

Why Young Children Don't Play: Parents' Accounts of Non-engagement with Digital Games

Jane Mavoa, Bjorn Nansen, Martin Gibbs, Marcus Carter

Young children increasingly have play experiences that transverse digital and non-digital spaces (Giddings, 2014; Kervin, Verenikina, & Rivera, 2015; Marsh, Plowman, Yamada-Rice, Bishop, & Scott, 2016). However, while many children play digital games, many do not. As conversations about children's digital worlds shift from focus on risks and harm, toward ensuring provision of opportunities for maximizing benefits associated with digital media (Livingstone & Third, 2017), there is a need to consider the permissive and restrictive forces acting on these opportunities. In this paper we consider the views of parents of young (three to five year old) children who do not play any digital games. Data was collected through text responses to part of a larger survey about children's digital gaming practices. We present the reasons parents gave for their children not playing any digital games. We discuss how this group of parents construct play in utilitarian terms and how digital games, talked about as a form of 'screen time', are thought to either displace time away from more beneficial types of play, do not add anything of value to, or actively cause some harm to, children's development. These findings are then related to current early years education frameworks which include the use of technology, including digital games, in learning tasks and outcomes. We urge educators, and media scholars alike, to consider these parental constructions, as influential components of the context of children's informal experiences with digital games at home.

References

Giddings, S. (2014). *Gameworlds: Virtual Media and Children's Everyday Play*. New York; London: Bloomsbury. Retrieved from <http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/gameworlds-9781623568023/>

Kervin, L., Verenikina, I., & Rivera, M. (2015). Collaborative onscreen and offscreen play: examining meaning-making complexities - Digital Culture & Education. *Digital Culture & Education*, 7(2), 228–239.

Livingstone, S., & Third, A. (2017). Children and young people's rights in the digital age: an emerging agenda. *New Media & Society*. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/home/nms>

Marsh, J., Plowman, L., Yamada-Rice, D., Bishop, J., & Scott, F. (2016). Digital play: a new classification. *Early Years*, 36(3), 242–253.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2016.1167675>