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The particular politics of the home

- Domestication and parental practices of digital games in everyday life

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Abstract

The masters thesis *The particular politics of the home - domestication and parental practices of digital games in everyday life* aims at providing a closer look at how games played on phones, consoles or computers are regulated within the everyday of family life. Through semi-structured interviews with nine parents, the author creates understanding for how digital games are not only tied to the moral project of the home, but have their values negotiated in relation to public discourses around games, focused on the perceived harmful aspects. The study is theoretically informed by a conceptual framework built on the works of Roger Silverstone, Eric Hirsch and David Morley (the moral economy), Michel de Certeau (everyday tactics), Deborah Chambers (media imaginary) and Anthony Giddens (ontological security). Positioned in the cross-roads of moral panics and domestication theory, the thesis deals with both the domestication process of digital games as media technology, as well as the social construction of digital games and their perceived harms. What is found, are that the meanings of digital games are evaluated as active or non-active in relation to the building of the moral project of the home, visible through varying forms of negotiations and tactics of regulations. The families in this study use tactics in the everyday to construct moral continuities, which are 'defended' from the perceived harms of digital games. Digital games are also identified as inhabiting properties of distancing, potentially creating divisions between individuals in the home, which also calls for parental regulation. The thesis does see a way forward, as the inclusion of these 'wild' technologies and content into the moral project do not need to hinge on public discourses of harm. In an acceptance of digital games containing these discourses, they need not be evaluated solely on these terms.

Keywords: Domestication theory; digital games; problem gaming; everyday studies; morals

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INTRODUCTION

A plethora of media technology and content are now intimately interwoven into the mundane routines of our daily lives, leaving the everyday a site deeply influenced by media (Couldry & Hepp 2017:54). The social world has ultimately become a world signified by media use (Hepp 2010:40). Digital games¹ have emerged as such a technologically dependent activity, whether it be playing games on mobile phones on the living room couch or on the commute to work, or engaging in massive virtual worlds on gaming computers. This activity does not remain unproblematic, with, for example, debates on correlations between violent behavior and video games being long standing (see for example Statens Medieråd 2011). Concerns have also been raised around commercial data collection and surveillance, both on a commercial level and in digital games themselves (Hope 2017:164). But it has been argued that the debate on *excessive gaming* and *video game addiction* has now become the "key trigger of media panics surrounding the new medium" (Thorhauge, Gregersen & Enevold 2018:9).

This raises questions around how we actually cope with these technologies and content on a daily basis, with so many deeply involved in the activity. What's at stake is risking the home becoming "an increasingly regulated and surveilled space" (Flynn 2001). But it cannot be presupposed that the practice of playing digital games is harmful, creating addiction or violent behavior. By looking at how *digital games are regulated* within the four walls of the home, for example by rules or restrictions, and how their *moral values negotiated* in the everyday of families, this study is to be considered an investigation of the values and meanings of digital games *in relation to the moral project of the family*.

As of 2018, the World Health Organization considers video and computer game addiction a mental health disorder (Scutti 2017). Children and young adults are singled out as the primary group at risk, a group that usually believed to be extraordinarily susceptible to a wide range of harms (Lupton 2013:155). The reporting of Swedish media on the subject seems to have seen an increase, as a quick search on "dataspelsberoende"² in Mediarkivet (Retriever 2018), a database for

¹ The term 'digital games' (sometimes 'video games' or/and 'computer games') will be used in this text as a collective definition of the spectrum of games played either on classic consoles which connect to a TV, computers or any mobile device. For the reader, these terms can be seen as encompassing the wide variety of technologies and games (as content) that people play, often on a daily basis.

² "Computer game addiction" in Swedish.

aggregating media content in Sweden, shows that as of the 21st of April 2018, 93 articles are dedicated to or partially cover the subject in 2018. The same search for the entirety of 2017 yielded only 38 articles. This simple search becomes a testament to how this subject has seen an increase in media coverage in 2018, signaling a possible peak in actuality.

In a debate article on SVT Opinion³, Patrick Wincent, owner of the video and computer game addiction facility Dataspelsakuten, warns about "asocial mobile phone zombies"⁴ (Wincent 2014), metaphorically blaming technological over-use to have paralyzing effects. This constitutes a telling example of how public discourse around the fear of new technology has a strong social character. In the addiction and excessiveness debate, harms of video and computer games are presented not as entirely psychological, but more often than not presented as social afflictions as well. In light of this, Thorhauge, Gregersen and Enevold (2018) propose a conceptual replacement for the term 'video game addiction', especially in research within the social sciences, as excessive gaming often becomes synonymous with an actual psychological affliction. Instead, the authors propose addressing excessiveness as 'problem gaming' (2018:9), which becomes a more relatable concept for this project as well. The term problem gaming is itself not entirely unproblematic, as questions arise to whom gaming is actually a problem (Brus 2018:51).

The scope of this research

Digital games are the central medium here, but in taking a non-media centric approach to media studies, the central questioning remains on practice and agency in the everyday (Krajina, Moores & Morley 2014). It is a closer look at what Roger Silverstone (2007) calls "the particular politics of individual households" (2007:169), posing the question of what role digital games play in the morals of everyday life. The ways in which we use, reflect on and evaluate media, where our role as consumer is in constant transformation and question, are actually "boundless", "incorporated, both consciously and unconsciously, into the cultures of the everyday" (Ibid. 2007:20). It is then also here where we are confronted with the experiences, definitions and constructions of threats, harms and afflictions of media use. These are moral questions posed with the entrance of every new media technology into the home, a prime example the television, in many ways echoing similar types of concerns (Livingstone 2009:152; Williams 2001).

³ This is a website from Swedish public service, offering a platform for debate articles and their responses.

⁴ This is the author's translation from Swedish, full article in original is cited in the reference list.

This thesis aims to contribute to a discussion of digital games grounded in examinations of the moral negotiations and forming of regulations in the home, while not neglecting its relation to public discourses surrounding digital games. The everyday are "spaces of agency" and are built on specific practices, politics and moral responsibilities (Sandvik, Thorhauge & Valtysson 2016:11). Using the concept of the moral economy from domestication theory, as well as Michel de Certeau's (1986) notion of everyday tactics as modes of operation, digital games, and the regulatory practices they spur, will be explored as moral values. However, the home and its everyday practices are not autonomous, they are not isolated from the public. In examining the 'outside world', the arena(s) of public discourse, Deborah Chambers (2016) work on the media imaginary proves an effective endeavor as a concept encompassing public definitions surrounding digital games and the practices of gaming. How we perceive digital games rely on definitions in public discourse, positionings of power, enabling "possibilities and opportunities" but also "disruption and suffering" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999:4). So there is a manifestation of digital games at two levels here, the *social construction of digital games* and the *domestication of digital games*, centered on how digital games are perceived and everyday practices around them respectively. This converges the two main research areas in which this study positions itself, that of domestication theory and moral panics⁵.

The discursive constitutes an important piece as the home is never fully separated from the outside world. In uncovering how problem gaming is constructed, examples of definitions and discourses around video game addiction will be used. The home as an imagined place exist in the tension area between definitions and practices, in the form of *negotiations*, including moral evaluations and the formulation of regulations. This is also true in enforcing regulations on digital games in the family, whatever form they may take.

Providing a broad view on the parents perceived (potential) threat of excessive gaming of or violent content in digital games, this study's scope is digital games both in their social construction through public discourse and in the domestic setting. Following this framing of the subject, this thesis aims to answer the research questions below:

⁵ This thesis will not investigate addiction to digital games as a moral panic, but the debates, narratives and mechanisms visible here, are those commonly addressed in relation to the dangers of media and its usage.

- In what ways do parents negotiate the moral values of digital games in relation to public discourse?
- How can this negotiation work be understood in relation to the tactics parents deploy in regulating digital games in everyday life?
- What part do these tactics play as part of the moral project of the home?

A total of 9 semi-structured interviews with parents will provide the empirical foundation, composing the main data, paying special attention to the ways in which parents regulate digital games in their daily lives, uncovering the theoretically complex practices of the mundane. Two examples of public discourse will also be investigated, taken from the webpages of Dataspelsakuten (2017) and Logopeditjänst (2016), where video game addiction is discussed and defined. It should be noted, that this thesis does not ignore the fact that there may be consequences of any excessive behavior or problematic use, video gaming among them, but it does not presuppose that media content or its uses in any way can be correlated to abusive, harmful or asocial behavior. The aims of this text is to nuance the on-going debate of problem gaming and look closer at the area of tension between definitions and the reality of families who have video gaming children. It is not in this thesis interest to prove or discard connections between any kind of harm and media use.

MORAL PANICS AND MORAL ECONOMIES

Adapting new technologies into everyday practices both shape and are shaped by the technology and the way we use it (Sandvik, Thorhauge & Valtysson 2016:11), also bringing along any problematic issues faced in this process. The domestication of new technologies always seem to be associated with a sense of threat, a disturbance in the everyday that needs to be managed. Whether this be the VCR and video violence, mobile phones and communication practices or video games and addiction, they all share a similar relation between domestication practices and the discursive mechanisms of moral panics, though not always as well researched. This thesis positions itself within the cross-roads of two research fields, that of the aforementioned moral panics and domestication theory, the main areas addressed in this overview. But this study also shares contact points with the field of game studies, treated with a brief introduction in this chapter. Closing out this section of the thesis, is a more detailed look at the operational theoretical framework used for understanding the empirical data.

But I would first like to turn to research done on video and computer game addiction specifically, albeit in brief form. Studies on the subject have been around since the 1980s, but has been much more thoroughly examined during the 2000s, one of the reasons being the entry of MMORPGs⁶ into the market, among those *World of Warcraft* (Blizzard 2004) (Griffiths 2016:75). In the DSM-5⁷, Internet Gaming Disorder encompasses video game addiction and it described as an affliction for further study, and as such not recognized as an actual disorder, as there is no conclusive diagnosis for the affliction (Ibid. 2016:83). The majority of the studies on video game addiction are quantitative in nature, a comprehensive overview of the research can be found in Griffiths (2016), available in the anthology *The video game debate: unravelling the physical, social, and psychological effects of digital games* (Kowert & Quandt 2016).

Cover (2004) exemplifies how video game addiction almost always carries with it a strong resemblance to the discourses surrounding substance abuse, as it is presented as "unknown, dangerous, unsafe or menacing" (2004:111). Cover draws the comparison to moral discourses, and shows how both digital addiction and "real life" addiction (like that of drugs) share a discursive

⁶ MMORPG stands for Massively multi-player online role playing game and is played online in a world inhabited by a large amount of other player characters.

⁷ The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, published by the American Psychiatric Association.

framework. But Clark and Scott (2009) make a point of addressing that video game addiction "doesn't appear out of thin air" (2009:8), meaning that there is no simple explanation (nor a solution) to why the addiction permeates a person's life. The study remains in the realm of psychology and psychoanalysis, as with much of the research on addiction. An earlier study, but which also brings with it an important point, is Charlton's (2002) separation of addiction and high engagement (2002:329). This becomes an important distinction, as the term addiction is treated with relative ease in the research presented here. As noted before, this thesis will use problem gaming for defining the excessive behavior of playing digital games.

There is a point to be made on the geographical positioning of this research. While the study at hand is based in Sweden, becoming a part of a Northern European field of study, there has been research in areas of the world where video and computer game addiction is considered, and presented as, a larger problematic area. For example, with the rise in popularity of e-sports⁸, especially in China, this is often linked to the rising numbers of players considered addicted to games (Lu 2017). The research on this particular type of addiction is overrepresented in China (along with Taiwan and Korea) when looking at other types of addiction, as that to for example drugs (Carbonell et al. 2016), revealing an exponential increase in interest in studying the affliction in Asia. Aligning the growing economic market of competitive computer games with that of it's issues (as addiction), touches on, at least in part, the topic of this study. As of Scandinavian research, Lundedal Nielsen (2018) makes note of Norway being the only country involved in social research on the existence of video game addiction, conducted in questionnaire form (2018:17).

The sprawling field of game studies

Studies conducted on video games and it's audiences have evolved from being almost exclusively comprised of effect studies⁹, to now being an interest in a wide variety of fields, among them psychology, computer research and of course media and communications (Märyä 2008:5). Digital games themselves have also developed in such a diverging way, that talking about video or computer games can encompass an entire ecosystem of digital entertainment (Ivory 2016:1). Research approaches to digital games seem to differ as much as the very games themselves. In a lot

⁸ E-sports, or electronic sports, is the competitive side of computer games, in recent years drawing a lot of audiences to competitions and events. The most popular games (in Europe at least) are *League of Legends*, a real-time strategy game, and *Counter-strike*, a team-based first-person shooter (Gibson 2017).

⁹ Once again, to see a somewhat recent critique of this, see Statens Medieråd (2011).

of cases the genre or theme of the games, or the technology on which the game is played, dictates the scientific approach taken. In this thesis, the focus will remain steady on digital games, be it video, computer or mobile games. The roots of game studies though, can be traced back to research on physical games and the role of play in culture, as in Johan Huizinga's (1955) classic *Homo ludens: a study of the play-element in culture*. Modern game studies still draw influence from this tradition, adapting both method and terminology. The term 'magic circle', for instance, is often used to explain the experience of being in a game, explaining the liminality and borders of play, a separation from the mundane, a term that originated in Huizinga's work¹⁰.

In this tradition, Jesper Juul (2005) primarily draws on Roger Caillois (2001), to explain how video games can be seen as 'classic', that is physical, games. These criteria provide a framework to understand how video games, as well as games in general, can be defined and understood as something outside of the mundaneness of the everyday. Influenced by this definition of play and games, ethnographical studies have been carried out in, for instance, massively multi-player online worlds, such as World of Warcraft (Nardi 2010) and other online communities which have gaming elements, not so easily defined as a 'game' (Pearce 2011). These studies also show the vast interest in the social character of video and computer games, and the often creative ways of exploring them in an academic context.

Following these shifts in research on digital games, interactivity has been placed to the fore. Instead of talking about the functionality of technology, there has been a re-location of focus to *experiences* in modern game studies (Märyä 2008:6). The experience is not only limited to social experience, but other areas of play have been explored as well. One such area, called 'dark play' by Mortensen and Linderoth (2015), refers "to content, themes, or actions that occur within games that in some contexts would be problematic, subversive, controversial, deviant, or tasteless" (2015:5), which also links to content and practices which are often considered harmful. It is an exploration of the nature of play in games, where the dark side, whether it be purely content-wise or the option of being treacherous to other players, is not entirely presented as harmful or malicious, but critically researched as experiences outside of the mundane (Ibid. 2015:11). Signifying a move away from looking at harmful effects of video games through purely quantitative research, it puts the spotlight on not only the diversity of games, but on their approaches as well. What this current research does

¹⁰ For a good example of a current appropriation and discussion of this term, see Stenros (2012). This points to the prevailing relevance of early work on play and culture.

as well, is lead us into issues of moral panics, thus creating a bridge of sorts between game studies and another of the two fields encompassed by this overview.

The social dangers of media use

In a moral panic, a part of society considers certain behaviors and lifestyle choices of another part to be a significant threat to society as a whole. In this environment, moral beliefs can substantially influence scientific research, and its results are readily used as confirmation for what has been expected. (Elson & Fergusson 2013:322)

Moral questioning of new media, technologies and content, can be traced as far back as the ancient Greeks, where the written word was imagined to be a threat to education as it was believed to "present singular answers to complex questions" (Bowman 2016:24). As Staksrud and Kirksaether (2016) note, Marshall McLuhan (2003), in 1964, made a clear connection between moral panic and the "electric" media, where he argued for it being perceived as a "threat to the written word" (2016:145). The media is at the forefront of the concept of moral panics, as it is both an instigator and it's fuel in spreading the "panic" of certain issues.

