Digital citizenship in domestic contexts

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Chapter 32: Digital citizenship in domestic contexts

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ABSTRACT

Digital citizenship is an important aspect of children’s rights and is receiving increasing policy attention around the world, including from the United Nations. For many children, however, it is the domestic environment where core digital rights are negotiated, with parents and teens sometimes clashing over children’s digital activities. This chapter draws upon ethnographic work with adolescent male online gamers who constitute the inner circle of a Dota 2 clan of two years’ standing. Separate interviews with five parents and four teens, and follow up focus groups with each cohort, reveal details of domestic negotiations around digital citizenship rights.

The evolving policy context around digital citizenship

In March 2019 the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child advised it was “drafting a General Comment on children’s rights in relation to the digital environment” (OHCHR, n.d.). Importantly, this notification was made under the auspices of the United
Nations Commission on Human Rights. The initiative aligns with an increasing policy emphasis on developing and recognising children’s digital citizenship. According to a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report, *Digital Kids Asia-Pacific*, digital citizenship “is about preparing children to become true digital citizens, with both the skills and the socio-emotional abilities to engage with digital technologies and other users in a critical and ethical manner while being aware of their own and others’ rights and responsibilities” (UNESCO Bangkok Office, 2019, p. 50). This chapter focuses on the development of i) socio-emotional abilities, ii) rights, iii) responsibilities, and iv) critical and ethical digital engagement, principally in the domestic context of the family home. Other definitions of digital citizenship call attention to how digital media offer a channel through which children may ‘speak truth to power’ about issues that affect them now, and which will be crucially important to the world they will inherit as adults (Green, 2020). That definition is a cogent one, but less relevant to most domestic contexts.

The current focus on digital citizenship is the most recent transformation in a journey that began by constructing children’s digital engagement as a matter of provision (approximately 1995-2004), then as a matter of protection (approximately 2005-2014) and most recently as an emerging discussion around participation (2015 onwards). Participation is crucial to the enactment of citizenship. Arguing for a specific focus on children’s rights in digital environments, Livingstone and Third (2017) note that the policy emphasis has tended towards protection: “over and again, efforts to protect them [children] unthinkingly curtail their participation rights in ways that they themselves are unable to contest, given the nature of Internet governance organizations.” (2017, p. 661).
Recognising the zeitgeist of the time, a flurry of recent policies and pronouncements relating to children’s rights in digital environments, specifically reference digital citizenship.

The European Union, for example, has embarked on an EU-wide discussion of these issues (EU Council of Europe, 2019), alongside such initiatives as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (“EU data protection rules”, n.d). These generally positive regulatory advances, which include for example ‘the right to be forgotten’ (Bunn, 2019), nonetheless have a sting in their tail since they effectively increase the age of digital consent for children in some European countries from 13 to 16 (Milkaite & Lievens, 2019).

In the United States, the Center for Digital Democracy (CDD) particularly champions children’s and young people’s rights to privacy and seeks to protect them from online commercial exploitation, especially in terms of the commodification of their data (CDD, n.d.). Elsewhere in the world, UNESCO’s Digital Kids Asia-Pacific reports leading-edge work on investigating children’s digital citizenship in terms of a “comprehensive and holistic set of competencies” (UNESCO Bangkok Office, 2019, xiii). These competencies, explored via benchmark research in Bangladesh, Fiji, South Korea and Vietnam, comprise five domains: Digital Literacy; Digital Safety and Resilience; Digital Participation and Agency; Digital Emotional Intelligence; and Digital Creativity and Innovation (2019, pp. 8-10). Extrapolating across these dimensions and relating them to the domestic context, this chapter considers the development of digital citizenship in children’s domestic lives.

**Children’s everyday lives and digital citizenship**

Although there is significant activity to promote children’s digital citizenship, the impetus is arguably adult-driven and top-down, engaging with children on occasion, but not necessarily
reflecting children’s priorities and preoccupations. The case study that follows offers a bottom-up perspective: evidence of developing recognition of digital citizenship with specific reference to a clan of teen gamers who play Dota 2. The analysis suggests that there is an articulation between proactive parental mediation, which aligns with Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig and Olafsson’s notion of “active mediation – the parent talks about content (e.g. interpreting, critiquing) to guide the child” (2011, p. 103), and digital citizenship. These engaged parental mediation approaches, which were largely followed by the families discussed here, support the growth of key skills in children’s digital activities and behaviour, and the competencies that feed into the development of digital literacies. At its best, parental mediation may induct young people into digital citizenship.

