The Nordic countries represent the social democratic type, wherein an elaborate system of public work and family policies maintain gender equality and the wellbeing of children as an important goal.

b) Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands form the conservative corporatist type where the family is important, traditional gender roles are persistent, and social policy is less individualized.

c) Southern European countries form the Mediterranean type, which have very few public provisions, gender roles are traditional and family problems are solved privately.

d) The liberal type (UK and Ireland) views servicing as a market activity. Government involvement is limited, and work/family arrangements are seen as individual responsibilities to be left to free market forces.

e) The post-communist type used to have a broad range of public policies to support families but provisions have declined since the transition to democracy.

Maria Benvenuti (2008) puts the main issues that concern women today very clearly, which are relevant for this dissertation. She is part of the “library of the women of Milan,” an outreach initiative on the issues affecting women. This author says that while women have equal access to work, differences have emerged in the way that these posts are filled and,

at the same time, in male-dominated professions men are revalued and priced.

Benvenuti explains that they call women who do not want to give up motherhood and work “twice yes” women (in Italian *doppio sì*). In this situation, women are involved in this dual activity without wanting to establish a priority, as required by the laws of the market. Benvenuti gives the example of the Lombardy region where, on the one hand, women’s occupancy rate at a critical age in respect to children aged 35 to 44 is recorded as higher than the Lisbon objectives that provide at least one female employment rate at 60%, while on the other there has been a growth in resignations following motherhood.

In addition, Benvenuti noted the added difficulty facing women today in getting a part-time job. This author collected testimonies from women who worked part-time in Italy because she thought they could create a critical mass and make some positive changes in several directions. She is concerned with political support for the right to work part-time that exists in some European countries like Germany and Holland.

In this regard, we must add that in the U.S. there are current trends in companies with women managers that are becoming popular with the time-intensive or part-time work of women at home by highlighting the advantage of getting the best value. However, this has not always been the case, and Martha Chamalla (1986) has even said that part-time jobs in the American landscape in the late 1980s were not idyllic but a solution to the issue of motherhood, and second-class jobs were concentrated on a second-class service sector.

Returning to the ideas of Maria Benvenuti, a reconsideration of the terms of the actual work in itself for people as they live today is needed because it affects their lifestyles, and she argues that a formulation of the possibility of motherhood as a subject of feminine freedom is necessary. To top it off, she says that the conflict is not between the division of productive and reproductive work, but in the complex organization of work for the market.

We, on this issue, would go further still, saying that the base at stake is the right of women to be mothers in this society, to be able to be with their children when they are young and to make this compatible with decent work and be paid enough which, along with the husband’s salary, allows the family to succeed. In many ways motherhood should be honoured, protected and encouraged for the good of society, and the same is true of the family. We personally know of a case of a German father with four daughters who, in competing with a woman without children for a job, found that the latter was favoured for the fact of being female.

The emotional stability and satisfaction of the woman in motherhood and job status is essential for a family to live. We note that the Spanish woman, in this sense, is under a lot of emotional pressure for wanting to combine work and home. We are convinced that this contributes to contracting cancer for women, and creates a negative impact on the lives of couples, causing marital breakdown and the loss of values in society.

While superstructures have no clear concept of family and the ideal of the person they want to promote, it should focus on excellence (and perhaps Plato was right and philosophers ought to govern), because if the priority should be economic benefits, society is doomed to failure by ignoring the real social wealth of people, contemplating them as worthy, deserving a happy, full life, and not seen, from a materialistic point of view, as being only productive. It is a sorry thing to say, but we are in a society that still has the same basic concept as the ancient slave societies, in the sense that, despite many technological advances, we can't boast of having made much progress.

We found that Cristina Morini complains about some of the social-economic aspects in her recent book *Due to Love or Force* (2010):

Total overlap between work and life time, lack of distinction between production and reproduction, more established centrality of care work, precariousness and flexibility of paid work, integration into the paid employment of forms of production and unpaid in excess of the time work hard to maintain areas of self-determination, subjectivity and sharing of experiences, almost total inability to maintain a sense of perspective, open your lifetime and so on, now seem to characterize the lives of everyone in the background of the new bio-political regime of accumulation.

(Morini 2010).

Another interesting issue is that in Spain we are now approaching the use of social networks in the classroom as a positive way for teachers to involve more parents in the education of their children (Hita 2011). What worries us is that this tool would ideally be established as a complementary mode of education and not ending in a virtual and comfortable way of raising children, where parents are so busy at work they avoid spending time educating and sharing interests with their children.

