And Yet Children Play: Echoing Voices of Computer Game Concerns in Barcelona

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In Western and westernised capitalist regions, usual concerns about computer games in relation to children are produced and reproduced in scientific literature, media outlets, laws, brochures, parents' talk and even in children's talk. These concerns, as literature on parental mediation shows (e.g. Nikken & Jansz, 2007; Shin & Huh, 2011; Torrecillas, Vázquez-Barrio & Monteagudo, 2017), may span from the very content of the games to the player's behaviour before, during and after the gaming session. A local example of concerns can be found in a guide for parents subtitled *for the choice and use of video games*, published by the Barcelona City Council, with the support of the Catalan Government, in 2006 (Barcelona City Council, 2006). The guide, titled *Who sets the rules of the game?* includes the following sections: *What to play? When to play? Where to play? Who to play with? Video games and the Internet, Labels* and, finally, a *Decalogue of good practices*[1]. In it, concerns are age-related (the appropriate age at which a specific game can be played depending on the depictions of culturally sensitive content) and behaviour related (what amount of time should kids spend playing instead of doing other culturally more valuable activities, and where to play and with whom). Both types of concerns also imply a third kind of concern about which regulations of playtime are needed and which restrictions are to be put in place.

As Ulf Hannerz described, meanings are distributed over people and social relationships in the world in an increasingly intricate manner (Hannerz, 1992). For

1 These documents are all originally in Catalan and translated by us. The same is the case with the interview material on which the dialogue and analysis of this chapters are based.

instance, as computer gaming spreads, public concerns on computer gaming have also become widely distributed and blur social units (namely, cultures, societies, groups, etc.) that we had previously conceived as neatly delimited. Concerns on computer gaming have disseminated and are recreated in public discussions that are not confined within cultural (in its classical anthropological sense) or national boundaries. This does not mean that concerns may not change in relation to different legal, religious, child-rearing, etc. traditions, but it does emphasise that very similar concerns can be found in rather different countries, showing that discourses also circulate within similar socioeconomic status and consumption patterns.

In order to present the concerns we found from research done in Barcelona (Catalonia), we will present, and afterwards analyse, a brief, dramatized dialogue that we wrote using verbatim utterances from Barcelona parents' discussions on computer gaming. In doing this, we wish to transmit their concerns for an easy and quick read, but also to make the emotional content of the discussions accessible, which is probably done better using a narrative form. Our dramatic vignette concentrates on multiple scattered concerns, found in several discussion groups, in one brief conversation between two people. While it may enable the reader to listen specifically to the concerns, it may artificially amplify the relevance of the worries, giving them more importance than they had in their actual spoken context. For example, as we will stress in the conclusions section, none of the worries discussed was powerful enough to stop parents from buying computer games for their children. In this sense, the reader should be careful interpreting the results and should compare them to their own local knowledge and experience on the subject.

METHODOLOGY

Between April and November 2010, we conducted a study on gender and computer games in Barcelona for which we organised six computer game workshops for parents and their children. These workshops took place in schools and community centres in the city. Couples of mothers or fathers with a son or a daughter aged between eight and fourteen years old attended the workshops. After a brief introduction in which we explained that they would participate in a study on computer games, they played four computer games for an hour: *Dance Factory* (Broadsword Interactive, 2006), *Spore Creature Creator* (Maxis, 2008), *Super Mario Galaxy* (Nintendo EAD Tokyo, 2007) and *Shaun White Snowboarding* (Ubisoft Montreal, 2008). These games are varied, both in their content (group

and/or competitive games, sports games, dance games, figure construction games or commercial hits) and in their platform (computer, traditional console, console with movement recognition and dance pad). Once they finished, adults and children were taken into separate discussion groups, each comprising five to eight individuals. We recorded both the playing and the subsequent discussion groups on video tape. In this chapter, we will only present what the 37 adult participants (26 women and 11 men) said. Their discussions constituted a very specific debate on the experience that they had just had. As the specific goal of the research was directed towards analysing gender and technology relationships, concerns on computer games were not introduced by the interviewers. It seems interesting, then, to see which concerns appear spontaneously, without being prompted by questions during the conversation. Each discussion group lasted between 45 to 50 minutes. The concerns we detected account for around 7 per cent of the utterances.