However, the first extensive usage of the term can be traced to Stanley Cohen's (2002) paradigmatic 1972 book *Folk devils and moral panics: the creation of the mods and rockers*. Cohen's explanation of moral panics contains a very broad definition, but presented as it's foremost panic is situations regarding "youth culture [...] whose behavior is deviant or delinquent" (Cohen 2002:2). Folk devils, as mentioned in the title of the study, are in Cohen's words "visible reminders of what we should not be" (Ibid.). Being highly cited in the literature (see Staksrud & Kirksaether 2016; Petley 2016; Drotner 1999), it is apparent that Cohen's work still holds a cemented place in the research around moral panics.

It is not only media coverage of troublesome events that constitute the central aim of moral panics research though, as special attention is given to public response in conjunction with media reports. Waddington (1986) stated early on, in a response to Stuart Hall et al.'s 1978 study on mugging, that a moral panic is the relationship between the proportion of the actual problem and "the scale of response to it" (1986:246). This critique signals a cautionary stance in using the concept in contexts that can be argued for not giving enough focus on the actual response. This is an important critique

to take into account, as this thesis is not examining moral panics in a classical sense per se, but rhetorics and language *based* in ones commonly found in moral panics. In Sweden, one of the more prolific debates that have had the characteristics of a moral panic is that of violence in the media, specifically film, where *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* is the first defining case (Dalquist 1998). Dalquist covers this in his dissertation, with empirical material spanning fifteen years, from 1980 to 1995. Of note is that Dalquist relies on social constructionistic approaches in his analysis of the media debate (Idid. 1998:19), and as such his objective remains close to that of this thesis. He is also not concealing his skepticism of media effects, which remains a common denominator in much of the research on moral panics.

In specifying moral panics in relation to the media, Drotner (1999) brings the discussion into what she calls *media panic*, noting that "every time a new mass medium has entered the social scene, it has spurred public debates on social and cultural norms, debates that serve to reflect, negotiate and possibly revise these very norms" (1999:596). Drotner presents a historical focus and draws on early examples like books to more contemporary ones like film and the digital media. Her main point is that of children and young adults being the target of media panics, commenting that "they inevitably represent experiences and emotions that are irrevocably lost to adults" (Ibid. 1999:617). In Drotners study, this ties into discussions on the particulars of (late) modernity, where history is dependent on a linear construction of time, making the progress from child to adult irreversible. While discussing Drotner's work, Staksrud and Kirksaether (2016) note that this ultimately becomes a "*double jeopardy*¹¹" (2016:147) where the moral issues of new technology and the need for our children and young adults to be safe are two interrelated aspects of the same key issue in a media panic.

These views coincide with an inherent critique of the effects of media use, a critique that is also present in this text, arguing for a contextualization, a call to explore the complexities of media usage. Buckingham and Strandgaard Jensen (2012) bring this critique to light with their own concerns, where they argue that especially in media and cultural studies "[d]espite the apparent embrace of popular culture, there is a danger of being seen to dismiss popular concerns about the media as somehow irrational, ignorant or deluded" (212:415). These concerns are often overlooked as moral or media panics research focus is, as noted above, an examining of proportions between

¹¹ Emphasis in original.

the issue and the response, and not diving deeper into what Drotner (1999) describes as the "emotional undercurrents of the panics" (1999:618).

Digital games have remained a focus of moral panics research ever since the defining case of *Mortal Kombat* (Electronic Arts 1992), a game which not only spurred the creation of a video game rating system¹², but also an outcry from US senators and the public alike for its violent content (Crossley 2014). This is comparable to the enforcement of classifying films released on video in Britain in 1984, which ultimately came down to censorship (Petley 2016), pointing to the similarities in media regulations. *Mortal Kombat* (and its sequels) have been extensively used in laboratory studies to investigate the correlation between violence and video games (see for example Kirsh 1997), showing how media coverage can be argued to have an impact on the stereotyping of games with violent content. Although this particular game can be viewed as a rough starting point, there have been other considerations, for example around the game *Custer's Revenge* (1982) for the Atari, which brought up heated discussions around sexual content and (rather extensive) cultural issues¹³ (Payne & Alilunas 2016).

The connection between moral panics and video games has still primarily been focused on violence, in more recent research based in the relationship between playing video games and violent acts, like for example school shootings in the US. In an overview provided by Ferguson (2008), he points to the divide between the discussion of causal effects and moral panics (2008:2). While some (still) propagate and call for the investigation of causal effects, this seems to originate from mostly experimental studies, which inadequately tries to establish a link between isolated studies and real life effects. Studies made on moral panics is often criticized for approaching the subject with a preconceived notion that the media has inherent harmful effects (Bowman 2016:27) and as such *research itself* can be seen as an enforcer of moral panics. In the history of moral panics research, warnings have been issued towards launching research that tries to find correlating evidence between violent acts and video games (as in the Sandy Hook shootings), as this research runs the risk of being highly influenced by the panic-like situation (Elson & Fergusson 2013). As the

¹² The US system is called ESRB and ranges from E to M, Everyone to Mature, while the European equivalent is called PEGI.

¹³ In the game, one plays as the titular General Custer, sporting an erection, avoiding arrows to eventually arrive at a tied up native american woman which the player then is supposed to rape.

research on video games and moral panics tend to lean towards violence, there are few studies that actually tackle the issues of video game addiction in relation to moral, or media, panics.

Complex media uses - domestication as theory

On the one hand there is the image of these technologies in general, and information and communication technologies in particular, being consumed increasingly in the domestic context of our everyday lives. On the other hand there is the image of these technologies consuming us, the users, of transforming us to the potential inherent in them. We are, indeed, great consumers of technology. (Silverstone & Hirsch 1992:1-2)

In *Consuming technologies*, Roger Silverstone and Eric Hirsch (1992) argue, already in the first pages of the book, for something we might now perceive as an integral part of everyday life and our daily routines. Domestication theory is used to examine how we domesticate ICTs¹⁴ into our routines and daily lives. It is at the same time studying agency (how we use technology and what we do with it) as well as adaptation (how we fit those uses into our daily routines) (Haddon 2016:20). But since the publishing of the anthology mentioned above, the technologies available to us has grown immensely, and with them the actual content, the functions and uses (Ibid. 2016:17). In this perspective, the term 'everyday life' contains its very own definition, as research within this field "have tended to deal with those parts of life outside the formal worlds of work and education" (Haddon 2004:1). Everyday life, then, takes center stage in exploring the family and the home. As such, domestication theory deals with the "so-called moral economy of the household¹⁵" (Helles 2016:33; Silverstone & Hirsch 1992), and the integration of ICTs into that very specific economy.

The television as media technology has a long history of being conceptualized as part of family life (Livingstone 2009). But Silverstone and Hirsch (1992) argue for a paradigmatic shift in studies on families and media technology, presenting a collection of studies which place family life and the *consumption* and *integration* of this technology at the very center. This shift in focus diverges from studies of television as technologically and culturally significant (see Williams 2001) to the practices of the everyday. Media itself becomes a placeholder for researching everyday media use

¹⁴ Information and communications technologies.

¹⁵ The concept of the moral economy will be explained further under the header Domestic frameworks.

and the mundane, potentially thought of as *non-media centric media studies* (Krajina, Moores & Morley 2014). The individual and collective practices and meaning-making processes of people, in relation to media, in their daily lives take the lead in these studies. Stemming from early works in the 1980s, where for instance David Morley (1986) investigated television viewing within the social sphere of the family¹⁶, the non-media centric approach is not unusual in studies utilizing the frameworks of domestication theory. As much as television remained an early focus, studies within domestication theory started to include more modern media, like VCRs, satellite TV and home computers as these technologies developed (Haddon 2007:26). This broadening was also due to "a shift away from models which assumed the adoption of new innovations to be rational, linear, monocausal and technologically determined" (Berker et al. 2006:1), instead displaying the complexities of media use in everyday life.

As early as in Silverstone and Hirsch's anthology, Haddon (1992) touches on the eventualities of "disruption of family cohesion" (1992:84) through for example addiction, when introducing micro technologies¹⁷ into the home. Haddon also points to moral panics as a field of research to provide a wider base in looking at both the production and the consumption of technologies, as the fears surrounding the new technology shares similar frameworks to that of other moral panics. Even as an early distinction, and as discussed in the review of moral panics research, this is very much related to what might be considered media panic. Being centered on families everyday lives, some early domestication theory showed interest in the mapping out of various economies within the household, one of those being the social economy (Wheelock 1992:99). In this context, families form an institution which is seen as a compliment economy to that of the state or market regulated ones. This focus does present a model for understanding the family as an entity of self-regulation, of producing and consuming *only* for the sake of the household, effectively establishing it as an institution.

Evolving from these early studies, domestication theory research have seen an appropriation of the approach, as the boundaries of the home have seen an evolution with ICTs that, with considerably more ease, reach further both temporally and spatially. As Morley (2006) states, "our senses of

¹⁶ This research also presented a breaking away from studying audiences, instead seeing the family as a sphere of it's own, where media, in this case the television, is part of the very flow of life.

¹⁷ In Haddon's case it's home computers, our notion of micro technology has of course drastically changed during the roughly 25 years since the book was published.

'belonging' to either national or transnational communities" (2006:22) have transformed practices and routines of everyday life as the Internet provides almost unlimited range of social access points. The home does not run parallel to this evolution, but is very much part of it. Livingstone (2009) also argues for the increasingly individualized western society as part of, and partly because of, the move that media technology has made from the "main collective family space of the living room" (2009:156) to more separate spaces. This mainly being due to technology becoming cheaper and more abundant both in its form and content, being able to adhere more specifically to individual preference.

These very rapid, often almost over-whelming, technological progresses has forced domestication theory to re-evaluate some of its initial concepts and approaches. Hartman (2006), while discussing the concept of the double articulation¹⁸ of media technology, simply put seeing technology as both physical object and symbolic meaning, proposes an extension of this original concept to include a third articulation, that of the message itself, which would possibly broaden the contexts surrounding the specificities of the domestication of media technologies (2006:96). In an attempt to form a pragmatic methodology around the usage of this triple articulation, Courtois, Verdegem and De Marez (2012), have appropriated the concept to contemporary television studies as an effort to show how these three articulations all, in their own way, form specific meanings around television. The meaning of media technology is also the focal point of Chambers (2016) conceptual work around the media imaginary. Mainly this pertains to how the perception of media use is constructed through different discourses. For example, Chambers brings up how marketing and commercial strategies construct a media imaginary surrounding the Nintendo Wii, a home gaming console, as a family centered activity, albeit not without it's gendered and generational issues (Chambers 2016:96).

More contemporary studies utilizing domestication theory are not always preoccupied with the actual technology, but also focus on content. Karlsen and Syvertsen (2016), for example, expand the theoretical framework to explore online self-help guides¹⁹, and the way they promote "real life" experiences, in an attempt to minimize technological usage (2016:27). Their analysis of content as texts expands the usage of domestication theory in that it is more centered on definitions and lends itself as a framework which can be used to bridge (at least somewhat) textual analysis and

¹⁸ This concept will be further investigated in the Domestic frameworks chapter.

¹⁹ The self-help guides were collected from the site *WikiHow*.

experiences within the home. Furthermore, Karlsen and Syvertsen bring in the notion of the fears surrounding new technologies and media (among them addiction), which is exactly what they elaborate on, through their empirical material, as the main reason for spending less time online (Ibid. 2016:28).

With the evolution of media technologies such as modern computer and video games, comes a distinct form of consumption which is dependent on interaction, which in many ways differs from the practice of, for example, watching television (Flynn 2001). Willett (2017) examines the domestication of this specific activity in a study which included 8 families in the US (2017:149). Willett's study has a similar scope to this thesis, in that it tries to map out the incorporation of digital games into the everyday. In concluding her study, she shows how the moral economy of the household is navigated by parents, and how they "strive for a sense of ontological security in their homes" (Ibid. 2017:158). Willett calls for the need to not only examine, but understand the practices of children's online gaming habits, as an overly restricted regulation within the household would discourage and play down the potential benefits of online play. Another understanding of the relationship between parent and child regarding media use is available in Clark's (2011) overview of the concept of parental mediation. Being a theorization of parents attempts to "mitigate the negative effects of the media in their children's lives" (2011:325), the concept relates to our cause as an understanding of the regulations of the home. As this tradition is rooted in studies on media effects, it primarily focuses on the negative development of the cognitive of children regarding media use (Ibid. 2011:324), not dealing with the moral aspects of the family.

A more specific examination of video game addiction and family life can be found in Thorhauge, Gregersen and Enevold's (2018) anthology *What's the problem in problem gaming?*. In the collection of perspectives on what the problematic construction of problem gaming actually is, Brus (2018) argues for the stigma of young people and gaming being based in generational issues. She concludes that the young people in her study "act from a relational platform that is dynamic and complex" (Brus 2018:62), bringing up relations with peers and parents, as well as practices of acceptance and regulations of gaming.

A non-media centric media study

Positioned within the grey area of moral panics and everyday experience, this thesis will draw on the mechanisms and discourses of moral panics, but it will be rooted in theories of the

domestication of media technology. The non-media centric approach seems invaluable in examining agency of families in relation to media technology. Domestication theory itself embodies this kind of research, as it explicitly deals with the bringing in, evaluating and ultimately using media technology as part of the mundane routines of the everyday. It's the de-centering of "the particularities of media, their distinctive characteristics and affordances" (Krajina, Moores & Morley 2014) that signifies the non-media centric approach. This approach to media studies offers a contextualization which, instead of research being focused on one specific technology, includes the broader ensembles of media use (Hepp 2010:42).

This is not to say that the differing perspectives on media studies are in any way unrelated, they form different but complimentary understandings of media as context, object and text. These approaches, Morley (2014) argues, are necessary to (re-)expand the scope of media studies as an interdisciplinary field (Krajina, Moores & Morley 2014). The aspects of moral panics are revealed as definitions of the perceived dangers of digital games, appearing in both public and private discourse. The object is both text and context, but what is explored here is how it is morally evaluated in the making of the home. Within the contextual, the domestication process of the object includes these dimensions, potentially more. Domestication theory lets us expand this perspective in converging the multiple dimensions of the evaluative work of families, as well as their subsequent practices.

Domestic frameworks

The domestication approach is composed of a wide array of theoretical stances, tailor-made for studies of the everyday, including the specifics of classic domestication theory itself. Following on from the more general overview above, I wish to provide more detailed form of understanding for the theoretical concepts that will operate in the analysis of the empirical material. Deliberately a separate overview from that of the research fields, its detailedness demands a different type of approach. Included here is *ontological security*, explained by Anthony Giddens (1991, 1992), as a framework for examining at the establishment of routines and regulations regarding the playing of digital games within the four walls of the home. The chapter will also draw on classic domestication theory, primarily from Silverstone and Hirsch (1992), which provides a set of *dimensions of domestication* which constitute the very foundation of research conducted on domestication of technology and media. Concluding these pages are the major theoretical perspectives operational in the analysis of the empirical material, that of *media imaginaries* (Chambers 2016), *everyday tactics*

(de Certeau 1986) and their relation to the metaphorical *moral economy* (Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley 1992).

