



Children's digital rights: negotiating parental responsibilities in the digital age

Sonia Livingstone & Alicia Blum-Ross

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www.parenting.digital



MEDIA@LSE
Department of Media and Communications

The UNCRC and children's rights in the 'digital age'

■ Core principles:

- Non-discrimination
- Best interests of the child
- Right to life, survival and development
- Respect for the views of the child



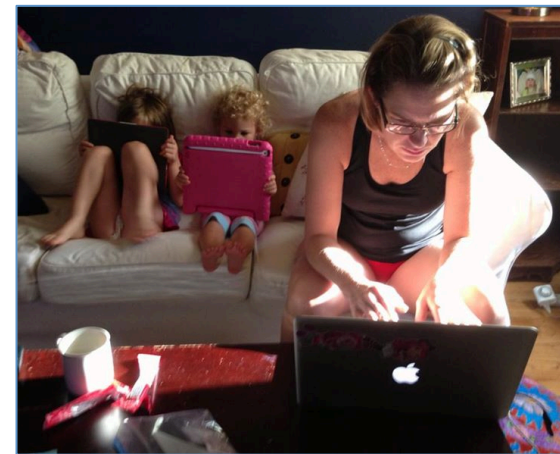
■ Rights categories:

- Protection
- Provision
- Participation



Roles for parents in the UNCRC

- As front-line rights 'guarantors'
 - Responsible for supporting children's rights
- As directly addressed by CRC and counted on by stakeholders
 - Minimise burden on states and businesses
- As double mediators – mediating the media
 - Parents provision, manage and mediate media use – with what effects?



Research questions

- How are parents engaging with children's rights in practice?
 - Are rights discourses accessible to parents?
- What types of dilemmas do parents face in supporting children's rights?
 - What happens when rights are in competition?
- Are parents doing what is expected of them?
 - By stakeholder community? By other parents?
 - Are there sanctions for 'failing' to support rights?



Parenting for a Digital Future

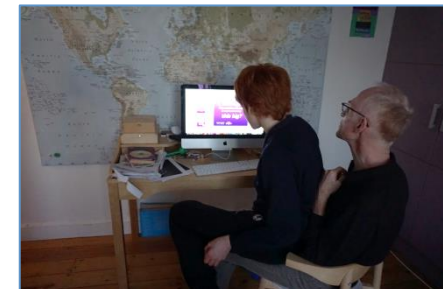
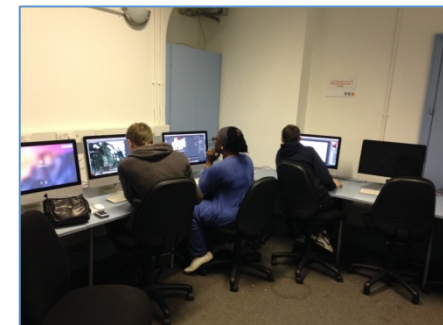
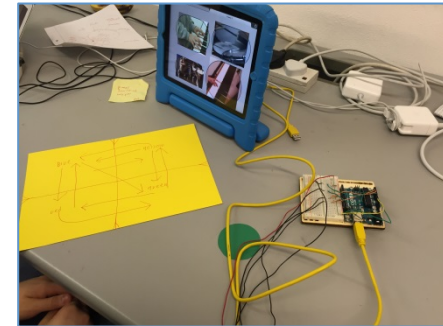
- How are parents bringing up their children in the digital age? [practices]
- What is expected of parents in the digital age ? [discourses]
- What are the particular hopes/fears crystallised by 'the digital future'? [imaginaries]



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Mixed methods

- 65 families, studied with variable intensity, mainly sampled around key sites
- Participant observation at digital media learning sites e.g. Code Club, Digital Design, App Development
- Interviews with parents, at home where possible
- Interviews, observations, games with children
- Interviews with teachers and facilitators



Dilemmas: protection

[Kaval] wanted the TV in his room, but I said no... I want to be able to keep an eye on what he's doing...

I have access to their passwords. That's really important. Their PINs, password, I have to know it. ...you're not getting it otherwise...