We performed a thematic analysis focused on the concerns, resulting in four main categories of codes. The first one was related to the addicting power of computer games. By the amount of sentences devoted to it, this actually constituted the most prominent worry. Many parents have experienced first-hand, or through a family member, the long and uninterrupted hours of play that some games require. This worry is based on their practical evidence that gaming is not only difficult to stop solely on the power of one's own will but also, above all, it is especially difficult to make children stop playing. In fact, one of the participants brought up that games are especially designed to create addiction. The second category involved all the codes related to the regulation of playing. In these parents' view, time to play must be scheduled, limited and controlled in order to give priority to homework or other domestic chores, but overall, to prevent children from getting hooked on the games and experiencing too much anxiety. In addition, in their opinion, there should be a right age at which to play certain games, although this is something difficult to enforce because the gaming of other siblings can interfere with what is believed desirable.

Computer games become an issue on how to organise the home materially, so, in accordance with their addictive power, places to store computer games may have to be assigned carefully and access has to be supervised. This can be done by storing them in closets and drawers or, on the contrary, by leaving them in plain sight, so they can be easily checked when they are in use.

A third category was constituted by a frequent discussion on how to avoid being trapped to buy the latest version of every console. Parents complained that new models appear constantly and that this is a financial burden.

Finally, the fourth category was related to the power attributed to the devices for causing a wide array of human actions and reactions. According to the parents,

computer games can cause anxiety, excitement and nervousness for both children and adults. Computer games are also in some cases related to distraction and lack of concentration. They can cause isolation – usually feared – thus bringing praise to games that allow siblings to play together. Surprisingly, as one of the much-voiced worries (cf. Barker & Petley, 2001; Jenkins, 2013), violence or aggression in computer games only appeared anecdotally in the conversations, as something that some boys appreciate. However, partially related to this, increased competition (between friends, brothers, and even between fathers and sons) is something parents worry about.

With the sentences expressing concerns, we have built an ethnodramatic text inspired by verbatim theatre methods (Shah & Greer, 2017) in order to preserve and communicate the multi-voiced and dialogical character of the discussion groups – as others have done before, mainly in the field of critical ethnography (Mienczakowski, 1995; Fox, 1996; Glesne, 1997; Richardson, 2000; Saldaña, 2003; 2008). Ethnodrama also suits the purpose of transmitting the emotional content that we felt was present during the discussions (Cannon, 2012). To create a dramatic text, we had to distribute among several characters the concerns and the types of relationships with technology that appeared in the discussion groups. When doing this, we realised that all fragments could be distributed between just two characters, without compromising the need for coherence that this kind of narrative imposes. While we constructed the structure of the dialogue, we did not do so for the utterances. In this manner, through translating from Catalan, ordering and slightly editing the fragments – only for the sake of the reading and characters' coherence, as the content and phrasing remain unaltered – we created a dramatized hypothetical conversation between two avatars of the participants who condense the different concerns of parents.

It is no accident that the avatars, which represent the words of all parents, are women – not only since women were more than two-thirds of the adult participants, but also because apparent gender differences in the discussions were more likely due to the differences in participants' experience with computer games than to a gender trait. It is interesting to note that men with no computer game experience talked like the women with similar low levels of familiarity with gaming (which were the clear majority). Very few participants had a high level of expertise in computing or computer games, and among these, there was only one woman. The only worry that savvy participants shared with the others was related to the addictive power of computer games, which is the most common concern we found, regardless of personal experience with computer games.

THE PLAY

Setting. The scene takes place in a room with eight computer game settings: two PlayStations (PS), two Wii consoles and two computers, all against the walls, and two dance pads in the middle of the room. Each one has a corresponding blinking screen. The PS and computers are set on tables with two chairs in front of them. Beside each computer game setting there is a video camera on a tripod. On the background wall of the stage a late afternoon sunlight comes through an open door.