Ontological security and addiction in late modernity

Explained as the everyday rituals and social conventions which create a sense of routine and continuity in an individual's life, Giddens (1991) concept of *ontological security* is the sense of the world as tangible, as making sense. It's the continuative regularity of everyday practices and conventions that solidifies the individual's experience of the world as a dependable constant, and as such, these continuities create a sense of safety (Giddens 1991:48). In modern or late modern (primarily western) societies, much focus has been placed on the self-reflexivity of societal collectives, as well as that of the individual (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991). Manifested as a practice of reflection, and often a subconscious one, this reflexivity is part of the identity work in (late) modernity. Identity in these societies is often seen as fragmented, in a state of constant change, mirroring the multitude of choices and influences faced in the everyday (Frosh 1991). This demands a reflective imaging of the self, always negotiating these choices, resulting in constantly on-going identity work. Ontological security becomes the sense of stability that is so desperately missing in modern life.

The concept of ontological security is translated as a "continuous work of reproduction" as "the household engages in a process of value creation in its various daily practices" in early work on domestication theory (Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley 1992:19). The home is seen as a creator of "a spatially and temporally bounded sense of security and trust" (Ibid. 20). Family life, through the stability of the everyday and the construction of the household, reproduces the feeling of security and sense-making, but can also be the source of the lack of security. Giddens (1991) argues that *trust*, built up within the home, becomes a fundamental defense against the anxiety of modern life, the fragmented perception of reality. The functional home is the main source of ontological security, as the socialization process of the child depends on the trust in the parents.

Giddens (1992) also addresses this kind of identity work in relation to addiction in modern life as "a particular mode of control over parts of one's day-to-day life - and also over the self" (Giddens 1992:74). He draws attention to the lack of security, the absence of set "patterns and habits", as constituting a threat to the identity project. At the same time addiction signals a specific control over oneself in the creation of alternative sets of patterns, although often viewed as ultimately

damaging. In arguing for the connection between life-style choices, addiction and ontological security, Giddens means that the project of the self needs to be "brought in line" with the "reworking" of the identity project (Ibid. 1992:75). As such, he argues, the range of addictions that an individual can succumb to, is wide and disparate.

The dimensions of domestication

The primary assumption of domestication theory is that media technology, as objects, are not mere material constructions, but are also meaningful artifacts (Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley 1992:15). In being part of the meaning-making within the home, these technologies are part of the project of the household, which Silverstone, Hirsch and Morley conceptualize as the "moral economy" (Ibid. 1992:16). This economy is not autonomous in relation to the public, objective economy, but it is still considered a system of its own, largely metaphorical in nature. Within the practices of everyday life, the moral economy is the on-going negotiations of value in both the transaction from the public to the private, as well as within the private sphere of the home. The concept encompasses these negotiations and transactions, as well as the building of taken-for-granted practices surrounding media and technology within the household. As Silverstone (2006) himself puts it:

In one sense the notion of the moral economy is naively empirical. It asks the question in what ways, if at all, households or families create for themselves private and personal cultures, which have consequences for the way in which the anonymous, homogenizing technologies and services of public and commercial life, are used and valued. (Silverstone 2006:238)

The moral economy is an abstraction where values are in "constant exchange" as an on-going process within the everyday, as well as in its relationship to the public (Berker et al. 2006:4). The concept of the moral economy and that of ontological security manifest two sides of living with technology and media within the family, as processes of creating the home as an entity. Stability of the private sphere is essential to uphold the household as an institution, an institution that is economic, moral and social. It is these processes, "which turns space into place" (Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley 1992:19), that make households heterogeneous homes. Silverstone (2007) also makes note of that there is a moral struggle within the home, the parameters of this specific economy and its contact surfaces is never plain and simple, they are complex and constantly renegotiated (2007:169).

Domestication theory considers media technology as "*doubly articulated*²⁰" (Berker et al. 2006:4). Technologies are considered both object and meaning, they are part of the material world but are at the same time constantly evaluated. The objects are part of the meaning-making of the home, they play part in the creation of the families everyday lives. But they are also articulated as part of the metaphorical transaction between the public and the private (Berker et al. 2006:4; Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley 1992:21), obtaining a second meaning. It is through media technologies that information and communication can be shared from the private to the public, and vice versa. It is also a mode of transaction between private spheres, between households.

In further explanations of the procedural work of media technologies being negotiated within the household, Silverstone, Hirsch and Morley (1992) propose four elements of domestication, which occur in the initial entry of the object into the home, as well as in the process of the technology becoming part of it. These are *appropriation*, *objectification*, *incorporation* and *conversion* (Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley 1992:21). The dimensions become useful tools in addressing in what kind of stages practices are formulated in the domestication process. The first element, appropriation, lies in the transactional process of an object being brought out of "the world of the commodity" (Ibid.) and into the household. As such, the technology is in this process crossing the line of being a commodity in the objective public economy into being owned by the family and brought into the moral economy. It is important to note, that it is not only material objects that are treated in this way, but also the media itself, be it a subscription service or any kind of content (like, for example, a video game). An object is also considered to have a *biography*, a story that not only encompasses the technology's production but also its marketing and other aspects of its "life" (Ibid. 1992:17-18). Media technologies biographies "contribute to shape their identities and to carry particular representations of their roles in our society and everyday life" (Natale 2016:432). Biographies thus contain discourses surrounding the object or content, bearing weight to both decisions around acquisition and the domestication process.

Continuing on from the process of appropriation, following the objects entrance into the home, the object is objectified. This is "expressed in usage [...] but also in the physical dispositions of objects in the spatial environment of the home" (Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley 1992:22). In placing the object in the home, its spatial placing conveys specific meaning, and could be understood in, for

²⁰ Emphasis in original.

example, aesthetic values. The placing of an object in the household becomes part of the aesthetic of the home. The objectification of media and technology helps construct, and reconstruct, the layout of the home. The uses of technologies is the main consideration of the next element, incorporation, which "focuses on the temporalities" (Ibid. 1992:24), how the functions of media technology and content bring with them questions on the usage of the objects, who in the household uses them and in what way. These questions bring with them the specifics on usage of media, which in modern societies is a complex matter. The last element, conversion, is where the media technology becomes part of the transaction between the home and "the outside world" (Ibid. 1992:25). Here it is once again boundary crossing that is at the fore front. In that the technology has been incorporated into the moral economy of the home, its meaning and functions can be expressed outward, be it in public space or between private spheres. This is where values negotiated in the private can be articulated in broader contextual situations.

These elements are part of classic domestication theory's framework for investigating the entering, and adaptation, of media technology into the home. As Haddon (2016) argues, this classic approach is, although it has been expanded upon, still useful as domestication theory includes a general "requirement to be sensitive to social context" (Haddon 2016:22). Since the 1990s, our media repertoires have become increasingly complex, but it is in the empirical investigations that this complexity can be investigated, which a general framework such as the classic formulations of domestication theory allows for (Ibid.). The increasingly complex media systems which we nowadays operate, and operate within, does not benefit from a structural system of understanding. The terms explained here are somewhat elastic, Silverstone (2006) himself makes note of this, and should be treated as flexible concepts. In the analysis, these concepts will be applied with this flexibility in mind, to broaden the understanding of digital games in domestic spaces.

Media imaginaries, everyday tactics and the moral economy

The definitions and constructions of digital games are not separate from the actual content or technology, but part of what has been explained above as their biography. The biography of the acquired media content or technology contains the lifespan of the commodity, both its physical production and its immaterial construction (Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley 1992:18). Digital games are highly diverse in both technology and content, and tracing the biography of any given technology or text would result in a study which would call for the necessity to research a single game console, specific game or mobile unit. Instead, adopting a perspective that encapsulates this

wide variety of forms, is essential. Deborah Chambers (2016) uses Roland Barthes (1973) notion of the myth to construct the concept of *media imaginaries*, which encompasses "popular discourses and public meanings associated with media technology" (2016:13). Chambers uses media imaginaries to address how media technologies and their "potential are debated, contested and agreed upon" (Ibid.).

In borrowing from Barthes, Chambers media imaginary are digital games as myths, containing the overarching discourse of the destructive ability of the media, a myth susceptible to reproduction or resistance in both private and public discourse. The myth could be considered similar to discourse, as it's the taken-for-granted construction, the connotative meaning, of the subject that remains in focus (see for example Hansen & Machin 2013:176). The media imaginary mostly pertains to the appropriation stage when media technologies and content is brought into the household. The fantastical myths of media technologies include narratives spun by the producers, the commodification of the object and the object as meaning for individual homes, often retaining strong moral characteristics. The concept of media imaginaries will be used as a way of explaining public discourse, tying the media technology and content closer to how it is *perceived* rather than its biography as commodity. This forms the first dimension of this conceptual outline, acting as the over-arching narrative surrounding digital games.

While the concept of the imaginary is satisfactory for understanding public discourse around digital games, there is still the question of the practices within the home, the regulatory processes deployed by parents. Michel de Certeau (1984) distinguishes between strategies and tactics, where strategies are places where power is created and "isolated" (1984:36). Strategies can be seen as the over-arching macro structures, the broad strokes of power relations, not defining but inspiring modes of operation. Strategies are dependent on the creation of place, where tactics, on the other hand, are reliant on the "*utilization of time*²¹" (de Certeau 1984: 39), a reaction to the dominant strategy. In other words, a strategy is in many ways included in the media imaginary, as it is a creation of a 'place', a dominant narrative, looming over everyday practices and regulations. Tactics, on the other hand, symbolize the operational modes of the private sphere, where social practice can be investigated. This plays the part of 'time', it is the individual agency in contextually rich situations. It is the way in which the common individual re-evaluates products (like media technology and

²¹ Emphasis in original.

content) to suit their own needs, adapting an individualized tactic in its usage (Ibid. 1984:32). Strategies and tactics are never independent of each other, as tactics, being the varying practices of households, are the reaction to the theoretically charged strategy. The 'ordinariness' of families is what de Certeau (1984) calls the "everyman" (1984:2), the ordinary hero of the everyday. Families are highly complex constellations of similarly complex individuals, and their social life is an intricate web of practices and experiences. They are, as we shall experience later in this text, not ordinary at all.

Using de Certeau's (1984) distinction between strategies and tactics, we are allowed to move beyond, or at least elaborate on, the discursive, in trying to understand the modes of operation that exist within households regarding digital games. In this, we are understanding the household as consumers of technology and content, but this "consumption has to be understood as productive" (Silverstone 1989:79). Strategies are the *ideas*, tactics are the *productive practices*. Consumption is not something passive, but requires the ability to (re)formulate, to articulate and appropriate, any media that is so intricately interwoven into the fabric of everyday life. It is very much a constitutive part of the moral economy of the household.

The everyday tactics are negotiated within the evaluation and meaning-making processes, between the private of the home and the media imaginary, the perception of digital games. What domestication theory lets us do, is investigate these tactics and negotiations in relation to the morals of the home. Utilizing the concept of the moral economy from domestication theory opens up a moral vantage point from which to view the families regulatory processes. There is no need to draw lines between these concepts. Instead, they should be considered influential of each other as parts of the regulatory processes of digital games, grounded in the moral project of the family.

THE POINTS OF DEPARTURE

The marking of a starting point for understanding how moral evaluations of media technologies both shape and are shaped by everyday practices, is an attempt to "encapsulate the nuances of consumption and the way that users inscribe artifacts with meaning" (Berker et al. 2006:6). Domestication theory demands a methodological outlook grounded in perspectives understanding the everyday as a space of "sense making" (Ibid. 2006:7). But what kind of everyday, what kind of world, is there to make sense of? Social constructionism challenges claims of taken-for-grantedness, by definition being a critical approach the understanding of the world as an objective entity (Burr 2003:2). A social constructionist approach to the social sciences subscribes to the idea that knowledge and the human perception of phenomena is created in social interaction and is thus socially constructed, there are no inherent qualities that makes something what it is (Ibid. 2003:4). Subjectivity functions as its ontological and epistemological foundation, as the subjects interactions within the social takes center stage. Even though it is the *idea* of a phenomenon that is dissected (Hacking 1999:26), it's available to us empirically in social interaction.

It is an approach that sees the social as constructed through "*everyday action* [...] in *practices*"²² (Couldry & Hepp 2017:21). This perspective does not reject the notion of the world in material form, but it is in our experience of it that we both create and acquire knowledge about it. This means that the world does not simply come into existence, but is an experience, a construction (Ibid. 2017:22). This approach provides an ample methodological foundation for researching the practices of parents, as well as the interplays with the social construction of digital games, primarily for two reasons. One, the practices and interactions within the social are made the focal point, however banal these practices may seem at first glance. As has been discussed earlier, this is also embedded in the notion of the non-media centric approach, where the mundane and ordinary is often placed at the heart of the inquiry (Krajina, Moores & Morley 2014). Every interaction has the potential to alter the way we perceive the world, which is in turn influenced by our initial perception of it as well. The second reason is exactly that. The influence of the discursive, the ideas that exist in society and the manifestations of them, also shape the practices of the everyday. "Ideas do not exist in a vacuum", Hacking (1999) states, "[t]hey inhabit a social setting" (1999:10). This not only

²² Emphasis in original.

allows for an inclusion of both practices *and* ideas to be brought into analysis, but in a sense demands it.

Research surrounding moral panics and domestication theory remain reliant on case studies, this one included. Bent Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that "[t]he advantage of the case study is that it can "close in" on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice" (2001:82). Exemplification highlights specific analytical points, arguing against generalizable results, according to Flyvbjerg. A case study will then bring with it all the complexities of family life and the everyday, where any kind of generalization would overshadow the details and intricacies of the interactions and practices within specific families. Instead, case studies lets us move away from "analytical rationality" (Flyvbjerg 2007:391), to a more contextually perceptive approach. In social science research, this context-dependency, Flyvbjerg argues, establishes a sensitivity to the "open-ended, contingent relation between contexts and actions and interpretations" (Flyvbjerg 2001:43), emphasizing the importance of the contextual in studying agency and experiences. In this, importance is given to a "wide variety of viewpoints" (Seale 2007:381). Issues surrounding definitions of the harms of digital games are part of this contextual framing, setting the stage for agency within the home, and how it can be understood.

Researching the home

With the methodological foundation acting as a viewpoint, the practicalities of the method remain the start of the analytical work (Bazeley 2013:12). The empirical material in this study consists of 9 semi-structured interviews²³, all approximately an hour in length, focusing on parents, the head policy-makers of the home (at least they are considered so in an initial stage). All the interviews were conducted within the homes of the families. Understanding the home will have to entail questions on how parents view their children's gaming, how their regulation around games look, but also why they retain policies and rules around digital gaming, if at all. Harnessing the advantage of the interview as method, it lies in exploring these individual "attitudes and values" (Byrne 2012:209). The interviews particular interest was divided into three larger sections, Family life and technology, Video- and computer gaming, and Gaming, the family and the surrounding world. The open-ended structure of the interview allows for an understanding of that particular family, their routines and perceptions surrounding digital games.

²³ The full interview guide is available as Appendix 1.1 and details on the interviewees available in Appendix 1.3. Also, an excerpt of a select interview is available as Appendix 1.5.

For this type of non-media centric study, semi-structured interviews or other ethnographically informed methods may seem like the most anticipated approach. But it's important to recognize that interviews are never fully a subjective telling of the interviewee's viewpoint, as the data is co-produced with the researcher (Rapley 2007:16). Rather than being a process of a collecting of data, it is in many ways instead a *generation of data* (Byrne 2012:208). Thus, the formulation and structuring of questions must be handled with care and thoughtfulness, there is not much to gain from attempts at fully controlling the conversation. The loss of control and as the ability to successfully steer the interview, becomes a delicate balancing act. Sensitivity to the specifics of the individual interviewee also has implications on the actual interview and the questions asked. Having a schematic of topics and questions that is flexible, with the ability to "mutate", and one that allows you to "follow the interviewee's talk" (Rapley 2007:18) is key in extracting the intricacies of specific parents perspectives.