Another approach is that of Nicla Vassallo (2011), who organized the Italian National Centre for Women's Health to promote a culture of female health in denouncing all the cultural stereotypes that women would like to put off. She suggests thinking in terms of a feminine pluralism, referring to unique personalities for a new coexistence among individuals—men and women who mingle and interact. The philosopher thinks that humans

are enrolled in a specific historical situation and there are several ways they can be combined, including sexual orientation, personal history, culture, age, etc.

We agree with the idea of thinking about the person as unique, however both genders are defined as heterosexuals, and therefore we believe that men and women are concepts that reflect a kind of nature.

Nicla Vasallo wants to give a sense of extreme freedom to all decisions of women in the sexual sphere—abortion, conception, freedom of behaviour and so on—and in this sense Sheree Cartwright (2008) also defends maternity as a personal choice. The criticism that we can make is that her sense of freedom is extreme and we should also consider the woman as a member in society, as she has to respect others, and consider the opinion of her partner at the time of motherhood and the common good due to the society from which she also receives some benefits.

Lea Melandri (2011), from a militant feminist stance, does not conform to what women have achieved in society and says that more is needed to be done:

But we must also have the courage to ask awkward and embarrassing questions about what now seems strikingly like a contradiction: a movement that gave women a movement and citizenship in the world so far unknown, but that inexplicably found suitable, reluctant to open conflicts, acrobats and stretches to reconcile the two realities made it impossible to remain separate, the home and the polis, the body and mind, the feminine and masculine hardness, the affection and the complexity of social life.

(Melandri 2011, 8)

Research Studies on Contemporary Women

The pursuit of English literature has shown us articles and studies on the lifestyle of women in the fields of sociology, psychology, medical psychology and medicine in the last ten years. We will deal with sociological literature and briefly mention the studies of other disciplines to discuss the direction in which the scientific interest in women is progressing.

Rainwater & Coleman (1959) carried out the first study on women as the wives of working men. Ester Mathews & David V. Tiedeman (1964) made a study on the relationship of eighteen attitudes towards career and marriage and the lifestyles of girls and young women. The effect of attitude towards career and marriage differs in three developmental stages:

- a) A pseudo-career drive seems to appear in some women during early adolescence.
- b) Major attitudinal themes affecting lifestyles during early maturation are, in order of importance:
 - b.1. the woman’s impression of the male reaction to her intelligence
 - b.2. struggle over the possible position of the dominance of men at work and the place of women at home
 - b.3. conflict between family and work demands on the time of a wife and mother
 - b.4. dilemmas of timing in dating and marriage
 - b.5. issues in acceptance of the general outline of the feminine role.

In another study of the 1970s, Judith Birnbaum (1971) researched patterns of life, personality and female self-esteem. In sociology, Catherine Hakim (2011) explains that recent social and economic changes have focused attention first on promoting women’s employment, and more recently on reversing declining fertility. Hakim’s theory sets out five socio-economic conditions which create a new scenario for women:

- a) The contraceptive revolution gives women reliable control over their own fertility for the first time in history.
- b) The equal opportunities revolution gives women genuine access to all positions and occupations for the first time in history
- c) The expansion of white-collar occupations, which are more attractive to women.
- d) The creation of jobs for secondary earners, such as part-time jobs, working at home, tele-working and annual hours contracts.
- e) The increasing importance of attitudes and values in affluent modern societies, which gives everyone the freedom to choose their lifestyle.

The theory posits that women fall into three main groups:

- a) Women who prefer a “work-centred lifestyle” and often remain childless by choice (about 20%)
- b) Women who prefer a “home-centred lifestyle” often have many children and little paid work (about 20%)
- c) The remaining majority of women can be labelled “adaptive” and are those who seek to combine paid work with family life and raising children.

Catherine Hakim carried out two national surveys in Britain and Spain to test the theory and showed that questions eliciting personal preferences

can strongly predict women's employment decisions and fertility. In contrast, women's behaviour did not predict their attitudes, showing that lifestyle preferences are not *post hoc* rationalizations. This study also showed that other sex-role attitudes do not have the same impact on women's behaviour; notably, the patriarchal values measured by most social surveys, including the European Social Survey, have virtually no impact on women's personal choices and behaviour.

Hakim's Preference theory tries to understand women's choices regarding paid jobs and family work, and provides an empirical basis for social and family policy. The theory tries to predict continuing gender differences in lifestyle and life goals, and increasing diversity in life patterns for men and women. In contrast, feminism insists that all gender differences can and should be eliminated so that diversity will vanish.

Hakim thinks that social scientists are now giving more attention and weight to (unpaid) reproductive and household work, bringing them into the policy limelight. She also says that policy-makers are confirming the economic and social importance of population growth, and hence the necessity for active population policies.

For the British, judging by the results, the two policies that appear to have the greatest potential for encouraging women to achieve their ideal family size are raising family allowances to reduce the cost of children, and the homecare allowance which pays one parent a salary for full-time childcare. Hakim estimates that both have proved successful and effective in Europe.