This section addresses aspects of parents’ mediation activities, especially as these relate to gaming, before introducing the specific characteristics of Dota 2, the focus game. Apperley has previously argued that children have a right to digital play, including a right to play digital games, which he sees as contributing to “literacy and civic engagement” (2015, p. 193). He notes that: “the process of playing digital games and being a part of gaming communities fosters the development of skills that support civic behavior and participation” (2015, p. 200).

In their paper on parental mediation of First Person Shooter (FPS) and Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games, Jiow, Lim and Lin (2017) also suggest that family discussions around game play may themselves fuel children’s awareness of digital citizenship rights. Jiow et al’s work focuses on parents’ mediation of gamer children aged between 12-17, since this is “the developmental stage where adolescents begin to exhibit individuation through negotiating and asserting their rights” (2017, p. 314). Arguably, negotiation and the
assertion of their own priorities are key indicators of a realisation by adolescents that they have rights.

An awareness of rights develops over time. Willett notes, of a younger gamer age group (7 to 11), that “‘big gift’ items (namely gaming consoles or tablets) [are] a frequent point of negotiation between parents and children” (2016, p. 467) in relation to birthday and Christmas presents. Between them, these researchers indicate a trajectory of awareness in children that transitions from hopes regarding gifts to the claiming of rights. Children’s realisation of their growing autonomy around making decisions and setting their own priorities becomes more evident as they earn or are given their own money. In the discussion to follow, when Mike purchased his own computer it became the catalyst for him to change the family rule around having the computer in a shared space. Mike located his new computer in his bedroom.

According to Nikken and Jansz, children’s videogaming practices from the 1980s onwards have “produced considerable public concerns, in particular about the effects of violent game content, the stereotypical representation of women and non-white ethnic groups, and the time-consuming nature of gaming” (2006, p. 182). These researchers draw upon their survey of 536 Dutch parent-child (aged 8-18) dyads to observe that, with regard to parents’ mediation of videogaming, “all three forms of parental mediation (restrictive, active and co-viewing) were more often directed towards younger children and girls than towards older children and boys” (2006, p. 185). This contrasts somewhat with Eklund and Helmersson Bergmark’s view (2013, p. 63) that, in Sweden, “Boys and young adolescents are controlled more than girls and older adolescents”. This latter finding might reflect Swedish parents’ “quite negative views on gaming” (Eklund & Helmersson Bergmark 2013, p. 63).
Leaving gendered aspects of mediation to one side, the general view concerning older children is that parents feel a “need to grant more decision-making authority to young people as they age” (Clark 2011, p. 325), implicitly acknowledging that young people living in the family home have an increasing right to act autonomously. Negotiations around potential points of parent-child disagreement, such as screen time restrictions, or adherence to media classification categories, can be challenging emotional work, however. One of the parents involved in the case study indicated a strong antipathy towards violent content in video games, saying that the game his son plays, Dota 2, is “not that sort of game. It’s a fun game [pauses] I know it’s intense but it’s a fun game they play. You know, there’s no level of violence that I’d consider to be extreme.” (Father B). This father was particularly keen that his son should respect the 18+ classifications of some the popular FPS games.

While Common Sense Media suggest a rating of 13+ for the case study game, Dota 2, describing it as a “Polished, fun fantasy multiplayer game [that] stands test of time” (Chapman, 2013), others take an alternative view. The Anti-Defamation League for example, in their report *Free to play? Hate, harassment, and positive social experiences in online games* (ADL 2019), ranked 15 games according to players’ experiences of online harassment. Dota 2 tops the list, with 79% of players reporting toxic experiences in-game. “Online multiplayer gamers who experience harassment believe they were targeted because of their race/ethnicity, religion, ability, gender or sexual orientation” note ADL (2019, p. 7), subsequently observing that “A majority of players (62%) feel that companies should do more to make online games safer and more inclusive for players” (ADL 2019, p. 28). Arguably, the public discussion around violent content in videogames may distract parents and commentators from paying attention to other aspects of children’s online experiences.
With socio-emotional abilities previously identified as a component of digital citizenship, Clark notes that “Parents attempt to utilize media for positive familial and developmental goals that may not be directly related to the media” (2011, p. 324), adding that “parents and children negotiate interpersonal relationships in and through digital mobile media” (2011, p. 335). These issues will now be explored in greater depth through a case study that uses ethnographic data gathered as part of an Australian Research Council-funded project, *Parents or peers: which group most affects the experiences of young people online, and how?* (DP110100864: see Green & Haddon, 2015), with the author and Leslie Haddon as co-Chief Investigators. Although these materials provide evidence of a discussion around digital citizenship, the initial impetus for the project was a comparison of parental influence on high school students’ digital activities compared with the influence of their peers.