Sampling was handled through the snowball approach, where the initial interviewees were asked for further recommendations. Initial recruiting was done by casting a wide net, a method of following multiple leads (Rapley 2007:17). The main criteria was that the household contains children, regardless of gender, in the ages of 6-15, and that they in some form engage in digital games. Through initial contact with friends and family, with the hope of being referred to, for example, work colleagues, 13 families were contacted, where 9 became to final sample. I did not want to strategically limit my search, for example only looking at the group that is most often portrayed as heavily invested in games; young males playing massive online games (albeit this group is represented in the thesis). Rather, I want to investigate the heterogeneity of the households, the varying views on regulations and restrictions. This being the case, I did not pay close attention to any specific practices or beliefs in the home in the recruitment process. The regulations tell a story of the challenges of the everyday, a story not only available to those who are portrayed as the problem group. Therefore, I also felt the need to conduct these interviews in the lived everyday of the families, their homes, where the comfort and the reminders of the everyday were close at hand, in the hope of enriching the conversation.

The 9 interviews were coded, using open coding, and three main themes emerged from this thematically analytical work, signified by a constant breaking down and building up of the transcribed interviews, "reflecting on evolving categories [and] deciding what is important to follow

up” (Bazeley 2013:16). The codes and categories of the interviews were divided into these three themes, which then became the main areas of investigation in the chapter The tactics of ordinary families:

- The tactics of regulations
- Moral activeness of digital games
- The distancing properties of digital games

In preserving and guaranteeing the anonymity of the interviewees, a content form was drawn up and signed by every interviewed person²⁴. The interviews were then digitally recorded with this written permission. The original names of the interviewees have all been changed in this text.

Approaching public discourse

In investigating public discourse, I intend to look closer at material from the websites of *Logopeditjänst* (2016) and *Dataspelsakuten* (2017), two private companies who offer information and care for the problem of video and computer game addiction. This material will not only provide the thesis with insight into the construction of public discourse on excessiveness as ‘problem gaming’, but will potentially reveal more general views on the need for regulation of digital games. The addiction perspective serves as an vantage point from where to view the perceived dangers to the social, and the above texts are specifically aimed at parents, which falls in line with this thesis project. Worth noting is that defining a social problem, such as what constitutes excessive gaming for example, requires certain motivation from the actors. For example, *Dataspelsakuten* require a definition of the affliction to be able to offer treatment for it. Often these actors are in possession of “access to the media or to influential political figures, financial resources, and so on” (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 2009:155), granting them especial positions of power. While the debate on violence and games, as covered in a previous chapter, is almost exclusively centered on content, the texts surrounding addiction remain partly on the psychological damage, but also on damage to the social and the socialization processes of primarily young people.

Based in the notion that “[d]iscourse constructs social reality” (Schröder 2012:112), this material then becomes an entry point to the *construction of the harms of digital games* in a social context.

²⁴ Consent form available as Appendix 1.2.

This bridges the public and the private in this specific case, as the social practices not only exist in both these spheres, but also in the tension area between them. Deciphering the language used on these webpages will provide the thesis with a contextual understanding of problem gaming, providing a *discursive overview* of sorts, mapping out the discourses present in the texts as well as investigating their discursive nature. This includes particular elements of the texts that broaden the understanding of how a particular content is constructed and defined (Bruhn Jensen 2012:184).

In this way, the textual analysis of this material will not make attempts at even a light version of any variant of discourse analysis. Instead, a broader approach is taken in analysis, which explores the content in terms of "the social uses of language and other modalities - rather than self-contained texts" (Bruhn Jensen 2012:183). From this perspective, these texts exemplify discourses present in the public, not to be considered isolated textual artifacts. The very fact that the companies producing these texts exist, in offering care to young people who have a hard time managing their gaming, point to larger discursive practices in the public. It should be clear, that the critical stance that this analysis takes, is in ways inspired by discourse analytical frameworks. An analysis of discourses is in no way neutral (Jørgensen & Phillips 2000:70), but has the intention of exposing power relations through taken-for-granted assumptions and language use. This analysis was in its initial stages influenced by Norman Faircloughs (1992; Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999) critical discourse analysis (CDA), and still partially is. However, it is in its execution to be considered a more general textual analysis, where additional emphasis is placed on language and discourses. Telling of this is for example the use of the term 'discursive practice' which originated in CDA. Discursive practice is the use of language to describe phenomena, which is seen as both constituting and constitutive of the social world (Fairclough 1992:3; Jørgensen & Phillips 2000:67).

Once again, this approach is not without its limitations. The selective process in sampling these texts runs the risk of limiting public discourse, as a larger narrative, to a handful of documents. Of course public discourse includes counter-narratives, in the form of for example debates, that resist these types of definitions, but as the key focus of this thesis is on regulations and domestic tactics, the construction of the potential harms remains at the heart of the discussion.

DIGITAL GAMES AND THE MORAL PROJECT OF THE HOME

Constructing social deviance

Discourses surrounding the social harms of digital games all make claims, and in uncovering what these claims are, as well as who they are directed to, broadens the view on how these types of discourses are constructed. This basic understanding of public discourses around the social implications of problem gaming provides a basis of further examination of their appearance as discourses in the negotiations between the private and the public. The excessive playing of digital games is a phenomenon constructed and defined as a social problem in which children and young adults are considered engulfed in fabricated worlds which threaten their social, psychological and physical well-being.

Following on a methodology based in social constructionism, the texts below will be approached with the discarding of any epistemological or ontological essentialism, thus regarding the construction of the phenomenon as subjective. At the same time this is not disregarding the actual psychological and physiological damage that can be attained by an excessive behavior. The social constructionistic view on social problems, noted by Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009) in relation to moral panics, is not only a perceived problem by a societal group, it needs to be manifested as a solvable one, not as "an act of God, or the whim of nature" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 2009:151-152). Not only is a social problem constructed through definitions of the phenomenon, but also through the communicated concern and its ultimate solutions, although this does not mean there has to be consensus. Social groups, be it parents or organizations, who engage in "claims-making activities"²⁵ (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 2009:152) in relation to a particular social problem, add to the construction of meanings and definitions of this very problem.

Public discourses on problem gaming

The media imaginary of digital games contains the seeds of moral panics, which becomes evidently clear in the definitions of problem gaming. For example, in the text from Logopeditjänst (2016) three major discourses emerge from the analysis of the text. There is an inherent medical discourse in the material, digital games is an affliction that needs to be treated, equalling the addiction to

²⁵ Emphasis in original.

digital games to that of any other type of addiction²⁶. But maybe more importantly, the discursive structure of the text is one of desire, of games being so attractive that they inherently possess the potential to destroy young lives. It is constructed as a desire which lures in young people who have no notion of the consequences of excessive gaming. But that desire is created somewhere, it is the games themselves that are produced in such a way that this desire is not only instigated, but is kept throughout the practice of gaming. This discourse is one of the production of desire, of market strategies and game design. The game itself is created as an object of desire, and a successful one. And it is an object that needs to be controlled.

Clearly considered a social problem, addressed as young people being able to "live another existence through their screen", a duality in formed in terms of control over one's own life and control over the object. The text explicitly addresses the need for more education to youths of the dangers of too much digital gaming²⁷, but it is not addressing the youths themselves. It describes them in third person as "youths" or "persons", and using pronouns in conjunctions with describing them, using "their" and "they". In calling for more education around games and gaming, the text puts responsibility on parents, schools and government²⁸. This discursive framing is of addiction as an effected individual losing control, control is instead transferred to the addictive content. This transference of responsibility is noted several times in the text, through formulations such as games being "ingeniously constructed", or that young individuals that are addicted have "grown up in families where games have been a central part of the existence" (Logopeditjänst 2016). Digital games are almost solely blamed for the consequences, but also their contextual placement in everyday life.

Under the headline "What is computer game addiction?", Dataspelsakuten (2017) once again define video game addiction as an issue particularly effecting young people. Here, there is emphasis on balance in the lives of young people²⁹, where gaming is not a problem area unless this balance

²⁶ "The player often loses their perception of time and reacts with the same symptoms as with other types of addiction, for example aggressiveness and abstinence, when they are not allowed to play." (Logopeditjänst 2016)

²⁷ "lack of knowledge of computer game addiction" (Logopeditjänst 2016)

²⁸ "As there is great cluelessness in society regarding young peoples playing there are attempts made to increase awareness through information to youths, their parents, school personnel and other groups where young people are active." (Logopeditjänst 2016)

²⁹ "Gaming become an addiction when it starts to interfere with the persons relationships or his/her strive towards goals like good grades or progress in other activities, such as sports." (Dataspelsakuten 2017)

somehow becomes skewed, like in cases of excessive playing. The balance contains a dichotomy of the normal and the fantastical, where participating in digital games allow young people to act differently than they would in real life situation, where "[a] shy child can suddenly become sociable, a passive child can become aggressive". This dichotomy is further elaborated on, as this is presented as the main issue of creating the excessive behavior. It is a division between the digital and real world, where the consequence-less freedom of the digital world is portrayed as a desirable one³⁰. Digital worlds represent escapism, where there is no "demand to meet people for real" (Dataspelsakuten 2017).

As in the text from Logopeditjänst (2016), Dataspelsakuten use pronouns like "they" that show the text as not being directly in dialogue with these young people, but instead calls for action and the taking of responsibility. The text also lists symptoms of video game addiction, thus alluding to a medical discourse. These symptoms are almost entirely of social character, like the effect on school work or lying about the amount of play time. There is a complimentary list which mentions the physical effects, such as sleep disturbances and headaches. Even though Dataspelsakuten's text mostly constructs a discourse of desire, of being able to become someone or something else in a digital world, it also questions the actual transference of behaviors in-game and in real life, as these are defined as two entirely different skill sets. The focus is here on online computer games, in a way defining what digital games actually encompass and in sequence, who can be a victim of addiction.

Mythologizing deviance

What this analysis is allowed to exemplify, is how the social harms of video and computer games linguistically and discursively are placed in a more general discourses on both excessive gaming and the activity of playing games. This is of course only part of the discursive construction of digital games, as this also includes, for example, the debate on violent media content. However, this debate is extensively covered elsewhere, and acknowledged as part of this thesis literature review. The *myth* of addiction to digital games does not exclude any real-life implications of the activity, as physical, social or psychological issues can arise from excessive consumption, as I have stated throughout this text. But through mechanisms commonly found in moral panics, these discursive practices construct excessive gaming as a threat to the social specifically. Digital games are indeed

³⁰ "Young people, that feel powerless in their daily lives, suddenly get the ability to take the command of armies, drive and crash cars and deliver chaos in a virtual world without there being any real consequences. This is of course enticing." (Dataspelsakuten 2017)

seen as potentially creating social deviance³¹ in children and young adults, having destructive effects on their psychological and physical well-being. The perceived responsibility, "the degree of felt concern" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 2009:152), to manage this deviance does not only lie at the level of public institutions, such as medical or educational, but also in the moral institution of the family, the home.

Moral deviance is attributed, not to young people themselves, but to the controlling properties of the very technology and content itself. The object becomes the active subject, while the individual, in a state of lost control, is at the mercy of the ("ingeniously crafted") technology and content. When this transfer of control has reached a certain point, when the player is no longer consuming the object, but being consumed by it, different modes of intervention need to be enforced. As this analysis shows, and which has been mentioned before, these interventions come in the form of institutional practices (education, medical treatment, school system) and the (in the best of worlds) supportive structures of the family.

The texts analyzed here construct the problem area as a largely grey one, with the lines between addiction, excessive behavior or high engagement never being clear cut. Within this grey area lies the struggle of the social implications of digital games, and as a struggle, it contains power relations, both between discourses and in terms of active control. Video game addiction is an affliction caused by desire, by the potential loss of control, and the question remains how this control should be regained and sustained. Responsibility is not thought to lie with the game developer, neither is it in the hands of the afflicted individual. Rather, responsibility lies with the stability of society, of functioning institutional resources, whether they be public or private. In line with the construction of social deviance which Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009) describe, there is not only "something wrong" (2009:151), but there is a solution, although not always clearly described or elaborated on. The media imaginary of digital games contains all these struggles for meaning as these technologies and content are invited into the family. So moving this discussion to the confines of the four walls of the home will reveal how the family, as a moral constellation, assesses and takes responsibility for the particular control over digital media in the form of games.

³¹ I am aware that 'deviance' contains its own definitions, especially within criminology. The way I am using it here is as a description of the individual succumbing to a social problem, becoming socially deviant, which in turn triggers a response, often in the form of regulatory actions.

The tactics of ordinary families

When asked why she and her husband ended up playing the Scrabble-Like digital app game Wordfeud on separate phones while laying right next to each other in bed, Maria, a resident of Ronneby, Sweden, and mother of two girls, offers this response:

Easily accessible. I think that's what it is. I don't know why really, but those damn phones are experts at drawing people in. It's an addiction that you've created for yourself, which is terrible. As soon as you don't have anything to do, you sit with your phone. Instead of reading and talking with each other, or play games or something. It's scary actually. (Maria, Interview 2)³²

Maria's response is a telling example of the home as a technological arena where media is increasingly reconstructing the everyday. Although often conceived as a private sphere, the four walls of the home have become increasingly transparent with advancements in media technology. This is not limited to a metaphorical window for looking out, but through images, sounds and texts, there is also an invitation to look in, gaining insight to the inner most private. The transgression between the public and the private is through the transparent and porous walls of the home, ideas are as appropriated as the objects that are brought into the home as commodities. The private sphere is often felt as an isolated refuge, but it is a "dedicated space" for "technological change" (Chambers 2016:44), not as easily separated from the discursive practices of the public. The negotiation work of families is complex and ambivalent, recognizable in Maria's quote, where she lays blame to the object itself, but at the same time recognizing individual responsibility. Within 'ordinary families' these negotiations differ wildly, as do their practical and operational implementations. But, as we shall see in the subsequent chapters, there are also similarities. As Silverstone (2007) notes, the everyday is composed of differences and similarities (2007:108).

De Certeau (1984) uses the notion of 'ways of operating' to illuminate the complicated variations of everyday practices (1984:30). As Maria tells us, it's the interplay between the construction of the product and it's uses that informs the modes of operation. But it's not an isolated practice, but a negotiation with the construction of digital games. With that construction comes the myth of it's harms.

And we check all the time which one are there. We try to keep track but yeah, sometimes we look at the iPad and the phone and go all right, what's this game? But most of the time she

³² The original quotes in Swedish are available as Appendix 1.4.

keeps to the types of games we feel are okay. So its like, we try at least, but it's hard, it's really hard. (Maria, Interview 2)

Maria has an idea of what is considered acceptable in her family's household, what kind of games are appropriate for her children to consume. The symbolisms of objects entering the home become part of a regulatory process, one that is describes by Maria as a "really hard" one. So, in negotiations with the perception of what games are "okay", Maria adopts a forceful tactic of surveillance, checking her children's phones for what is not perceived as "okay". This, albeit very simple, example shows how regulations are reinforced within the negotiations with the media imaginary, how the object and it's meaning is reliant on negotiations, what's considered okay and what isn't. In de Certeau's (1984) words; "[t]he imposed knowledge and symbolisms become objects manipulated by practitioners who have not produced them" (1984:32), the forceful nature of objects entering the home become part of a manipulation which is tied to the moral structure of the home. Simply put, digital games need to be morally evaluated, manipulated, and regulated.