Characters. Anna has two sons; one is ten and the other elven. She has never played computer games before today. Maria used to play a lot with her ex-husband when she was younger, but she does not anymore. She has three children – two boys and a daughter. Just a few moments ago they were both playing computer games in the room, each with one of their children.

[Before the lights go on we hear noises of chairs and tables being pushed away. When the lights go on we see two women chatting near the only door of the room. It seems they are just about to leave. There is no one else in the room, but there is a distant noise of children playing, probably their own, coming from outside.]
Anna: [Softly grasps Maria's arm before she goes out through the door.] Hey, what do you think about what just happened? Have you played with any of these games on other occasions?
Maria: [Stops and turns towards Anna.] No, I haven't.
Anna: Neither have I.
Maria: You know, I'm not really interested in them.
Anna: [Not really surprised, but curious.] You're not interested in games?
Maria: No, no... It's not that I'm not interested in them, I have no interest in... I don't see... Well, a little bit is OK, the Wii is OK, the dance one, I like it too, the others, well...
Anna: You know, just before, while playing, I felt dumb…
Maria: Really?
Anna: Absolutely, because I didn't understand any of the games [she laughs], the dance one, no, no, I didn't like it, well, it's not for me, and the monster's one, which is calmer, and the skiing one, yes it is, but I get nervous. It makes me very nervous playing with these things. No, I don't like it. Nor playing, nor the dance one, nor anything related... Well, the dance one maybe because.... But no, it doesn't attract me neither, I mean, apart from that these are things that I'm not really interested in. I mean, I don't pay too much attention to figure out what you have to do here, or what you don't have to do. No, because he has been playing

all the time, my son, I mean, he was the one who directed everything, you know, I was getting a little bit behind… There with the monster, for example, I haven't touched anything, because he was at the commands to make… I don't know what. You had to create the monster, and I didn't do anything at all [she laughs]. You know, this is the first time I played with Jaume, to tell the truth, because at home his father is more into it, and he plays with them.

Maria: Not me, because you see, I separated five years ago, and my husband used to come home from work at 2 a.m. and at 6 a.m. We were hooked, him and me, and I was leaving for work at 7!

Anna: [Really surprised] Wow!

Maria: And I don't want this for my girl.

Anna: Of course...

Maria: Because she has very good grades. And the children, you know, they just come home and get hooked on the games, and it's very dangerous.

Anna: I'm not interested, but let's face it, if I were interested, I'd get hooked on them. There are games that would hook me. And I have other things to do... There are other priorities [she laughs]… than spending two hours there...

Maria: I know, well, from time to time, I don't say no, but not as... maybe if she was playing longer, maybe yes, I would go with her, at a given time, but the times that she plays I have other things to do, and of course, the schedule is incompatible [she laughs].

Anna: I fear for my sons because my nephew, who is nineteen years old, is really hooked on games and *anime*, so I was afraid that they'd get hooked too.

Maria: The thing is that you have to find the right moment, don't you? And the right game too, because everyone is different, right?

Anna: If everything properly done, it doesn't have to be bad.

Maria: Of course.

Anna: You play a while, and that is it. The bad thing is that it may... that it may get you addicted.

Maria: You get provoked... and as there are many who are really hooked... but it's the same with the computer, and with the... Well, I honestly believe that all these games, especially PlayStation, create addiction. I am convinced they are really made for that, because people wouldn't buy them, nor would they cause addiction.

Anna: [Sounding sceptical] Uh-hmm.

Maria: I think that if I let her, she would play more, she would go "brrrrrr", but as we make some rules and we do other things so she's not hooked all day, then... Sometimes... there are some weekends when she forgets she has it, you know?

