



Young players and their contexts

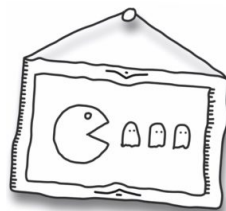
“there’s an enormous gap between youth culture, which is steeped in social networking and videogames, and adult culture, which is far from these things. Adults don’t understand these things much and yet, paradoxically, they’re even greater victims of them than the kids are”. Quote from an interview with an educator. [EI09](#).

Keywords: [Children](#), [Ethics and Games](#), [Regulation](#)

Who will find this scenario particularly interesting? [Parents](#), [Policy makers](#), [Researchers](#)

Description

During the project, the issue of children’s gameplay at home was raised by a number of participants. This scenario is concerned with the ‘soft’ regulation of gameplay in the home and other



personal contexts. Video games *can* be problematic where young children are concerned. Some games may not be appropriate for young players, either due to their content or the connectivity they afford to other unknown players via the internet. While a child’s unmediated access to gameplay therefore potentially has its dangers, a blanket ban on gameplay at home also has the potential to miss out on a whole range of benefits that can come from age-appropriate gameplay. A number of interviewees also

saw games as contributing to the generation gap, suggesting that parents have scarce awareness or understanding of game contents and age limits. Consequently, children and teens often have access to games with unsuitably explicit (especially violent) content, and both parental and legal regulation is considered inadequate.

Meet Freya (aged 9) and Jessica, her mum



Freya has expressed an interest in playing a new video game on her tablet device. Her mother, Jessica, is uncertain whether the game contains suitable content for her daughter. She has recently read an article about the potentially damaging effects of gameplay in relation to addiction and children being exposed to inappropriate content. Rather than saying no, however, she decides to do some of her own research to educate herself about the game. Jessica does an internet search for the game and finds some reviews that appear to suggest that the game would be suitable for her daughter, but might be a little complicated in places. She downloads the game herself and plays through the first level. She finds that there's an interesting backstory to the game and the interaction with other characters involves some words which Freya might struggle with on her own, even though the content is seemingly age appropriate.

As a result, Jessica suggests that they play the game together. Freya takes the lead, taking control of the tablet device whilst seated on the sofa next to her mother. They play together, discussing their progress, talking through the tricky puzzles and solving problems together. This joint, shared activity spans across a number of sessions. Even when not playing they often discuss the game, anticipating the next session or reviewing sections of gameplay that they particularly enjoyed. Jessica notices that, as well as enjoying the social aspect of gameplay with her daughter, Freya has also – unprompted – used the game as a stimulus for a number of other activities. Her drawings and writing have featured adapted versions of characters from the game, and she also sees her daughter role-playing scenarios from the game when playing off-screen with her friends from school.



By getting involved in her daughter's game play, Jessica has gained insight into the kind of content that is available to her daughter. Although there is not always time for them to play together in this way, from this point onwards Jessica always takes an active interest in the games that her daughter is playing, due to the safeguarding issues but also because of her first hand experience of the wider benefits of engaging with this activity collaboratively, rather than leaving Freya pursuing her interest independently.

In a nutshell

Video games can bring ethical and moral complications with them, particularly where children are involved. However, there are also multiple benefits of playing video games.

While the idea of banning video games belongs in the past, moderation in usage and age- appropriateness of content are important. The need for 'soft regulation' at home (actively and positively involving parents and guardians) is important and should be discussed more.

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Partners