But first and foremost it's about that we as adults have the ultimate responsibility for everything. Because children don't know, they can't do, they just do what everyone else does. And if someone is sitting there playing that GTA or whatever it's called, then I mean... If an 11-year old who doesn't get to plays it might not understand, like "my friends get to play, so why can't I?" And that's when we as parents need to go in and set things straight. (Maria, Interview 2)

Children are in Maria's mind the unsuspecting targets of the dominant narrative of the harms of digital games, of the media imaginary. They do not possess the ability to tactically maneuver the over-arching strategies, the places of power. They cannot themselves evaluate the moral implications of potentially harmful games. Tactical responsibility falls solely on the parents, because children, in Maria's words, "can't do". In many ways, this echoes the narrative of Logopeditjänst's text, where young people are perceived as incapable of foreseeing the consequences of gaming, whether this pertains to excessiveness or content. Children are unable, in Maria's mind, to fully understand the tactics available to them. It is not up to them to recognize and regulate the supposed harmful content of digital games. She continues:

But as a parent you have to also be... I mean, just like I think that a parent who buys these games for an 11-year old when theres an 18-year old restriction is completely stupid, I have to take responsibility to look through the children phones to see what kind of games they have.

Our children would never be allowed to play such a game for example. If we don't think it's kid friendly enough, they won't be allowed to have them and we'll erase them. (Maria, Interview 2)

It is not only up to the parents to regulate through everyday tactics, but also to interpret the media imaginary, to decipher it and act accordingly. By doing this interpretation work, Maria, together with her husband, is also deploying a tactic of sorts, an evaluation of object and meaning. Grand Theft Auto (GTA), a violent and adult video game, becomes part of the media imaginary of the harms of digital games, manifested as imagined threats on Maria's horizon. Silverstone (1989) means that "the everyday life world is a world on the defensive, a world of common sense, of common feelings, defining and defending a territory against the threats of the unknown and the oppressive" (1989:84-85). But the object of desire that needs defending against does not need to enter the home physically, to be able to enter it discursively. The media imaginary includes the production of power, the commodity that is consumed within the home is never only object, but also meaning, context and myth. According to Maria, her children have never come into contact with the game, it is never appropriated. It is not allowed to "become part of the family" (Berker et al. 2006:2), but it retains in its symbolism a potential threat, to what is still to be explored.

But the thing with buying stuff and that, it's... We try to keep it so that it's kid-friendly. We also set, they aren't allowed to buy something for example, we have the codes for that. Anja [the eldest child] has an iPhone but she has my Apple-ID there so she can't buy anything without my... Or download anything without me going in and writing in my code and approve it. So I feel you have to be a bit harder there. (Maria, Interview 2)

Running through Maria's story, the concept of *trust* seems to become invaluable. It is in the trust between parent and child that her home can be protected from harmful content. But it is a trust that can become forceful, visible in her tactics in seeking out, restricting or eliminating harmful content. Giddens (1991) metaphorically calls the bond of trust between children and their caretakers an "*emotional inoculation*"³³ against existential anxieties -- a protection against future threats and dangers which allows the individual to sustain hope and courage in the face of whatever debilitating circumstances she or he might later confront" (1991:39). Maria calls this trust the "ultimate responsibility". The child is expected to put trust in the parents ability to negotiate the media imaginary and supply the most (in their eyes) effective tactics. The parent is being positioned as the policy-maker of the home, and as such, is also able to be held accountable for any successes of

³³ Emphasis in original.

failures of harms during the child's upbringing. The bond of trust is the bond that morally ties the family together, it becomes the moral beacon which to follow.

In its practical approach, Maria's story provides an example of how everyday tactics and the evaluative moral work within the home is in constant negotiation with this media imaginary. In the tension area of strategies and tactics, of discursive and social practice, we find the negotiations of parents evaluating the playing of digital games within the household. It is, then, both discursive and practical, both metaphysical and physical. In the media imaginary, the myth of digital games pertain to all these meanings. The imaginary need not a materiality to spin its narrative around, it can in its discursive form be a formidable exercise of power.

Keeping deviance at bay - everyday tactics of incorporation

Maria's story is not without its nostalgic moments, as she sees similarities with her experience of digital games during her own childhood:

I don't see it as any worse than when we were playing video games, how long didn't we sit and play Zelda and Link or Super Mario or Ice Climber when they were out on 8-bit. Or computer games when they came, I see it as an evolution. But of course, it's much more accessible when they have their phones with them all the time. But I don't see it as any worse than us playing video games, I really don't. I mean, how many times didn't our parents tell us to go out and play in the sun instead of sitting stuck inside. (Maria, Interview 2)

Once again, Maria mentions accessibility as a potential threat, one that is a product of technical evolution. But her insights provide more. Video games seem to have the ability to get you "stuck", it has the potential to be a harbinger of excessiveness, although the definition of excessiveness is placed with the parents, the caretakers and policy-makers. Maria is describing an object in its dimension of incorporation, where its functions are negotiated and placed within the moral economy of the household (Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley 1992:24-25). Where in the previous chapter the regulations revolved around restrictions in the dimension of appropriation, here digital games are physically part of the home, albeit certainly not unproblematic. Within the dimensions of appropriation and incorporation the regulatory operations of digital games in the household are often most clearly visible. Here, the functions of the uses, the harms and the meanings are negotiated and regulated, ultimately being either shut out or, often with a lot of hesitation, invited in. It is here that Giddens (1991) metaphorical vaccine is created and applied.

In this incorporation dimension, the parents are in constant dialogue with a plurality of meanings concerning digital games in their moral evaluation. These dialogues are all moral in character as with the assessment of issues, comes a dimension of value and meaning around the discourses and objects. This does not mean that these assessments are always without moral indecisiveness in their practical enforcement:

I've tried to limit it a little bit like that they can put the clock on one hour and then they have to do something else. So sometimes it happens that I'm bad at reinforcing it, kind of. To be able to remember that, oh right, that's the rule I have. So, there is a rule, but I'm diffuse with it. (Agnes, Interview 5)

Straight-forward rules are often portrayed in the viewpoints of the interviewed parents not perceived the most effective modes of operation. These tactics are seen as morally questionable, and their implementation seems to require a further element, a basis for the trust between caretaker and child. This building of trust resides, regarding a lot of the interviewed parents, in dialogue with their children, in a 'why' that can establish the forceful limiting of games as acceptable.

And what kind of individual it is, what kind of human one is. They accept it for now and I tell them why I think they should turn off and not only because I think so. But because there is a reason. Maybe not with how long time but I decide it with my gut feeling. It's not weird that one asks them. (Karin, Interview 3)

And we've let her do that somewhat, that she can sit with her phone and computer, but at the same time we... I mean, she can't sit for as long as she wants but... We don't have any set times of so, we've talked about it when it's not working and we feel we have to nag too much for her to stop, then we've said we might need set times, kind of. But it feels so boring, we don't want any set times when we're ourselves are on our own phones. (Ester, Interview 1)

These modes of operation, these tactics, come up against moral implications in their pragmatic form. For Karin, this is a question of explaining her decision, but at the same time it is based on her intuition, on gut feeling. Ester, on the other hand, feels reinforcing moral standards on family members are dependent on a routine, a vision of values and morals that are based in the family members equality within the household. Of course questions of morals are part of an everyday

process of parents and families, as decisions and transactions within the moral economy are based on these.

These transactions do not only take the form of forceful modes of operations, of limiting the children's use of digital games or the technology which it's played upon, as regulatory practices developed in the home start to take on complex shapes. They are operational modes, "multiform and fragmented" (de Certeau 1986:xv). Leading into the intricacies and further theorization of digital games as part of the moral economy in the subsequent sub-chapters, there is emphasis on, on the one hand, the continuous work that is the moral project, and digital games as *active* or *non-active* elements in this process. On the other hand, there is also the question of what properties of digital games as part of the home are perceived as in need of regulatory processes. Here, focus is put on a property of *distancing* that digital games can be experienced as creating between individuals in the home, which opens up discussions on responsibility.

The value of continuous activity

Karin and Mattias live with their two children, ages 8 and 10, in a house just outside of Ronneby, Sweden. They both describe themselves as uninterested in new technology, but still admit to having a plethora of media devices in their home. They are, in sense, very alike the other parents interviewed for this study in their description of the role of media in the everyday. When asked about their daily habits, and after pointing to the TV as their main hub of media usage, they comment on digital games:

Mattias: It's a little bit of video gaming, but not all the time. Big brother ends up there a bit.

Karin: It's not like... When you talk to people, there are ones who have it much worse. They aren't totally hooked on these things even though they are exiting and interesting but it's not the only thing that matters. Like you hear about kids who play around the clock. They're not that old either. (Interview 3)

From the beginning of the interview, Karin shows how she is involved in negotiations with other parents, referencing, and measuring, her own family's practices with others. The negotiations of digital games are evident in both the appropriation and incorporation, but here Karin shows how it's also part of the conversion dimension, where the values of digital games are evaluated in terms of *other* families. Digital games become lesser threats when the morals of the family is measured

against families "who have it much worse". As the family continues to explain how digital games are handled within the household, it becomes evident that this establishing of moral values in regard to video games, is based within the moral economy of this specific household:

They often sit and watch and they play a lot of FIFA up here. I don't know much about it but maybe you know it. It's actual players from the real world and you can name them and it feels very real then, sort of. I have no problems with them playing it. They have a lot of fun with it and it feels okay. (Karin, Interview 3)

In Karin and Mattias family's case, there is value placed in the activation of family members, where football becomes the catalyst of this activation. Playing digital games which contain this interest does not pose a threat, they are not harmful as they pertain to the value placed in football as an activity. Mattias continues the discussion:

We try to put the brakes on it [digital gaming] somewhat, by trying to get them to think it's fun to be active. They are easily sold. They love balls and they think team sport is fun. Then you've got the social as well, you get a lot of pieces. (Mattias, Interview 3)

Football as a physical activity functions as a transactional element, influencing both the meaning of digital games, and the tactics associated with them. It enters the moral economy as a value, not as an object, content or technology. The playing of FIFA is no threat to the moral fabric of the household, as football is seen as a positive activity, and the parents see this interest in the game as an extension of the children's football interest. It becomes part of the family's identity as a "social and cultural unit" (Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley 1992:19). The activity resides within the moral confines of the family, and it is important to note that this moral transaction works both ways. The children are "easily sold" on football and team sports, creating a sense of unity. Being compliant, from the children's perspective, completes the transaction as they fall in within the moral outlines of the household. Mattias and Karin have presented the children with the option of, what they consider, a sound activity which then can be extended to digital games. This becomes a regulatory process in it's own right, integrated into the moral economy, a tactic which is dependent on the continuous moral agreement of physical activity. The regulation is visible as a *continuity*³⁴, as long

³⁴ The term 'continuity' is here borrowed from Giddens explanations of ontological security, and is to be considered a continuity of morals. This does not mean it is constant or inflexible, but it's seen as a continuity within the family that is valuable to protect, for example from the harms of digital games.

as the parents keep a moral stability within the household, digital games do not pose a threat. This is evident in the parents realization that this can easily be subject to change:

Mattias: As a parent of small children you have to live here and now. We might have answered totally different in five years time. They might have given up football completely and are sitting in a chair, drinking four liters of Coca-cola and crisps every day.

Karin: It doesn't feel like we're heading there, but you never know.

Mattias: It's exiting. For us it's always been very uncomplicated.

Karin: I can feel its like a drug. There is so much. (Interview 3)

The drug analogy becomes the ultimate signifier of the threat. At the same time, the parents are not worried, it's been "very uncomplicated" for them. It is this complexity that demands "boundary maintenance" (Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley 1992:20), the family needs their own set of regulations to establish a sense of continuity in these complex challenges. As seen above, the family has also established that there are families who are worse off in these regards, essentially valuing this moral continuity as successful. Being more a thought experiment from the parents, the myth of the harms of digital games is still spotted at the horizon of family life in various forms, and it shows that the family is in negotiations with external discourses:

No, it's characterized by their hobby if you compare to their peers who play other things. I think I would have had a harder time if they played, these games whatever they're called. Games that are characterized by violence. Then I might have thought they played too much, I don't feel that so far. (Mattias, Interview 3)

This line of thinking is also visible in Anna's, a mother of a boy and a girl, aged 12 and 15, discussion of activity:

Linus is very active as luck would have it, like in the summer when he's out playing ball in the yard and out and about. He's not locked in playing games. If he would have been doing that, we might have had to deal with it even more, but he's naturally one of those who wants to run around, but you can see how fast you engulfed in this like, the kick you get when you play. He gets totally into it. (Anna, Interview 7)

Mattias replicates the discourses surrounding both violence and excessive behavior, as they are presented almost as cause and effect, where games containing violence seemingly would result in excessive behavior. Anna does not mention violent games, but instead uses the "naturally" inherent behavior of her son as a form of reassurance of the self-regulating properties of physical activity. The potential threat is the "kick". It is the 'high' that Giddens (1992) refers to as the initial sign of addiction, the instigator to harmful excessiveness (1992:72). Placing this kind of negotiation within a plurality of meanings around the harms of digital games, further solidifies how the myth of digital games is not always easily defined within the household. But in the continuity of activity, where football or physical activity can be seen as the leading moral light, violent content or excessive behavior would be a disruptor to the moral fabric of the family, and as such would call for a shift in everyday tactics. The disruption is found in the families negotiation with public discourse, in the way the family imagines digital games in their harmful state. As stated in the previous chapter, this shows the strong presence of digital games as being potential threats without even being considered an issue. In keeping a moral continuity, in this case of physical activity, these disruptions are believed to be kept from entering the home as a "real" problem. Games have, in Mattias and Karin's case, been incorporated into the domestic sphere by negotiations pertaining to physical activity, specifically football.

The activeness of digital games in the moral economy

This evaluation and meaning-making is specific to the family, but the mechanisms of the moral continuities are visible in other ways as well, at the very least showcasing the complexities of 'ordinary families'. Agnes, a single mother of two girls living in Kalmar, makes note of the distinction between activity and non-activity concerning digital games:

I still think my children are small enough so they should take the opportunity to play and not just sit and take something in. I really want them to kind of do something. Sure, you can do that in a game, but I know the types of things they choose are not that developing or that they produce something. I would really have wanted to get them to use the iPad for something else. Like that it's okay that they record a movie, then I'd let them use the iPad whenever really. Or if they wanted to write or something. I just felt I really have a stone age vision of games! (Agnes, Interview 5)

What Agnes calls a "stone age vision of games" is the notion of games not being activating, at least not the games her children play. Agnes' articulation of activity can at first glance seem very

different from the interview discussed above. Still, they are both articulated as activities in the sense that they are believed to fall within the morals of the household, games should be *active in establishing the moral fabric of the home*. A game in the form of a *non-active*³⁵ element is seen as a disruptor to the moral continuity of the household. This further solidifies digital games, and the practice of gaming, as being part of the transactional nature of the moral economy. These regulatory modes of operation do rest on different values, but are similar in that they are part of the same kind of process of meaning-making in being incorporated into every day life. They are tactics as "activities which are heterogenous to the dominant" (Silverstone 1989:82), they do not conform to dominant narratives, but take form in the heterogenous household and it's many everyday practices. This process also shows the complexities in these negotiations:

Sure, they are really interested in having the iPad, its kind of the most important, but they rather watch stuff than actually play themselves. And I can find that a bit frustrating because I know that it's like girls watch while boys do. So it's almost like I want to say, come on, play a bit, do something! That's when I feel it's more developing than just watching a program. And there the thought that it's needs to be developing slipped in as well. [...] Like I know that Minecraft is good like, because it's maths and they can build and stuff. And that they are allowed to choose, that you don't allow the ones where you just dress Barbie in different clothes, but there being a bit more thought in the game. (Agnes, Interview 5)

Here, the dichotomy between active and non-active becomes both more *and* less transparent, and is also, through Agnes, understood as a gendered process. It is at the same time articulated as an activity to play games, but this activity, through stereotypical gendering, can easily be transformed into non-activity. The separation of activity and non-activity only becomes clear in the moral continuity of Agnes' line of thinking. In it's gendered process, the meaning of digital games and technology need to be subjected to an evaluation of their "developing" qualities, a process that Agnes sees as a non-activity if the bi-product of games (and their associated practices) become stereotypical representations of gender. It is in defining digital games as a non-activity, a non-contributor to the moral economy of the home, that digital games and their practices are perceived as potential threats. The regulations, then, rest on grounds of gendering, and takes on the form of

³⁵ Using the term non-active, instead of for example passive, is deliberate, as it's non-activeness pertains to the symbolic contribution to the family as a moral project. It is still an activity, but it's symbology is closer to non-activity in terms of the moral economy. The term passive signals a parallel process to the moral economy, while non-activeness can be part of the moral project, for example in the form of disruptions.

restrictions. Ester, resident of Malmö and mother of two children, comments on her and her husbands decisions when purchasing games for their children:

We rarely buy games but I usually think that I don't want there to be violence, unnecessary. I don't think that's needed. Gladly that it's something activating, that it's building or something. Like this one [points at the TV where a game is being played by their son] which I think it was great that you bought because it's a little bit puzzly. It's calm, beautiful and not that bustling. I think about that when it comes to movies and that stuff as well, that it doesn't need to be violent or so. (Ester, interview 1)

While not based on the same gendered discussion, but instead returning to the violent aspects of games, Ester conveys the activating part of games as a regulatory aspect of the adaptation of games into the domestic space. She also points to the relevance of a continuity, that this line of thinking, these regulatory processes or tactics, do not only pertain to digital games, but to other media as well. An activating or developing game can be more easily adapted into the household as part of the idea of the home as a moral place. This activity can also be found in the very mundane routines of the everyday itself, where the tactics in establishing continuity are reliant on patterns, patterns that need upkeep:

But when you at last have decided on these rules, that okay, there is no iPad or video game until we've eaten, or say, half past five. So when you just have gotten them to understand that, you're free of all the nagging because they know that that's just the way it is. A part of the routine. Then the key becomes to stand firm, and not become lazy yourself in a way. (Björn, interview 9)

As seen above, it is not always an easy task to regulate games so that these activating properties find a space in the home. The regulatory processes involved in these restrictions do require an activeness in themselves, which require certain "resources" (Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley 1992:19), not always available to the family.