**Method and approach**

The teens in this case study (Yin, 2009) were aged 16-17 at the time of the research, in 2014. Glynn, Louden, Mike and Rob (all pseudonyms for the purposes of de-identification) constituted the inner circle of a well-established Dota 2 clan which had played together for about two years. A fifth clan member was unable to take part because of lack of parental consent. The gamers all attended the same high school in the British Midlands, and were comparatively strong academic achievers, which may have meant their parents experienced less anxiety around their gaming practices.

The author had found it difficult to recruit a cohort of gamers who were willing to take part in the research and had parents who were similarly willing to give consent and participate
themselves. This clan was eventually recruited through the author’s personal networks. The four teen gamers were first interviewed individually and then gathered together for a focus group, with the same data collection strategy used with the (five) participating parents. The parents represented three of the four families, a mother and father from two families, and a mother from the third. Given the requirements of privacy and non-identifiability for all participants, mothers are numbered Mother 1 to Mother 3, while Fathers are A or B. Mother 1 does not necessarily co-parent the same child as Father A.

The nine interviews and two focus groups were recorded, and then transcribed, and the constant comparative method of analysis (Fram, 2013) was used to interrogate the resulting dataset. Constant Comparative Analysis (CCA) shares some similarities with the analytic processes of Grounded Theory but does not require that the outcome is inductive. As Hodkinson notes, however “although highly influential, grounded theory is not very often followed to the letter and […] it is more common for researchers to adopt one or more elements associated with the approach as part of their efforts to develop theory through research” (2008, p. 80). A CCA approach indicates that data are constantly analysed and compared, within and between: interviews; focus groups; interviews and focus groups; and, different groups of participants. Echoing Hodkinson, Fram notes that researchers often “pragmatically use the CCA method to support the emergence of a substantive theory from working the data” (2013, p. 4). Further details around recruitment and methodology are addressed in Green and Haddon (2015).

**Dota 2**

The clan’s preferred game, Dota 2, is a spin-off of the Warcraft franchise and a successor to a mod of Warcraft III, Defence of the Ancients. It is a free-access real-time strategy game that
pits two five-person teams against each other in a multiplayer online battle arena with the aim of one team destroying the other’s Ancient. With a high global profile that rivals Fortnite, Dota 2 has a significant eSports component. In 2019, for example, the competitive prize pool for professional gamers exceeded 30 million USD (Kaser, 2019).

The international community engaged in Dota 2 both fuels and reflects the richness of the gamer experience as well as, potentially, adding to its toxicity (ADL 2019). As Apperley (2018, p. 7) notes, “the work of ‘making meaning’ of [...] games does not only take place within algorithmic constraints; rather, it is also situated in relation both to a community of players and the circumstances of the individual”. Gamers have round-the-clock opportunities for competition, where one clan of gamers can take on another with the hope of establishing a relative pecking order and moving up the league tables. Dota 2 games typically take between 40 and 60 minutes to reach an outcome and, because of the importance of all players to the strategic outcome of each contest, there are significant penalties imposed by the competitive framework upon teams where a player or team drops out before the end of the competition. Mike explains: “you get put in a low priority, which means it takes longer to find a [good] match. The people you are with are also in low priority, so the games won’t be as good” (Mike).

Given the strategy element to Dota 2, it is advantageous for an established team to play games together, since they know each other’s strengths and weaknesses and can develop effective ways of collaborating. Even so, it can be challenging to get five teens online at the same time, with each having negotiated an hour’s uninterrupted access within their domestic context. Glynn is the eldest in his family and his parents have strict rules around no screen time after 9.00 pm, which he finds especially frustrating: “Normally in the week everyone
else stays on a bit later than me, so I could end up waiting the whole evening then I have to get off ’cos my brothers and sister are going to bed, then everyone else […] plays a match after I’ve gone”. (Glynn)

As well as the core group of gamers within most Dota 2 clans, represented by the four teen participants, there is also a floating pool of substitutes who may be incorporated within the team if one or more of the key players is unavailable when other members want to play. In extremis, it is possible to recruit ‘randoms’, people unknown to the team but offered to them by a Dota 2 matching system that suggests the player on the basis of skills and a ‘behaviour score’: which classifies their approach to the game (Cook, 2019).