Because you already do... you try doing other activities so she's not hooked to that little machine all day long.
Anna: Of course.
Maria: For if not, one would... one would be like "ta-ta-ta-ta-ta" all day long [she acts as if she were pressing buttons].
Anna: Right.
Maria: And she would not stop nor... nor eat... And no, this can't...
Anna: Well, my… they have their instructions. Then, until they don't finish their chores, they don't get their stuff, it's that simple.
Maria: Uh-huh.
Anna: Since they were little, huh, it has been so. Then, no, I never even had to worry.
Maria: At home, hmmm... that is, during the week, playing is forbidden. With anything – be it on the phone, consoles, whichever device. On the weekend, open season, but... Or when a guest comes home. When there is a guest, we let them play, on the contrary, weekend is…
Anna: Mine are... One is older than my son here. That is, one is eleven and the other is nearly ten. They have a TV in their room, and they have it, well, upstairs... Time flies. They don't move, they can spend time, time, time... And it is as you say, you have to go and turn it off. [Anna makes a long pause, while she seems to think better about this.] It's not that I think it's wrong, you know? Well, you know, I've always known that forbidden things are the ones you like the most, right? I have always thought this, then I try to live with it, don't you? Well, you play for a short while, but maybe for 10 minutes, or 15, a short football match, and that is it, and they satisfy their craving, as I say, and that's all, I don't think that's anything wrong, I don't know, 15 minutes.
Maria: We were living at my parents' house, and it happened every day, right? And to have to unplug the child and pull him off the machine every day... Because there was no way to unplug him: "One more minute, one more minute", and that… that is... no. I would not leave it in the bedroom. I have all that stuff stored.
Anna: I leave it in sight, everything in sight. [Anna pauses, thinking.] Yes, everything in sight, everything accessible, all of it. And for the record, when the... When you have them you are afraid of... I don't know if it has happened to you, has it? When it's the first time... Beware! Well, parents, grandparents... they are all saying, "Beware because they say on TV that they get hooked, that this is addictive!"
Maria: I have them really hooked, that is, we are five people at home, well, the two boys are hooked to every computer, Wii, Nintendo... and the girl doesn't. It is a very obvious thing at home – girls want to do something else, and boys are... fully hooked. There's my brother who is thirty-two years old and he is up until 5

in the morning, huh, playing to this... so... it is something that I don't want for my sons.

Anna: Well, then, do you like them playing video games or not?

Maria: [Dubitative] Well...

Anna: As long as it is not somehow excessive…

Maria: When I see that, when I see her a little bit excited like this… then you, you turn it off. Off! ... Then it takes a moment, a moment to calm down and not to... And then she maybe takes it after a... But I know now that when I see that something is really wished-for, that's when I say "Off!"

Anna: Right.

Maria: The other day they also said on television that this affects their focusing capacity. They get distracted, more than the children who don't play. I don't know if you've heard that as well?

Anna: Yeah, I heard, maybe on TV3, where they said that a study was done that showed that those who spent many hours playing with the computer... those that have this ability to play with all that... That that took from them their focus on school. That that had been proved. They were so distracted and had so many things at their fingertips, so easily, that they didn't... It is not that they didn't have the time, it is that they did not learn…

Maria: …the means. That is, to look for what they needed for everyday life.

Anna: I don't know. Anyway, it was an investigation, and I said, "Gosh! I'm worried", you know?

Maria: I think that anxiety is generated, isn't it? That is, these games, where they learn skills, and where they learn huh... maybe to self-organise... All these aspects are positive, but a point is reached where the kid makes it a habit, a thing, a routine with a game and this makes them anxious and sometimes they are only thinking about playing it, right? And this happens to us all, I think that this has hooked us all, and that's the point with video games and these technologies that scares you, don't they? That the kid...

Anna: I know some... I know some kids who look forward to finishing lunch or dinner just to go at it again.

Maria: I know.

Anna: What's happened sometimes, when a little friend comes, or they've gone to a friend's house and you go to get them or whatever, you see that one is playing with the DS and the other one is out there, and I say, why aren't you together, weren't you supposed to play?

Maria: In my case, the two boys play together a lot. The two have a very good relationship and they play football, and now they have discovered that they can play on the same team, and that they can pass the ball to the other, because until

now they didn't, and a friend of their father told them that they could play the game together.

Anna: The Wii has many things, and as the Wii is for the family, it is more shared, it is more…

Maria: Yeah, it's more for the whole family, and it's more… And it is true that they play with their brother, sometimes they both play together. I usually like games where both can play at the same time, because... I don't know, they play against each other... Football or any competition and all that... These platform games, like Mario Galaxy, where you play alone and all that, I don't really like them.