I mean, before my divorce, I used to be great at keeping track of what the kids did because I saw them all the time. And then now, when I don't see them all the time, it's like "ah, but we got a new game" or "we were allowed to download this when we were at dads". So then I'm a bit bad at checking what kind of game it is, I'm more just okay. (Agnes, Interview 4)

Being active in the production and transaction of values works both ways, it is dependent on the specific constellation of the household and their complex relationships. The potential non-activeness of digital games needs active regulations, either to bring them into the realm of activeness, or build a project in an attempt to exclude them from the moral economy of the household. Tactical advantages are reliant on resources in, for example, the structure of the family. It is not enough to establish moral guidelines, crucial importance is also placed within the possibility of enforcement of these tactics. Returning to Karin and Mattias, they seem to represent the other end of the spectrum:

We're home a lot now. We have a lot of time with them. It also makes it easier to control it all, I have to say. If you'd been gone all day and get home at six. When I'm home we can always go out and do something. I can control that it doesn't get too much. [...] It's important that you don't lose control. I think it's easy to do, but it's easier to control the more you're home. (Karin, Interview 3)

The structure and formation of the family plays an important part in the activeness of regulations, which in turn then potentially influences the ability of the family to create a "bounded environment" (Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley 1992:19) which is the household, or the home. Time, as a control mechanism, once again showcases how tactics are everyday processes, put in place for "control" over excessive behavior. The harms of digital games seem to always have to be kept at bay, as their imaginary threat would be destructive to the moral project of the home. It also shows that disruptions in the continuities of the home, like a divorce or a job that takes time away from home life, have the potential to destabilize the moral economy of the household. This connection between the media imaginary (in the form of harms of digital games), regulatory processes (the tactics of everyday life) and the moral economy are intertwined to form complex and interrelated relationships, ones that are unique to the specific family or household and their constellation. Activity, like being able to spend time with your family, remains the central theme. It is in being active in the construction of the home that moral processes and tactics can be effective against the potential non-activeness of digital games.

Regulating the distancing properties of digital games

The home is a collection of individuals, but is, of course, presented as somewhat of a unit, as this remains the focus of the project of the home, the intricate processes that "turns space into

place” (Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley 1992:19). Playing games often seem to be experienced as a solo activity:

No, I guess it’s not as common to sit all four of us. It’s not. It happens, but often not that long. It might be that we watch an occasional movie together maybe. But otherwise they rather sit and watch their own. She wants to see hers and Linus maybe wants to play games instead of watching TV. (Anna, Interview 7)

Digital games, as well as screen time more generally, can often be seen as embodying properties of distance, qualities that seem to work as distancing the family members from each other. This property is perceived as counter-active to the project of creating an environment of trust and moral continuity. Agnes formulates this property:

Concerning time, I think a lot about this isolation, that one starts living a double life, that one is more into the game and that’s more important for you, to play, than what it is to have your friends or to meet up sometimes and do something, like. I think it’s really important with relationships between people. (Agnes, Interview 5)

Digital games are seen as having isolating properties, and are in Agnes’ eyes not comparable to real life activities. Games create a double life, an introvert parallel existence that is centered on the individual and the game itself. It is not a relationship, but an isolation. It is a *distancing* from relationships, from the activity that is necessary for establishing links between people. It is in Agnes’ call for people to ”do something” that this becomes most apparent. This ’doing’ is applicable as a real life activity, where playing games is considered a non-active property of the ’doing’. Playing games is not doing something, emerging is instead properties of potentially creating parallel lives. In this creation, it is relationships between people that suffer, digital games become road blocks in the creation of the moral and the social. Part of the media imaginary of digital games, excessive playing is presented as harming relationships. Playing digital games is not only a distancing from the social, but perceived as a distancing from the active building of the social as well:

And even if that activity had been to create art, draw, I mean some kind of activity one likes, if it had been sowing, it doesn’t need to be physical either. Men just so you don’t get stuck in that interactive world kind of and just want to be in it all the time. But that you are actually around people and learn how to behave, I mean the social game in the world where you have to meet

people. If you don't socialize with people then you don't really know how to behave for god's sake, in a group. (Ingrid, Interview 6)

Ingrid emphasizes that digital games have the ability of getting one stuck, a phrasing which is recognizable from formulations earlier in this text. Getting stuck is being isolated, distanced from the social world, it is losing abilities to be able to connect. It is activity as non-active in the moral processes of building relationships, of being able to behave. But there is an apparent paradox here, as Ingrid also notes that games are interactive, they are by definition activities. Both Ingrid and Agnes point to games as having distancing properties, but also raise the question of who is in control. Digital games seem to be accused of drawing in, getting people stuck, having the power to create parallel lives. But in their description lies the notion of activity, of games actually requiring agency and interactivity, they need to be *played*. The tactic for averting the imminent isolation is activity perceived as morally sound, that of drawing or sowing. They are mirrors of de Certeaus (1986) mundane practices in their attributes as potentially re-appropriating the space as non-threatening.

What can also be extracted from Ingrid and Agnes' way of describing this distancing activity, is the realization that it is not that simple. Responsibility exists in the socialization process, in the building of relationships, but it is a responsibility that seems hard to grasp.

But it's like these games, I don't know what their names are, but there was rape in them, or is, I mean I think that's outrageous that it even exists. That 13-year old children, or however old they are, sit there and play. There is an age limit but the parents have allowed them to play and that's a responsibility that the parents then let go off in that "my child can do this, but then I don't really know what the game contains". But that there even exists these kinds of games is sick, regardless if they are for adults or children. (Ingrid, Interview 6)

Ingrid tries to understand this kind of responsibility work, naming the production side and the parental control. Industry regulations include age restrictions, but the very notion that this type of game even exists is alien to her. The actual gaming individual is seen as being non-active in this responsibility work. Responsibility is specifically transferred to the parents, it is in its tactical shape that this type of content should be regulated. This type of tactical agency around media use within the home, Silverstone (2007) argues, "implies some kind of responsibility" (2007:108). But also, in parents not being fully aware of the contents of the games their children play, this places emphasis

on the distance created between this responsibility and the moral project. If a moral project is being built in the home, this distancing, whether it is excessive gaming or "sick" content, is in need of regulation, again pertaining to the myth of digital games.

Being understood here as a distance between activity and a perceived non-activity, this property of digital games is also articulated as a distance of 'worlds':

I think it's important [knowing what children do with technology] and we parents have a large responsibility, I don't think everyone deals with that part. Some get into everything new, and I think that's the hard part, to learn how to keep up with all this stuff that are, and how they fit together. [...] The hard part for us adults is to keep up in this world. And I can imagine if you have kids that are very much in games, it's just as hard to keep up there with what you can and can't. I mean, that you, you have to sit there a bit for yourself and learn what it is they do. (Ingrid, Interview 6)

You try to be as much in their world as possible, but without believing that you can be a part of it like, but be there in a curious way. You can't intrude on their world, you just can't, it didn't work when we were small either, I think. There wasn't much available then, you didn't even have a cell phone but... You where in the telephone booth calling "Heta linjen" and that kind of stuff. (Ester, Interview 1)

Responsibility for being part of the children's mediated world falls, not surprisingly, on the parents, however small this part may be. Non-intrusive insight into this world functions as a tactic of shortening and controlling the distancing, but as Ester points out, the world of children is also an individual one which does not need to be a threat. It is the realization of not being able to fully reconcile the different worlds of the home, some which are constituted through media use. A moral project does not translate to a unified moral understanding of every question or issue raised within the home, it is also dependent on trust and understanding for the individual space. So this responsibility demands that special attention is given to understanding the balance of the home, of unity and individualism. This form of understanding can also be related to disruptions, as the idea of parental responsibility and the creation of the distance is not always easy to reconcile:

Fredrik: It would be fun to just socialize with the family, and play ordinary games, I mean regular games, board games, it that the name? The small one, he likes that but David, he ah... Its like he drops that kind of thinking and puts his time into other things instead.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Fredrik: No, I believe that it has a lot to do with us being too loose maybe, it's been too easy I think to buy this kind of stuff. And limit maybe. I think that saying like to forbid, that they can't use the computer or the phone, that won't work as it is today. It's a new generation and everything, but maybe one should limit it better. (Interview 8)

The generational distance, described partly as a product of media technology, needs a forceful tactic, that of limits and restrictions, according to Fredrik. It is in these limits that the family can be brought together, to play "regular games". But inhibiting technology is itself a tactical resource strapped by limitation. In the everyday permeated by media use, the project of restriction seems impossible, only the compromise of limitation is available. To obtain more of the social in the family, technology, and their uses, need some form of limiting tactic. Fredrik still displays understanding for the practice of playing games, as he admits the impossible task of restricting it, but shows how the responsibility of parents should at least try to limit it. Understanding does not need to have a similar outcome in regulations across families. On the contrary, what this shows more than anything else, is the interpretational practices that these families utilize.

Inclusion as regulation

Understanding the world of children, with or without the necessity of having to be an intrusive part of it, is presented as key in regulating the distancing property of digital games. This particular kind of knowledge of children's media usage is not autonomous from the media imaginary, as it is informed by the potential harms. Even though there is an acceptance for these worlds to co-exist, it does not mean that a unification tactic isn't visible in the parents regulatory process of this distancing:

We do have Wii, we do, but unfortunately we play it far too seldom. At least that's social. We have liked playing Wii, both me and Christoffer, and Sara. Especially these sports games where you go bowling and stuff. Then it's not as much since Petra was born, because she's too small to be in on it. And then she becomes annoyed because she can't manage it, then it's ruined so it hasn't become much more after that. (Maria, Interview 2)

The unification around the TV, playing the Nintendo Wii console together, is considered social, and as such it is active in the social and moral project of the home. The Nintendo Wii has special value as a family console, Chambers (2016) argues, through its connotations through marketing and

imagery, sees "[t]he video game tamed and domesticated as family-oriented leisure" (2016:104). But this family oriented leisure also comes with its own set of disruptions. As Maria sees it, the family oriented gaming is socially active but it also demands a democratic foundation. It demands a leveling of the playing field, playing needs to be on even conditions. As Petra is too small, and cannot properly be included into the family gaming, this unification process is disrupted and as a tactic it is, for the time being at least, rendered an unsustainable one. It is, however, in the project of unification that the distancing, the moral autonomies, is believed to be able to be countered. In including video games into the family as a unifying activity, these regulatory processes facilitate digital games in playing an active part in the moral project.

The distancing property and the regulatory process of trying to unify and include the value of digital games into the morals of the household does not singularly extend to the process of playing games together within the family. It can also be more tightly connected to the discussion on responsibility which has been covered above. Vera, who lives just outside of Karlskrona with her husband and their 11 year old son, regards the distancing property of games as being part of the non-inclusiveness of digital games into family life:

I think that parents generally have been engaged too little in that part [the playing of digital games]. It's something you do parallel to family life. And then I think it's easy to have rules around it. But you're not interested in taking part in it. There's so much positive stuff to derive from that world and then there's a lot of crap as well. You have to help your kids navigate around. I think it can become a situation where you let the children go at it and then it goes out of control and then you set up rules. That's the experience I have. (Vera, Interview 4)

Vera brings up the isolating quality as a distancing property of digital games, the risk of letting the activity of playing become a parallel activity to family life. Being resistant to forced rules around digital games, her (and her husbands) regulatory process looks very different to the other interviewees. Vera does not believe in rules, or even regulations, but sees the very exclusion of playing games from the homes social project as a danger for the excessiveness of gaming becoming uncontrollable. By not including the practice of play into the moral economy of the home, but trying to shut it out or forcefully control it (and the content), it per definition becomes non-active in this project. Rather, it is in her thought of "navigation" that we can spot the regulatory process. Responsibility for the moral project can not solely be up to the policy-makers of the household, but

needs to be incorporated into all the participants of the building of the home. Thought of as a tool for navigation, Vera also uses the metaphor of a filter for this building of responsibility.

He's been allowed to play games that have another age restriction than what he is. We haven't been manic about that. We are very active in what he plays and what he does however. We think it's important that our children have a filter between their ears. They'll come across these things at friend's or somewhere else anyway. We want him to think. Is this good? Is one allowed to do this? It gives rise to pretty good discussions even if one comes across games that are war games or something else. We don't think it needs to be a disadvantage that it's the same think you go out and do in real life. It's up to us adults to control. (Vera, Interview 4)

The value and meaning of digital games is then not only in negotiation between the private and the public, but also within the private, within the moral confines of the home. The acceptance of digital games as an activity, as something unavoidable, seems to present a very to the inclusion of this practice and content into the moral economy, an act that requires a transaction of responsibility. The incorporation of media becomes a democratic project. Responsibility is still at the forefront, as these specific regulations are dependent on the transfer of responsibility, trust and knowledge between the individuals of the household. Parents are still seen as the policy-makers, but their project is no longer tactical exclusion of digital games or their imaginary, but the formulation of playing games as active in the constitution of the home.

The views of Vera and her husband offer a counterpoint, a juxtaposition to the pattern of regulatory processes that seem grounded in a vision of digital games, in some forms at least, as non-active in the moral project. Even violent games, games that are restricted by age, are not excluded in the project of inclusion in Vera's family. This signals a rejection of the media imaginary, a resistance to certain games formulated as harbingers of harm. It does constitute a quite clear example of "the ways in which the public and private spheres are interconnected and how they are manifested and expressed" (Chambers 2016:48), concerning media technology and content. If this technology and its content is doubly articulated as object and meaning in the negotiation between the public and the private, between discourse and practice, this negotiation is also in many ways seen as transferrable, establishing both meaning and context within the home as a building of trust and responsibility.