**Findings**

The case study data suggest that core aspects of what policy makers deem digital citizenship are developed and recognised within the daily domestic negotiations of parents and teens around young people’s lives online. Examples of how this happens will be considered in relation to earlier discussions of four key aspects of digital citizenship: i) socio-emotional abilities, ii) rights, iii) responsibilities and iv) critical and ethical dimensions.

*Socio-emotional abilities*

Looking back over their shared years in high school, and as gamers, this clan has gradually internalised the realities of the impact of their gaming on others, and particularly on their families. Louden notes how the clan works around the fixed and moving points of
domesticity, while at the same time justifying his ongoing close connection with digital technology: “Say, I have [dinner] early and Rob has it late, there’s a period in between where we’re both free […] you have to be at the point where you’re on your computer for a lot of the time after school, so there’s just more chance of everyone being available.” (Louden)

The challenges of managing to find an hour or so of shared time, and the sense of time as an investment and a scarce resource, have come to be accepted as a responsibility by these clan members, who also talk about the days when they play a ‘bad’ game. Louden argues that “you have to remember, it’s an hour of someone else’s time. If you’re ruining the game for them they’re not going to be particularly happy”. Rob offers a more sanguine perspective: “you’ve both probably been bad in one match or another, so it’s just accepting the fact that the person you’re playing with has had a bad match and they know they’ve had a bad match.” This capacity to take a longer view and put one day in perspective against a general background of the everyday is part of digital emotional intelligence. As a socio-emotional journey, it builds resilience and a confidence in planning for longer term horizons.

Families within this tight-knit gamer clan have different perspectives about how to respond to classification standards relating to game content. For example, Father B recalls that at 14 his son “wanted to get Call of Duty, which is an 18+ game, and we said ‘no’, and he said ‘well, so and so’s playing it’, and we said ‘well sorry, but that’s up to their parents. We’re not going to let you play that. It’s an 18 for a reason, they’re age rated for a reason.’” While none of the Dota 2 clan could recall how they came to start playing the game, apart from the fact that is was free, enjoyable and challenging, it could be the case that Father B’s refusal to allow his son to play any 18+ FPS games meant that the friends sought an alternative. This would be another indicator of emotional maturity and the accommodation of a group
member’s specific circumstances. Given that the clan had been playing Dota 2 together for about two years at the time of the interviews, they would have started when Father B’s son was about 14.

Recognising and supporting their teens’ growing socio-emotional abilities, parents may also start paying greater attention to their child’s perspective. Mother 3, for example, acknowledges that: “In the last year, up until probably about a year ago I was, I didn’t, I was anti it, I was anti the gaming.” Over time, however, she came to accommodate her son’s right to be passionate about Dota 2. “You grow up yourself in recognising that, you know, there isn’t just one way the family’s living, or one way a boy’s living in the family, there’s [pauses] other ways.” This mother acknowledges the influence of dominant discourses that position gaming as potentially problematic but embraces the reality of the evidence experienced in daily life. “Rather than just accepting what you read in the paper and saying ‘Oh, this is bad for us’, we’re thinking ‘well, hang on a minute, our boy seems to be doing well at school, he seems to be having friends, […] What are we worried about? What are our complaints?’”

These vignettes show the growth of emotional intelligence and of reciprocal acceptance by parents and sons of the others’ points of view. As young people become more aware of their parents’ priorities, such as around family meal times in the evening, so some parents also recognise their child’s growing autonomy by practicing an increasingly soft-touch mediation of video gaming.

*Rights*
As noted above, one of the teens had changed his family’s rules around only having computer access in shared spaces within the home. According to Mike’s mother, he “bought his own computer and built it, and it was up in his bedroom. I [pauses] it was a long time before I was comfortable with it […] just frequently popping in and out of his room, just to see what he was doing […] and every time I went in there he was just on the game.” The implication of Mother 2’s response to Mike’s new computer, and its location in Mike’s bedroom, is that there was more at stake for her than increased access to computer time. The ‘popping in and out’ of Mike’s room is part of an active mediation strategy, while Mother 2’s reference to Mike’s being ‘just on the game’ indicates some relief that this was indeed the reason for Mike’s desire to have private access to his own technology. In terms of respecting her son’s rights to digital privacy, however, and in response to a suggestion that she might have wanted to check Mike’s browsing history, Mother 2 was clear about what she saw as acceptable limits of parental enquiry: “No, I wouldn’t check it, actually. […] I don’t know, just teenage boys, I don’t know what I’d find on there”.