Anna: In my case, today, we really got into one of the games and we collaborated a lot. Now, there's a small dose of competition, so, depending on which game, we had to be very careful, or we'd start throwing things at each other, for example with Mario Kart, things can end badly. I don't tolerate teasing. I get in a bad mood.

Maria: I don't know about that, but as they grow, boys remain competitive and more aggressive, so to say, for the kind of, for it's... because they are genetically like that.

Anna: Don't they ask you for video games on birthdays, Christmas and all sorts of occasions?

Maria: Mine, yes, and the girl too.

Anna: In my older child's classroom, there's a girl... There's a girl, and this girl, you see, for example, she already has... she has 3D glasses, and these devices were out… When? Two months ago? She has the normal Nintendo, which was just released last year, and now for her first communion she asked for the other one.

Maria: Mine have the Nintendo and now they are asking me for the Nintendo DSi, and I say they already have the other Nintendo...

Anna: I know, but there is a large one.

Maria: Yes, now there is one with a bigger screen.

Anna: Yeah.

Maria: And I say, "Look, you already have Xbox!"

Anna: But this is a dynamic that... you see we fall into it and, as parents, we are to blame.

Maria: I know, I know, because we spoil them.

Anna: Each week you'd buy a new one, because they evolve... from one day to the other, that is, they are such bastards.

Maria: Yeah.

Anna: They are releasing the DS, and bang, the next week you have another one, the DS XL, the large one.

Maria: All this also depends on, sorry, huh, it depends on the siblings. For example, the older one didn't see a console until he was seven or eight years old, well… He saw one... because we had one at home, we had it there, abandoned, and didn't see it anymore. Instead, the younger, who is already two years old, having two older siblings that have already played and everything, clearly... Well from a very young age…

Anna: He is an expert.

Maria: Exactly. And sometimes, I mean, many times we have had to get up, and go and say, "Listen, you should stop, OK?" This one is too young, these games… We have to go back, which is what you've done, but it also depends on whether they have siblings or not.

Anna: What I can't find any sense in is on spending an entire afternoon with... with... with a little machine. It's hard for me: the games, them spending hours and hours throughout the afternoon with a DS or a little machine, it is what I… [Anna pauses, expecting Maria to say something, but Maria is listening and nodding]. See, in my case, I never play video games with them, on the computer. It is an activity they do by themselves, and in addition to this, personally, I have always considered myself useless with the whole issue... computer and technologies, new technologies. And perhaps it is because I have no skills. That said, there is also a question of... of me being more from the humanities, isn't there? Then, to start with, I really love to see this ability they have, this lack of prejudice at the time they get into it. Because first of all, what I always intend to is to understand what's going on, and they begin trying, without... without considering what they will do, right? And what is the use of it... That is, well, they rush headlong into it. This got me, got me quite... well, astonished. And also, I see this with a cousin of his, much younger than Jaume. She's five years old, and also handles these things with complete freedom and without any kind of fear, and, well, I don't know, I think it's obviously a brutal generation gap, which I didn't have at their age, and they see this as a very normal thing, right?

[Most lights fade, now the two women are only illuminated by the light coming from the door near them.]

Maria: [Looking relieved.] Well, thanks for the chat, I think we should be leaving now, it looks that they are closing up.

Anna: [Feeling good that she could share all her feelings, she smiles.] Oh, yeah, thank you, great chat, see you tomorrow!

[Both women cross to the door and leave the scene.]

DISCUSSION

Attitudes can be understood as a set of widespread beliefs with a high emotional content (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). For instance, the belief that games create addiction is sometimes accompanied by explicit fear, as a participant said, "Children, you know, they just come home and get hooked on the games, and that is very dangerous". According to Potter and Wetherell (1987) attitudes cannot be considered as something we have in mind, nor as an individual internal prejudice, but as an evaluative practice. Attitudes are ways of speaking by which we let others know our position about certain realities. We use language to do things: ordering and asking, highlighting or ignoring, accusing or convincing and of course evaluating, as language is imbued with values. Values are not individual visions of the world. The values that a person defends or attacks directly relate to the groups to which one belongs or aspires to belong to. This can be verified if we look at how we talk; far from 'simply describing' their opinions on computer games, parents used the discussion to confront their current practices compared to other practices, to check their attitudes against the attitudes of others and, of course, to save face in front of others and appear as normal, decent parents. This is not something different from what can be found in common everyday discussions at family dinners or parents' meetings. Paraphrasing Livingstone and Bober on children (2006, p. 98), parents are also active and interpretative agents who appropriate and shape the meanings and consequences of computer games through a series of established and novel social semiotic practices.