Overall, the sociologist argues that social policy must recognize female diversity and support it with diversified policies that support all groups of women. To date, she thinks that careerist women have been given greater support than family-centred women, who tend to have the largest families.

The main criticisms of "preference theory" are that it does not demonstrate causality, that the observed preferences cause changes in fertility patterns, and that fertility may change values and preferences. It has also been suggested that the observed effect of lifestyle preferences on achieved fertility may absorb other factors when controlled for. A follow up study from Rabusic & Manea (2008) found that Hakim's typology does not work well in the Czech Republic, and that there were no important differences in fertility between the three groups in that country. A second follow up study from Vitali et al. (2009), surveying eleven European countries, found support for the theory in only two countries (Britain and Denmark).

Egbert R. te Velde (Beets et al. 2011) estimates that true equality must entail the notion that both sexes are equivalent in the sense of having the

same value, which is different from being the same. Unique female features and abilities such as the deep-rooted wish to have a child to care for, to be able to become pregnant, deliver a child, breastfeed, look after babies and better empathic qualities should not only be accepted and taken into account but highly appreciated.

The associations become the place where women develop their natural solidarity and become stronger. From sociology, Carolin Hagelskamp et al. (2011) study the work-family experiences of low-income and ethnic minority women in New York City from a role identity theory and the concept of gendered moral rationalities, proposing a five-fold typology of mother-worker role identity associations: dissociated, equivalent, compartmentalized, integrated and facilitative. This typology facilitates the understanding of low-income mothers' work-family decisions and experiences.

Identity theory is a micro sociological theory linking self attitudes, or identities, to the role relationships and role-related behaviour of individuals. Identity theorists argue that the self consists of a collection of identities, each of which is based on occupying a particular role (Stryker 1968). For example, familial identities might include those of a spouse or parent and occupational identities might include those of an accountant or salesperson. In turn, these role identities are said to influence behaviour in that each has a set of associated meanings and expectations for the self (Burke & Reitzes 1981).

“Gendered moral rationalities” is a term presented by Simon Duncan and Rosalind Edwards in 1997 that tries to understand the social processes by which lone mothers take up, or do not take up, paid work. In 2003 Simon Duncan and Rosalind Edwards, with other researchers, presented another study concluding that the adult worker model is severely limited:

The male breadwinner model, which dominated both policy assumptions and social ideals in the post-war welfare state, is increasingly being supplanted by an adult worker family model. In this new model, both men and women are assumed to be primarily workers in the labor market, who as fathers and mothers pool their earned income in supporting children ... We conclude that both the empirical and theoretical assumptions of the adult worker model are severely limited.

(Duncan 2003, 309).

Studies on women's health today are varied and provide an overview of the phenomenology that women face due to the job and family context they seek to reconcile. We will refer below to four studies we found interesting.

There are numerous studies that focus on biology, especially in recent years, with the neuro-anatomical and neuro trying to find sexual differences, such as the one by Natalia Lopez Moratalla (2007) that compares female and male brains.

A study by Maria Melchior et al. in 1997 took a sample in Dunedin (New Zealand) and concluded that work stress appears to precipitate diagnosable depression and anxiety in previously healthy young workers. Helping workers to cope with work stress or reducing work stress levels could prevent the occurrence of clinically significant depression and anxiety.

Soares et al.'s (2007) study in Sweden took the theme of "burnt out at work" (burnout) in a sample of 3,591 women. This research concludes that about 21% of the women had high burnout, and compared to those with low burnout they were more often younger, divorced, blue-collar workers, with lower education, foreigners, on unemployment/retirement/sick-leave, financially strained, used more medication and smoked more cigarettes, reported higher work demands and lower control/social support at work, and had more instances of somatic problems and depression.

Van der Berg et al. (2008) studied the influence of psychosocial factors in work and lifestyle on the health and work ability among professional workers in the Netherlands. These researchers conclude that among white-collar workers mental and physical health were of equal importance to work ability, but only mental health and work ability shared the same determinants. The strong association between psychosocial factors at work and mental health and work ability suggest that, in this study, population health promotion should address working conditions rather than individual lifestyle factors.

Another study focuses on the relationship between lifestyle relating to health (eating habits, alcohol and tobacco) and fertility (Revonta et al. 2010). Their study in Finland concluded that 10–15% of couples are infertile.

Conclusions

Although the social conscience is clear and it is not disputed that women deserve an equal role with men in areas of legal rights, both professionally and socially, studies and practical life show that we are still in a process of improvement.

Some studies also confirm that for women it has been difficult to continue with the weight of the household chores plus children along with