But I also think that, of course you can keep on and set restrictions, you can put on filters and have full control all the time, check her computer, what she does and such. But I still believe more in having this open dialogue and talk to each other, be curious and ask; "alright so what

are you watching and such, tell me about this, why is it that way". So I'm thinking that if she sees something that's scary she can tell us and we can process it together, like. (Ester, Interview 1)

It's in including a sense of responsibility and trust into the shared experience of the home, both Ester and Vera note, that the reality of a stable home can be realized. As Giddens (1992) notes, "[a] sense of the shared reality of people and things is simultaneously sturdy and fragile" (1992:37), which has implications on our sense of ontological security. The media then becomes part of the establishing of the contextual of the home, as a way of processing the in-betweenness of the public and the private, of the outside and the inside. This contextual work is paramount in reducing the distancing property of digital games, and it comes in it's simplest, and at the same time most complex interactional form, as dialogue.

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The over-arching narrative of the families met in this thesis is that of the challenges of everyday life, an everyday life that has the imagined potential to be colonized by media technology and its accompanying content. Games, then, can be seen as active or non-active in the continuative process of establishing the moral fabric of the home, with properties, like distancing, as challenges to overcome. Both the issues of moral activeness and the distancing properties range from questions of generational understanding, the value of physical activity and regulatory practices informed by perceptions of gender. It's in these complexities and heterogeneous attributes that the household becomes a distinct home. In the non-media centric approach, these complexities can be investigated without much restriction in regard to the media technology itself. Primarily framed as leisurely and mundane activities, digital games, as an ensemble, present a particular form of challenge to these heterogeneous homes. They are often seen as a non-contributor to the moral activeness of the household, and in mapping out these families and their tactics, hopefully the project of the home can become a bit clearer.

The metaphor of the moral economy developed by the initial domestic theorists still stands as a functional one, although it can, in its execution as analytical framework, be taken either too literal or too metaphorical. It contains transactional elements of meaning, but also of materiality and contexts, as part of a larger domestication challenge of media technology and content. As such, the families we have followed in this study exemplify the ever-changing everyday, a site of *moral production*, where the evaluative work of digital games are tactically maneuvered in trying to include them in, or exclude them from, the home. I have mostly focused on the moral economy as a site of negotiation work, which it certainly is, but these negotiations and moral transactions have been based in terms of threats and harm. This is of course not the only perspective. But the tactics of seemingly ordinary families, as regulations or restrictions, have provided not only a vision of the challenging work of negotiations, but also a potential way forward.

What I propose to add to the rather impressive body of research that is domestication theory, is how modern families, within domestication processes with a seemingly endless supply of media content, are caught defending the home from not only objects, but moral values, contexts and imaginary distances based in public discourse. Digital games are both alien and well known, shape shifters in

their appearance as media technology and content, sometimes acceptable, other times not. I do not believe that a critique of the social construction of the harms of digital games is enough. The worries experienced in the home are real, they are felt and dealt with, they cannot be discarded. But the exclusion of digital games from the moral project cannot be the solution. There needs to be a shorter distance between digital games and the morals of the home as gaming is an activity that is, and will with all certainty remain, a large part of young people's lives. The answer cannot solely consist of rules and restrictions. The domestication process is not just a way to tame "wild technologies" (Berker et al. 2006:2), but a way of finding *acceptance* for the wilderness in them, media technology can never be completely domesticated. Embracing this will not only make regulatory processes potentially less forceful, but hopefully create a familial understanding for the 'wild' attributes of digital games. There is no family in this study that is unaware of the discourses around digital games, neither is there one that fully believes there to be simple explanation of correlation between, for example, high engagement and addiction, or content and violence. Still, the formulation of their everyday tactics are often too closely informed by the myth of digital games, leaving them in danger of becoming a vicious circle of reproduction of the perceived harms.

Being fully aware that by focusing on regulations, I am in danger of moving too close to banal reproductions of the potential harms, threats and worries that are included with the media imaginary of digital games. I hope it is clearly illustrated that this text is an attempt to move away from this perspective. Instead, this is an effort to examine how digital games, through media imaginaries, enter the home as discourses and objects already ripe with meaning, focusing on a defined case which illuminates the challenges that families face in the social world of increasingly integrated media use. The potential activeness or non-activeness of digital games can be both contributor and disruptor to the metaphorical moral economy of the household, but a spotlight needs to be directed at issues of context, *as well as* the practices of the home. Non-media centric studies allow for this broad approach.

Admittedly, there's a lot left unsaid and untouched in this text. I have not extensively investigated the dynamics of family life through aspects of class and gender for example, which could perhaps provide a more detailed study on the intricate web of everyday family life. I have instead opted for a broader approach, using regulations as a way of uncovering power dimensions between the public and the moral project of the private. But a study that would allow for a greater span in time, not only space, would certainly provide insight that this study could not. Method-wise, this would be a

more expansive ethnographic project and, as stated above, have the potential to be more detailed. It's detailedness would possibly also require more space than this format allows for. The moral project can never be investigated to its fullest extent due to it's continuous and ever-changing state (both in the public and private), but it can be covered in detailed case studies which, then, do not have the mission to address any homogenous patterns, but instead focus on the heterogeneity of the home.

Another stone unturned, one that could be critiqued for being a glaring omission in this study, is of course the absence of the voices of the children themselves, the receiving end of the regulatory processes. In a more elaborate project on the family and digital games, this would of course be a substantial part of the investigation. The focus of regulations could potentially show how the tactics converge or diverge in the relationship of the parent and the child, adding to the complex structures of the negotiations of the family. The children are in a way present in this study, in the interpretations of their parents, receiving the status of 'ghosts'. This has never been my intention. But in focusing on *one* power structure, that of the parents regulatory practices in relation to the media imaginary, it has been possible to focus on certain parts of these processes, at the same time providing a narrative that is hopefully greater than the sum of it's parts. Children should of course not be considered passive receivers. Their tactics, their modes of operation, are just as valid to study as that of the parents. I accept this short-coming of the thesis, with the hope of bringing the voices of the children out of the status of ghosts in potential further research.

It also quickly becomes clear that digital games, in whatever way they are experienced, are not as easily distinguishable from what is commonly addressed as 'screen time'. Social media, YouTube, streaming services, and of course games, can all be accessed via these types of media technology, including phones, computers, iPads and televisions. Modern (primarily western) societies are likewise states of technological convergence (Jenkins 2008). Although not part of this thesis, it further consolidates the complexity of both the activities and the challenges these activities bring. They all pose individual and collective ideas of harms, becoming part of a greater fantasy or imaginary of what technology represents in the household. This is certainly an area that could be further explored, as the empirical material in this thesis show how the parents worries are not singling out digital games, but include games in a larger discourse of screen time. Here, domestication theory has done a lot of valuable work, and will, with all certainty, continue to do so.

The complexities of the home

But let us return to the research at hand. In the process of understanding the moral project of the everyday, the analysis also shows how responsibility and trust become imperative in negotiating the values of digital games. This thesis has seen trust explained as the parents ability to make the ultimate decisions, to know what is good and what is not, but there is also the transference of responsibility, to act accordingly to the moral framework. These two dimensions of family life operate within space and time. Trust, in it's tactical form of regulations, is a thing of space, a defensive reaction to threats of harm which sustains the territory. Responsibility is the on-going, the time, the gradual building of the moral economy of the home. In it's transactional metaphor, this is the parental transference of values and meaning, which then itself is negotiated and valued with the child. The parents of this study see this, explained as "navigation", "filter" or simply "dialogue", as a way of bringing the family closer to shared moral grounds, not meaning it needs to be uncontested or unified. But it is a process of letting digital games closer to the moral frames of the home. Responsibility becomes the bearer of trust, trust put in the child to make their own decisions and evaluations, while being able to rest on the base of the moral project. These become tactics in themselves, while the base morality of the family acting more like a strategy. It is the isolated power of parents, as guidelines and ideas, where children become the ones who tactically maneuver.

Partly a theoretical understanding of the worries of parents regarding digital games, in many ways, this thesis attempts to offer more. In diving into an investigation of the moral economy, we are able to uncover processes and procedures that are very specific to particular families, values and practices that are detailed and rich. Seeing how digital games are attempting to be integrated into the moral economy and the everyday, this reveals the moral challenges that parents face in the light of these new, highly complex toys. As noted before, these challenges come with practically any inclusion of new media technology into the home environment (Livingstone 2009). And while there are reproductions of similar types of worries surrounding the emergence of essentially every new media and technology, the processes and practices surrounding these worries differ, solidifying the importance of research into these areas.

It is in their inclusiveness, then, as active or non-active in the moral economy that the role of this special media becomes visible. The forceful tactics of restrictions or the morally constitutive regulations are both integrated parts of the household, a project that needs upkeep. This is in itself not without it's challenges. Changes to family life as an imagined stable unit, for example through a

divorce, often contain disruptive qualities, further shaping these processes. The processes are as complex as family life itself, in the individuals that are included and the relationships that are built. Social life does not start or stop, it does not arrive at a finish line, making research into these issues as on-going and procedural as the moral project itself. At best, the domestic approaches offer a slice of life, a puzzle piece seemingly suspended in time and space as a defined case, but with transgressional properties in its value of understanding the household as a heterogenous site of moral production.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1.1: Interview guide

Interview Guide "The particular politics of the home" (SVE), Researcher: Magnus Johansson

Tema 1: Familjelivet och tekniken

Hur ser er familj ut?

- Vilka ingår, hur gamla etc.
- Yrke och utbildning etc

Skulle ni kunna beskriva en vanlig vardag?

- Hur ser rutinerna ut
- Både dagsaktivitet och kvällsaktivitet

Vilken typ av medier använder ni i vardagen; tv, tidningar, mobil, dator etc?

- På vilket sätt
- Vilka använder vad
- Används de teknologiska till spel

Vad funderar ni kring när ni skaffar ny teknik till hemmet?

- Vem bestämmer, har något att säga till om
- Vilken typ av teknik premieras
- TV- och datorspel; speciella regler för inköp

Tema 2: TV- och datorspelande

Kan ni berätta kort hur spelandet av digitala spel ser ut i er familj (inklusive mobilspel etc).

- Vilka spelar och vad spelas
- Var och hur spelas det; hemma, hos kompisar
- På vilken typ av teknik
- Skillnad mellan familjemedlemmar
- Hur mycket, hur stort är intresset

Skulle ni säga att det finns regler i er familj kring spelandet och i så fall hur ser de ut?

- Vilka restriktioner
- För vem gäller vad
- Har innehållet (typ av spel) betydelse
- Rutiner för vardag och helg, ser de annorlunda ut
- Tidsaspekten, har den betydelse (hur länge någon spelar)
- Ålderskillnader eller kön

Vad är era tankar kring era regler kring spelande?

- Vad händer om de inte följs
- Vad ligger bakom reglerna; vad är oron
- Vad skulle hända om de inte fanns

Tema 3: Spelande, familjen och omvärlden

Om vi zoomar ut lite, hur ser ni på barns spelande i allmänhet?

- Attityder till spel; farhågor etc
- Attityd till ny teknik; farhågor etc

Hur ser ni på de dåliga sidorna som nämns när det gäller spel, som våld i spel, beroende etc?

- Hur tror ni barnen påverkas, om alls
- Är farorna verkliga för er
- Vad är de största farhågorna i er familj

Har ni funderat kring/tagit del av andra familjers rutiner kring TV- och datorspel?

- Vilka likheter
- Vilka skillnader
- Jämförelser med vänner, bekanta, klasskompisar

Har ni på något sätt anpassat era rutiner genom diskussioner med andra familjer?

- I så fall hur
- Vilka familjer; närstående (vänner) eller bekanta; skillnader

Interview Guide "The particular politics of the home" (ENG), Researcher: Magnus Johansson

Theme 1: Family life and technology

How does your family look?

- Who are part of it?
- Ages, profession, education etc.

Could you describe a regular weekday?

- How do the routines look
- Both day and night activity

What type of media do you use in daily lives; TV, papers, phones, computer etc?

- In what ways
- Who uses what
- Is the technology used for gaming

What do you consider when bringing new technology into the home?

- Who decides, who has a voice
- Which type of technology is premiered
- Video and computer games, special rules around these

Theme 2: Video and computer gaming

Could you briefly tell me how the playing of digital games look in you family?

- Who plays and what is played
- Where and how; home, at friends houses
- On what kind of technology
- Difference between family members
- How much, how big is the interest

Would you say there are any rules in your family when it comes to gaming, and in that case, how do they look?

- What kind of regulations/restrictions

- Does the content matter
- Routines for workday and weekend, do they differ
- Aspects of time, does it matter
- Age difference or gender

What are your thoughts on your rules regarding gaming?

- What happens if they aren't followed
- What lies behind the rules; what's the worry
- What would happen if they wouldn't exist

Theme 3: Gaming, the family and the surrounding world

If we zoom out a bit, how do you view children gaming in general?

- Attitudes towards games
- Attitudes towards new technology

How do you view the bad parts that get mentioned when it comes to games?

- How do you think children are affected, if at all
- Are the dangers real to you
- What are the biggest fears in your family

Have you thought about other families' routines around video and computer games?

- Similarities
- Differences
- Comparisons to friends, acquaintances, school friends

Have you in any way altered your routines through discussions with other families?

- In that case, how
- Which families, close or not so close; differences

Appendix 1.2: Consent form

Consent form: "The particular politics of the home" (SVE)

Masteruppsats

Ansvarig: Magnus Johansson, Student MSc Media and Communications, Lund University

Masteruppsatsprojektet *The particular politics of the home* (arbetstitel) vill titta närmare på hur familjers rutiner med barn och unga som spelar TV-, mobil- och/eller datorspel ser ut. Fokus ligger på hur spelandet av digitala spel ser ut i vardagslivet, exempelvis vad som spelas, hur och när, men även vilka regler det finns kring spelandet och hur rutinerna ser ut. Målet är att kunna bredda förståelsen för hur spelandet av digitala spel ser ut i vardagslivet och ge en större insikt i dessa speciella mediers plats inom familjelivet.

Denna medgivareblankett är för en intervju på mellan 30-60 minuter som kommer användas inom ramen för uppsatsarbetet. Jag skulle vilja spela in intervjun och använda dialogen för att presentera mina resultat i en essä. Intervjun kommer bara spelas in med ditt godkännande, vilket du gör genom att signera nedan. Känn att du kan säga precis hur mycket eller lite du vill, och du kan närsomhelst avbryta intervjun, eller välja att inte svara på frågor.

Jag försäkrar att du kommer vara anonym genom hela studien och att det material som samlas in förvaras säkert så att endast den ansvariga för studien kan identifiera de deltagande.

Var god signera nedan om du väljer att medverka i den här studien.

Namn

Signatur

Datum

Appendix 1.3: Information on interviewees

1. "Ester" and "Love", Malmö, one boy and one girl, 9 and 12.
2. "Maria", Ronneby, two girls, 6 and 12.
3. "Karin" and "Mattias", Ronneby, two boys, 8 and 10.
4. "Vera" and "Lars", Karlskrona, two boys, 11 and 22.
5. "Agnes", Kalmar, two girls, 6 and 9.
6. "Ingrid", Karlshamn, two girls, 7 and 11.
7. "Anna" and "Hans", Malmö, one boy and one girl, 12 and 15.
8. "Fredrik", Ronneby, two boys, 7 and 14.
9. "Sanna" and "Björn", Karlskrona, one boy and one girl, 8 and 5.