Computer gaming is not an indifferent subject; parents' talk is filled with emotional words and statements. The use of emotional words marks the values circulating during the discussion, for emotions transport meaning (Gil-Juárez, 2009) and take shape in situated social activities (Wetherell, 2012). Emotions can be considered as the intensities and forces that variously energise, contradict and overwhelm the narratives through which we live (White, 2017). In trying to disentangle the meaning of parents' utterances, we re-coded the fragments coded previously as showing concerns, using emotion, values and beliefs coding (Saldaña, 2013)[2]. In that sense, to look for affect is to try to account for the ways in which people make sense out of the impasse of sense (Mazzarella, 2017). This secondary coding allowed us to summarise the play of contradictory emotions that we found in parents' talk in one statement: "There are things far more important than computer games; we could engage in them, but we are afraid to do so".

2 Following Cannon (2012), emotion codes were also used to write the stage directions.

As Kultima and her colleagues comment, "While play is an easily acceptable and normal element in the context of children, an adult who plays can be considered as deviating from the adult norms of serious, nonplayful behavior" (Kultima et al., 2017, p. 16). The negative attitude towards computer games makes explicit a common value found among parents (mostly those with less experience with gaming) – that there are things far more important than computer games. This is more commonly expressed by mothers, perhaps because, as Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002) describe, "Girls were seen by many boys as being more 'mature' and adult-like than them – more serious, more committed to school work and less interested in having fun and joking" (p. 104). Play is accompanied by guilt, and especially, but not only, in women, as Kultima et al. (2017, p. 16) comment, "[This] attitude, that is, free play and playful behavior is childish, and thus not tolerable for adults especially in work environments, is still a prevalent view within Western adult population". The value that playing is not important, even futile, is energised by the feelings of uselessness or "dumb[ness]" that our participants express.

However, there was also a certain interest in computer games during the discussions. The ability that youngsters have with computer games is stated as admirable, and the fact that they have no fear is admirable as well. Finally, although it may not be easy, it is possible to control computer gaming with the correct implementation of rules. Parents implement many rules concerning the right moment, games and age to play (cf. Aarsand, 2018, this volume). In this sense, the household is a site of contestation between parents and children (Livingstone & Bober, 2006). Of course, if rules are implemented, it is also because parents understand that there are correct ways of playing; as one participant said, "If everything is properly done, it doesn't have to be bad". For example, playing together with friends or siblings is seen as very positive. However, perhaps in the common knowledge that rules are not omnipotent, parents provide competing activities. As one father said, "Because you already do... you try doing other activities so she is not hooked all day to that little machine". In this sense, a flavour of conformism spreads through their discussions when they assert that to forbid is useless. In addition, as Livingstone and Bober (2006) found, games are not the activity that causes the most worry: "Some internet uses are clearly considered worthwhile or, more likely, safe and so less in need of restrictive regulation (e.g. games, email, instant messaging) while others, that parents consider unsafe, are regulated more (e.g. shopping, privacy, chat, some forms of interactivity)" (p. 101). Also, ICT in general, and particularly games, have been positively promoted by some (e.g. Gee, 2003) as a site for gaining digital literacy. Both factors, may, in part, explain the ambivalence parents feel towards computer games.