Mother 3 also argued that the activity of checking her son’s computer would be “stalking your children”. In addition to constructing her son’s right to not be stalked, Mother 3 noted the lack, for her, of appropriate ways to respond to any outcome of such surveillance: “it will just pull you into a different world you wouldn’t want to know about, possibly. ’Cos if you do [find] something [then] you think ‘Well, now I’ve got to tell them that I’ve looked at their PC and do I want to do that?’ I’ve got no reason to look at it. I’d rather not, so no, I don’t.”

Father A puts the issue of accessing inappropriate content into the context of a preparation for adulthood: “I kind of think they’ve got to negotiate that world [internet content] for all their life.” In this respect, he sees parental prohibitions for this 16-17 age group as counterproductive. In particular, he is unable to see the value in saying “‘we’ll monitor
everything and once they’re 18 they can watch anything they like’, I think that’s probably more destructive.’

These different negotiations around young people’s rights to digital participation and agency demonstrate teens and their parents finding ways to respect the rights of other members in the family home. There is also a direct acknowledgement, by Father A, that the notional control that parents have over their child’s digital activities ceases at the point at which they become 18. For that parent, the aim of mediating his son’s digital engagement in domestic space was to lay the foundations for his son to conduct his own negotiations with digital content for the rest of his life.

*Responsibilities*

Aspects of digital citizenship associated with digital participation and agency involve self-directed activity on the part of gamers, particularly in terms of acquiring and using the high-end technological equipment and connectivity required to be an effective clan member. Father A, for example, was impressed with his son’s commitment to gaming in terms of the evidence it provided of long-term planning and goal-oriented activity. “His machine’s very high spec so, he chose it himself. He saved up his money and he bought it himself.” One clan member’s desire for bigger, better, faster, gaming tech can have a ratcheting effect on other families, however. Mother 2 identified that her son Mike was concerned about their internet connection:

Mike said ‘I’m lagging behind and, yeah, can we just look for something that’s faster, faster broadband speeds?’ And [we …] then researched and
found an affordable [pause] well the fastest speed at an affordable price for us […] But Mike did actually say that he was prepared to contribute [money] to a faster internet ’cos it affected his gaming so much if it was slow. (Mother 2)

It made a difference to these parents that Mike was helping take responsibility for the impact of his request for better internet access. At the same time, Mike’s parents were indicating their acceptance of his desire to participate in gaming with his peers on an equal basis.

One family can chart the process by which their son gradually took responsibility for aspects of his gaming behaviour as the two-year engagement with Dota 2 progressed. Mother 3 began by voicing her frustration around “[you] find he’s suddenly gone on a game and it’s going to last an hour. And you know he’s got a dentist appointment or we’re just about to eat, you know, and he’s saying ‘Well, I can’t come off it’, and you’re thinking ‘This is ridiculous, our life is being determined by one-person-in-the-family’s game!’” But then, this mother recalled that these frustrations were mainly a thing of the past, and that her own changes in behaviour had also helped create a more reciprocal environment where both mother and son took responsibility for the smooth running of the household. These days, says Mother 3, her son will come and quickly check and say “‘Is it OK if I go on a game?’ So sometimes I go, ‘yeah’, [or] ‘no’, [or] ‘that’s fine’. So mentally I have to allow them an hour. […] We just know that we give him a warning […] and he can see, he’s intelligent, he can see that obviously the meal thing is a big issue, that he can’t [pauses] we can’t all sit down and wait and have the food go cold.”
As well as appreciating that their sons were displaying greater responsibility as their Dota 2 gaming practices developed, two parents spoke about how digital engagement had led to their boys displaying financial responsibility. Mother 1 described how her teenager buys things on Steam, the video gaming distribution service operated by Valve, Dota 2’s developer and publisher. “He has to give me the money, obviously, but he always comes and asks. […] We’ve left the [credit card] details on there [Steam] because it just got so [pause] It actually got to be a bit of a pain, always having to put them in, so there’s a high level of trust in that respect.” Mike’s family had gone one step further. “[Mike] wanted his own debit card [so] that he could do it himself […] He does seem to know exactly what he’s doing […] because before that it was our credit card that was on there. And I wasn’t really comfortable with that because, you know, the sky’s the limit, but with his debit card he can’t go overdrawn. The only worry is fraud” (Mother 2).

