Parental Management of Children's domestic online videogame usage — Abstract for Digitising Early Childhood International Conference 2018

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Children are increasingly engaging in online videogame practices from within domestic locations. Games such as *Minecraft*, *Mario Kart* and the *Peggle* series are examples of videogames with online components popular among Australian children. These popular games require significant techno-literacy and can incorporate complicated social experiences. Accordingly, the online interactions of these videogames present several potential avenues for risk that necessitate parental monitoring of child online play habits. However, parental management is frequently engaged through differing interpretations of online usage and techno-literacy competencies, creating tension between parents and children.

This paper seeks to unpack the tension between childhood online play practices and parental supervision within Australian homes. This contextualisation is achieved through an analysis of data from two research studies; *Games of Being Mobile* (GoBM) an ARC research grant into Australian mobile gaming practices and *Playing with Steam* (PwS) an associated PhD project examining Melbourne domestic usage of the Steam videogaming platform. Both of these projects uncovered cases of children's domestic online videogame practices — and subsequent parental management approaches that created domestic tension between the groups.

This paper will examine this tension through an analysis of parental management strategies involving notions of temporal limitation, sequestering a device and removing online game access entirely. As digital technology becomes increasingly ubiquitous within the home, these approaches neglect ideas of 'balanced usage' and multi-faceted engagement. To this extent, Australian parental management strategies appear to revolve around removal rather than monitoring and promoting alternative forms of usage.

This paper highlights these problematic parental management strategies in order to provide insight into the need to rethink approaches to management of children's digital leisure activities. In a domestic environment inundated with digital technology, strategies employing total device separation are increasingly problematic — deterring children from engaging and learning with critical techno-literacies and ideas of balanced usage. Through it's analysis of Australian parental management of children's online videogame usage, this paper suggests that there is a need rethink management approaches to better facilitate 'balanced usage' practices with Australian homes.