Nonetheless, not all fears are overcome by the implementation of rules and the offering of more valued competing activities. Parents literally express that they are afraid and worried, not only because they are made to compulsively buy constant novelties (something for which they recognise they are to blame) but also because they have seen on TV that games negatively affect one's capacity to focus. Yet, the most consensual fear comes from the belief in the addictive power of computer games (cf. Nielsen 2018, this volume, for a critical review on the concept of non-substance addictions), which they frequently associate with increasing levels of anxiety, for both parents and children. Also, the 'hooking' power of games is strongly feared because it seems inescapable even by adults with little or no interest in games. As one father said, "I'm not interested, but let's face it, if I'd become interested, I'd get hooked, there are games that would hook me". In this sense, the parent's vision is certainly deterministic as "it construes the media is an external force that impacts on ongoing family life, directly modifying children's behaviour unless parents provide a buffer in the form of parental mediation or restriction" (Livingstone & Bober, 2006, p. 108). Still, there is currently a vivid discussion on the subject – as one mother said, "Well, I honestly believe that, all these games, especially PlayStation, create addiction, I am convinced, they're really made for that" – that is also taking place within academics (e.g. Schüll, 2012).

To state it briefly, parents not only do not favour computer games, to say the least, but also, they are actively worried about them. Yet, looking at the practices they explicitly mention (they have computer games at home and they let their children play for a more or less controlled amount of time), they are clearly not willing to position themselves against their presence and use at home. Maybe because the educational paradigms that parents embrace are slowly shifting "to a parent-child relationship that prioritises trust and negotiation, as mediated by the discourse of rights, including children's rights" (Livingstone & Bober, 2006, p. 109) or, from a more pragmatic stance, because parents in Barcelona find it much too difficult to make children stop.

CONCLUSION

Among the different groups of parents, we identified a certain consensus on concerns and the emotions that are related to them. What was diverse were the levels of experience with computer games, the number of children and their gender and the ways of confronting the concerns; computer games may be kept hidden or not, parents may believe computer games also have positive aspects or not, they can prioritise chores and homework during the entire week or only on weekdays, etc.

For this reason, our characters, Maria and Anna, are two women with a different relationship with computer games; while Maria is a former player and is familiar with them, Anna does not know anything about them and never plays. These two positions, however, do not lead them to have different concerns. On the contrary – and this is interesting – they share most of them, as the parents of our sample did. Different concerned voices, some coming from the media – as explicitly mentioned when they referred to a programme on computer game effects that they saw on TV – are echoed within the discussion groups, infusing them with arguments against computer games. During these conversations, parents cite a shared list of moral panic and social regulations, most of them spread through the media over recent decades (Barker & Petley, 2001; Feliu, 2006; Critcher, 2008), that have ended framing the general common sense of computer games in our culture. However impressive this list may be, citing a moral panic does not mean necessarily endorsing it. Actually, they are not powerful enough to make these parents and children stop using computer games. Perhaps this is because worries can also be cited as a face-saving process; parents may want to appear worried about their children's use of computer games, even if they do not intend to stop them from playing. Even if worries are legitimate under all circumstances, letting their children play can have important advantages that overcome the stated concerns. First, stopping a game is a difficult endeavour, as most parents painfully know, and trying to do so can trigger many arguments and deteriorate the atmosphere at home. Secondly, it is arguable that many adults are aware that they and their children will increase their digital literacy, which is something they would not attain by limiting their access to technology. Consequently, a consensus is built on the need to implement rules for computer game use at home, which means computer gaming is clearly a priority in parents' governance agenda of their children.

Of course, as common sense has a dilemmatic nature (Billig, 1987), needing to have rules for computer gaming is a factor that causes family disputes, making everybody uncomfortable without offering straightforward solutions to this discomfort. In accordance with that, we believe that, as researchers, we could help by not providing parents with stronger reasons to limit their children's play, as some seem to have in their agenda (e.g. Bushman & Anderson, 2001), but providing alternative points of view, for example, arguing that their children are not impacted by computer games but that they actively read them (Feliu, 2006; Feliu, Gil-Juárez & Vitores, 2010), that problematic gaming should not be confused with addiction (Ferguson, Coulson & Barnett, 2011) – as intensive reading of books is never confused with addiction – or that violence in games is not unequivocally related to any kind of real violence (Kirsh, 2006). This could help families to have better discussions and maybe even make better-informed decisions. But mostly,

calming down all the fuss around computer games may offer them a certain peace of mind on the subject.

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