Given the integration of gaming across these teens’ daily lives, it is unsurprising that their gaming activities offer a range of ways in which they can develop and display an increasingly evident sense of responsibility to others, in domestic spaces and beyond.

**Critical and ethical digital engagement**

This section considers how citizenship-like activities can encompass, and are not negated by, rule-breaking, where an in-the-moment responsibility to the peer group may trump an abstract responsibility to rules. It recognises the citizenship is an inherent attribute, it is not earned by good or bad behaviour, even when people act as good or bad citizens at different times and in different contexts.
Although there are many positive aspects to these boys’ relationships with digital media, they also discussed a range of non-compliant behaviours. Two specific examples were proffered during the focus group discussion. Since the teens all attended the same school, and had privileges as a result of being in the sixth form, they had periods of free time when they were trusted to go online and behave responsibly:

Rob: They do filter games and TV sites at school, but you can get quite inventive and find […]

Mike: Dutch websites.

Rob: We’ve tried all sorts. It got to one point where we went and learnt the Arabic Google [all laughing] and googled [unclear] and so … and typed in like ‘play online games’ and then translated it into Arabic, and then pasted it to Google. I was trying to get round the filtering system.

There is some incidental evidence that contesting established authority strengthens the bonds that link the boys. The examples of non-compliance certainly fuelled moments of hilarity in the focus group. As noted above, Mike has his own debit card and takes responsibility for buying some of his digital games. He explained the challenge encountered when a younger player likes:

Mike: …the trailer for an 18+ game, you have to put your age in

Louden: You can just lie.
Rob: … and I’ve just got it auto set to, I was born in 1907 (all laughing). I just click okay and then it’s all fine.

Relevantly, the policy settings around access tend to be made without reference to those they are intended to protect, representing adults’ views of what constitutes responsible citizenship for young people. Further, parents may model a comparatively laissez faire attitude to some of the restrictions upon this age group, although they may feel strongly that such rules should apply to younger children. Mother 1, for example, suggests that the family’s internet filter is little more than an inconvenience for Louden: “I’m sure techno-savvy teenagers know what to do to get around a basic filter system in a house”. Such an attitude aligns with a (teen-friendly) perception that filters are only necessary for people unable to circumvent them. The parental hope seems to be that by the time a filter can be beaten, the child is sufficiently mature to handle the material they access.

In terms of the perennial concern of parents that activities other than schoolwork may compromise their child’s future, Mother 3 shared a recent development in her own philosophical approach:

I’m just going [speaking to myself …] ‘Actually, you know, he’s a lovely boy, do we want to spend our lives in complete conflict? He’s not going to change, he’s not voluntarily going to give this up, it’s not affecting his school work.’ Well, maybe it has, maybe he could get better marks but, you know, who knows? […] Maybe not. Maybe he’d just be depressed or something. (Mother 3)
Taking these four points into consideration: i) socio-emotional abilities, ii) rights, iii) responsibilities, and iv) critical and ethical digital engagement; the overall impression is that the digital citizenship project for this group of gamers is working well, with significant respect shown by parents and sons for issues of socio-emotional intelligence on the one hand and digital participation and agency on the other.

Conclusion

Willson notes that “parents want happy and healthy (and successful) children. How to understand and achieve healthy, happy and successful, however, is less clear” (2019, p. 623). This case study examines a journey towards ‘healthy, happy and successful’ in terms of the digital citizenship dynamics at work in four families selected for their teen sons’ engagement in an online game. In many families, at a critical point of a child’s educational journey, a hobby such as videogaming might be constructed as a negative, or a challenge. In the families in this study, however, the boys and their parents used gameplay as a means for learning more about what matters to each, in relation to the other. Whilst this is a small-scale study and of limited applicability to wider digital citizenship issues, it has demonstrated that these families’ generally active mediation practices (Livingstone et al. 2011, p. 103) have helped foster the conditions for nurturing and refining certain aspects of digital citizenship. Given that the national and international focus on this area is placing these issues at the forefront of public debate, it is important to recognise that parents have been helping prepare their children for digital citizenship for as long as children have had domestic access to digital media.
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