In one respect, [Zafira's] like, oh, you're too protective. But my son said, but you're lucky your mum cares.



Daya mum to Kaval (boy, 14), Zafira (girl, 12),
Kiya (girl, 10) and Kashi (girl, 7)

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Dilemmas: privacy

[My son] will ask me is this a photo for you, Daddy, or is it a photo for the blog? ... I think he's just a bit sick of it...

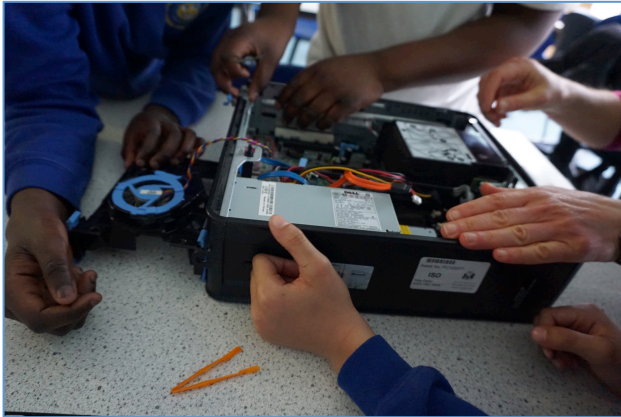
He's six, so his understanding [is changing]... He's allowed to tell me what he wants to put in it. He's the one telling me what he wants me to write. So, in that way, he doesn't mind it. So, I think he's very much about the control.



Harvey, dad to Archie (boy, 6) and Oscar (boy, 4)

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Dilemmas: provision



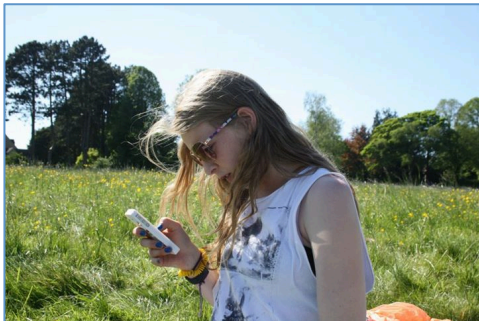
He has always said that he wants a job working with computers. ...I said to him, well maybe, you know, it will be helpful if you knew exactly how computers worked, just for his own knowledge really...

He said he wants to design games... He wants to work for Sony or something... but education is just, like, the main thing. Because even if he does want to design games he still going to need a degree for that, isn't he?

Samantha, mum to Braydon (boy, 9) and
Jasmine (girl, 2)

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Dilemmas: participation



When these peers come round that don't have access to the technology, you can tell. You can tell in their fine motor skills... the ones allowed an hour a week...

[being anti-tech] is, sort of, as weird as having, I don't know, some kind of philosophical argument against teaching a child to ride a bike... It's an inherent part of their world...

Even when her sensory problems are really bad, she can still virtually travel the world, interact with different types of people. She isn't just, you know, literally peering out through the curtains wondering what's going on out there.

Nina, mum to Iris (nearly 8)

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Conclusions: negotiating digital rights at home

- Absence of explicit language of ‘rights’
 - But awareness of underpinning principles, especially ‘best interests’
- Rights in competition
 - Privacy vs. expression, protection vs. learning, parent vs. child
 - Parents make decisions in response to needs, interests and abilities of child – iterating in relation to their *evolving capacities*
- Processes of accountability
 - Peer culture, parenting resources, at extreme state intervention
 - Lack of available resources for parents to draw on



Policy ramifications

- Parents unsupported in balancing risks and opportunities
 - Lack of coordination in address, lack of evidence
 - Continued majority focus on risk
 - Generic advice that assumes homogeneity
 - Underestimates parents' digital skills & interests
- Continued roles for state and industry
 - Protection rights could be better ensured by state so that parents can focus on participation and provision rights
 - How to avoid overburdening parents?

(from our new policy brief on 'screen time' – see www.parenting.digital)



Thank you

s.livingstone@lse.ac.uk

@Livingstone_S

a.blum-ross@lse.ac.uk

@AliciaBlumRoss

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