Appendix 1.4: Interview quotes in original

"Lättillgängligt. Tror jag det är. Jag vet inte varför egentligen, men de där jävla telefonerna de är experter på att dra in folk. Det är ju ett beroende man har skapat sig, vilket är fruktansvärt. Så fort man inte har något att göra då sitter man vid telefonen. Istället för att läsa eller att prata med varandra, eller spela spel eller såhär. Det är otäckt egentligen faktiskt." (Maria, Interview 2, p. 35)

"Och vi kollar ju hela tiden också vilka som ligger där. Vi försöker ha koll men visst, det händer ju att man tittar på plattan eller telefonen och bara jaha, vad är detta för spel. Men oftast så håller hon sig till dom typerna av spel som vi tycker är ok liksom. Så det, vi försöker i alla fall, men det är svårt, det är jättesvårt." (Maria, Interview 2, p. 36)

"Men framför allt är det ju det här med att vi som vuxna människor har det yttersta ansvaret för allting. För barn vet inte, de kan inte, de bara gör som alla andra. och är det någon då som sitter och spelar det här GOTA [sic] eller vafan det heter, jag menar då, en 11-åring som inte får spela det kanske inte fattar, men mina kompisar får de spela det, varför får inte jag det? Och då är det ju vi som föräldrar som får gå in och styra upp." (Maria, Interview 2, p. 36)

"Men där måste man ju som förälder också vara, jag menar precis som jag tycker att förälder som köper de här spelen till en 11 åring när det är 18-års gräns är helt dum i huvudet så måste jag ju ta ett ansvar för att kolla igenom barnens telefoner för att se vad det är för spel de har. Våra barn skulle ju inte få spela ett sånt spel till exempel. Anser vi inte att det är tillräckligt barnvänligt så får de inte ha dem och då kommer vi att radera dem." (Maria, Interview 2, p. 37)

”Men just att det här med att köpa in grejer och sånt det är ju, då försöker vi hålla att det ska vara barnvänligt. Vi satte ju även, vi har ju alla, de får ju inte köpa någonting till exempel, det har vi ju koderna till. Tuva har ju en iphone men där har hon ju mitt appleid så där kan hon ju inte köpa nånting utan att jag eller ladda ner någonting utan att jag går in och skriver in min kod och godkänner den. Så att där känner jag att man får vara lite hårdare så.” (Maria, Interview 2, p. 37)

”Jag ser inte på det som något värre än att vi satt och spelade TV-spel, hur mycket satt inte vi och spelade Zelda eller Link eller Super Mario eller ice climber när det kom på 8-bits. Eller dataspelen när de kom, jag ser detta som en utveckling. fast det är klart, det är ju mer tillgängligt då de har telefonerna med sig hela tiden. Men jag ser inte det som värre än att vi spelade TV-spel, det gör jag inte. Jag menar hur många gånger sade inte våra föräldrar till oss att ut i solen istället och lek istället för att sitta här inne och ugгла.” (Maria, Interview 2, p. 38)

”Jag har försökt begränsa det lite såhär typ att ni får sätta klockan på 1 timme sen så får ni hitta på något annat. Så det händer ibland men jag är dålig på att såhär reforca det liksom. Att komma ihåg att juste det är den regeln jag jag har liksom. Så det finns en regel men jag är luddig med den.” (Agnes, Interview 5, p. 39)

”Också var det är för individ, vad man är för människa. Dom accepterar det än så länge och berättar varför jag tycker att han ska stänga av och inte bara för att jag tycker det. Utan för att det finns en anledning. Inte kanske med hur lång tid utan jag avgör det med min magkänsla. Inte konstig att man ber dem.” (Karin, Interview 3, p. 39)

”Och det har vi låtit henne göra en del, att hon får sitta med mobil och dator, men samtidigt att vi, alltså hon får ju inte sitta hur länge som helst utan... Vi har ju liksom inga bestämda tider och så, vi har pratat om det ibland när det inte funkar när vi tycker att vi får tjata för mycket om att hon ska slkuta, då har vi sagt att vi kanske ska ha bestämda tider, liksom. Men då känns det så tråkigt, vi vill ju inte ha bestämda tider när vi sitter och avvänder vår telefon.” (Ester, Interview 1, p. 39)

”Mattias: Lite TV-spelande är det, men inte hela tiden. Storebror hamnar där lite grann.

Karin: Det är inte så, när man snackar med folk de finns dom som har det mycket värre. De är inte helt hooked på det här även om det är spännande och intressant men det är inte bara det som gäller. Som man hör ungar som sitter och spelar dygnet runt. De är ju inte så stora heller.” (Interview 3, p. 40)

”De sitter ofta och tittar och de spelar väldigt mycket FIFA här uppe. Jag vet inte så mycket om det men det kanske du känner till. De är alltså spelare från verkliga livet man kan döpa dom och det känns mycket verkligt då på något vis. Det har jag inget problem med att dom spelar det har dom jättekul med och det känns ok ändå.” (Karin, Interview 3, p. 41)

”Som tur är ju Liam väldigt aktiv, som på sommaren är han ju ute och spelar boll i trädgården och ute och far och så. Han sitter ju inte inlåst och spelar. Hade han gjort det så kanske man hade fått ta tag i det ännu mer,

men naturligt är han ju en sån som vill springa omkring, men man ser hur snabbt man slukas upp i detta liksom den här kicken man får när man spelar. Han blir ju helt liksom inne i det.” (Mattias, Interview 3, p. 41)

”M: Som småbarnsförälder lever man ju här och nu. Vi kanske skulle svarat helt annorlunda om 5 år. De kanske slutat helt fotboll och sitter i varsin stol och dricker fyra liter cocca cola och chips om dan.

K: Det känns inte som vi är på väg dit, men det kan man aldrig veta.

M: Det är spännande. För oss har det varit väldigt okomplicerat.

K: Det är som en drog kan jag känna. Det finns så mycket.” (Interview 3, p. 42)

”Nej, det är präglad av deras fritidsintresse om man jämför med deras jämnåriga som spelar annat, Jag tror att jag haft jobbigare för om dom spelade, spel vad dom nu heter. Spel som präglas av våld. Då kanske jag tyckt att dom spelade för mycket, det tycker jag inte än så länge.” (Mattias, Interview 3, p. 42)

”Som tur är ju Linus väldigt aktiv, som på sommaren är han ju ute och spelar boll i trädgården och ute och far och så. Han sitter ju inte inlåst och spelar. Hade han gjort det så kanske man hade fått ta tag i det ännu mer, men naturligt är han ju en sån som vill springa omkring, men man ser hur snabbt man slukas upp i detta liksom den här kicken man får när man spelar. Han blir ju helt liksom inne i det.” (Anna, Interview 7, p. 42)

”Jag tycker ju att det är jobbigt att höra när de har varit hos vänner. Jag tycker ändå att mina barn är så pass små att de ska passa på att leka och inte bara sitta och ta in nånting. Jag vill ju gärna att de ska liksom göra nånting. Visst kan man göra det i ett spel, men jag vet att den typen av saker de väljer så är det inte så utvecklade eller att de producerar något. Jag hade ju gärna fått dem att använda paddan till något annat. Typ att det är helt okej att de spelar in film liksom, då kan de få använda paddan närsomhelst egentligen. Eller om de vill skriva eller så. Jag har visst stenålderssyn på spel kände jag nu!” (Agnes, Interview 5, p. 43)

”Visst, de är skitintresserade av att ha paddan, det är liksom det som är det viktigaste, men de tittar ju hellre på saker än vad de faktiskt spelar själva. Och det kan jag tycka är lite frustrerande också för jag vet att det är liksom att tjejer tittar medan killarna gör. Så då är det nästan att man liksom bara men hörni, spela lite, gör någonting! Då känner man att det är kanske mer utvecklande än att bara titta på något program. Ja, där kom det in också att man måste vara utvecklande också. [...] Typ att man vet att Minecraf är bra liksom för att det är matte och de kan bygga och liksom så. Och att vilka spel de får välja att man kanske inte tillåter de där man bara ska klä på barbie i olika kläder utanatt det kanske finns nån mer tanke bakom i spelet.” (Agnes, Interview 5, p. 44)

”Vi köper ju ganska sällan spel men jag brukar tänka på att jag inte vill att det ska vara våld, onödigt. Det tycker inte jag behövs. Gärna att det är något aktiverande, att det är något bygga eller nånting. Typ det här tycker jag det var jättebra att du köpte för det är såhär lite klurigt. Det är ändå lugnt, vackert det är liksom

inte så stimmigt. Brukar tänka på det när det gäller filmer och sånt också, att det inte behöver vara så våldsamt och så.” (Ester, Interview 1, p. 45)

”Men när man väl har bestämt de här reglerna, att okay, det blir ingen platta eller inget tv-spel då, förens vi har käkat, eller säg halv sex. Så när man väl bara har liksom fått dem att förstå det så slipper man tjat och då vet de ju liksom att det är bara så. En del av rutinen. Då gäller det att stå på sig och inte bli lat själv på något sätt.” (Björn, Interview 9, p. 45)

”Alltså innan skilsmässan så hade jag jättebra koll på exakt vad barnen gjorde för att man träffade dem hela tiden, sen nu när man inte träffar dem hela tiden så är det såhär ah men vi fick ett nytt spel eller vi fick ladda ner detta när vi var hos pappa. Så då är väl jag lite dålig på att sätta mig in och kolla vad det var för något, utan då är jag mer bara okej.” (Agnes, Interview 4, p. 45)

”Nu är vi ju mycket hemma. Vi har mycket tid med dom. Det får man ju säga och också lättar att kontrollera det hela. Om varit borta hela dagarna och kommit hem vid sex. När jag är hemma kan vi sticka ut och göra något. Jag kan kontrollera att det inte blir för mycket. När han börjar åka hem direkt efter skolan och då är det säkert lätt att det blir så. Det är viktigt att man inte tappar kontrollen. Det gör man nog väldigt lätt, men det är lättare att kontrollera ju mer man är hemma.” (Karin, Interview 3, p. 46)

”Nej det är väl inte så vanligt att vi sitter alla fyra. Det är det inte. Det händer men oftast inte så länge. Det kan väl hända att vi ser nån enstaka film kanske tillsammans. Men annars så sitter de ju hellre och tittar på sina egna. Hon vill se sitt och Liam vill spela kanske istället för att titta på tv.” (Anna, Interview 7, p. 47)

”Vad det gäller tiden så är det mycket den här isoleringen som jag tänker på att man börjar leva lite så dubbelliv, att man är mer inne i spelet att det är viktigare för en, att spela, än vad det är att ha sina vänner eller att träffas ibland och göra nåt liksom. Jag tror att det är skitviktigt med relationer mellan människor.” (Agnes, Interview 5, p. 47)

”Och även om den aktiviteten hade varit skapa konst, rita, alltså någon aktivitet man tycker om, om det skulle varit att sy, det behöver inte bara vara fysiskt heller. Men att man inte bara fastnar i den här interaktiva världen liksom och bara ska vara i den hela tiden. Men att man faktiskt är bland människor och lär dog bete dig, alltså det sociala spelet i världen där du måste möta människor. Om du inte umgås med människor då vet ju för fanken snart inte hur du ska bete dig liksom, i ett gäng.” (Ingrid, Interview 6, p. 47)

”Men det är ju som de här spelen, nu vet jag inte vad de hette, men där det var våldtäkter i , eller är, alltså det tycker jag är helt sanslöst att det bara finns. Att det liksom då, 13-åriga barn eller vad de nu är, sitter och spelar. Det finns ju en åldersgräns men föräldrarna har ju tillåtit dem att spela och det är ju ett ansvar som föräldrarna då släpper att ”mitt barn får ju göra detta, men sen kanske inte jag vet vad det spelet innehåller”. Men att det ens ska finnas såna spel tycker jag är sjukt oavsett om det är för vuxna eller barn.” (Ingrid, Interview 6, p. 48)

”Jag tror det är viktigt och vi föräldrar har ett stort ansvar, jag tror inte alla tar den biten. En del sätter sig in i allt nytt, och det tycker jag är det svåra, att lära sig hänga med i de här grejerna som är, och hur det hänger ihop. [...] Det svåra är nog för oss vuxna att hänga med i den där världen. Och jag kan tänka mig att om man har barn som är väldigt mycket i spel, det är ju lika svårt att hänga med där med vad du kan och inte kan. Alltså, att man, man får ju sitta med där lite själv för att lära sig vad det är dom pysslar med.” (Ingrid, Interview 6, p. 49)

”Man försöker vara så mycket i deras värld som möjligt, men utan att tro att man kan vara en del av den liksom, men man kan vara där på ett nyfikat sätt. Man kan ju inte inkräkta på deras värld, det kan man ju inte, det funkade ju inte när vi var små heller, tänker jag. Då fanns det ju inte så mycket, då hade man ju inte ens mobil men... då stod man i telefonkiosken och ringde till heta linjen och sånt.” (Ester, Interview 1, p. 49)

”Fredrik: Det skulle vara kul att bara umgås med familjen, och spela spel vanligt, alltså vanliga spel då, brädspel, heter det så? Den lille, han gillar ju det men David, han, ah... Det är precis som om han släpper det tänkandet och lägger tid på annat istället.

Interviewer: Vad tror du det beror på?

Fredrik: Nej, jag kan ju tro att det har mycket att göra med att vi har väl varit för slappa kanske, det har varit lite för lätt tror jag att köpa såna här grejer. Och sätta gränser, kanske. Jag tycker det här med att säga att förbjuda att de inte får använda datan eller telefonen, det kommer inte hålla i dagens läge. För det är ju en ny generation och allting men man kanske skulle begränsa det bättre.” (Fredrik, Interview 8, pp. 49-50)

”Vi har ju Wii, det har vi, men tyvärr blir det alltför sällan man spelar det. Det är ju åtminstone socialt. Vi har ju tyckt om att spela wii, både jag och cristian, och tuva. Framförallt de här sportspelen där man ska bowla och så. Sen blir det inte så mycket sen livia föddes, för att hobb varit förliten för att vara med. Och sen blir hon sur för att hon inte klarar det, så då blir det förstört så det har inte blivit så mycket sen.” (Maria, Interview 2, p. 50)

”Jag tror att föräldrar generellt kan jag tänka att föräldrar har engagerat sig för lite i den delen. Det är något man gör parallellt med livet i familjen. Och då tror jag det är lätt att man har regler runt om kring det. Man är inte intresserad av att ta del av den. Det finns mycket positivt att hämta i den världen och sen finns det en massa skit också. Där måste man hjälpa sina barn att navigera runt. Där tror det kan bli att man låter barnen hålla på och sedan går det över styr och sätter man upp regler. Det är den erfarenheten jag har.” (Vera, Interview 4, p. 51)

”Han har fått spela spel som har annan åldersgräns än vad han har. De har vi inte varit maniska med. Däremot är vi väldigt delaktiga i vad han spelar och vad han gör. Vi tror att det är viktigt att med våra barn har filter mellan öronen. De kommer ju ändå att stöta på de här sakerna hos kompisar eller någon annanstans. Vi vill ju att han ska tänka efter. Är det här bra? Får man göra så här? Det ger upphov till ganska bra

diskussioner även om man råka på spel som är krigarspel eller annat. Vi tycker inte det behöver vara en nackdel att det är samma sak som du går ut och gör i verkligheten. Det hänger på oss som vuxna att styra.” (Vera, Interview 4, p. 52)

”Men jag tänker också att, det är klart att man kan hålla på och sätta förbud, man kan sätta filter och man kan ha full koll hela tiden, kolla hennes dator, vad hon gör och sådär. Men jag tror ändå mer på att ha den här öppna dialogen och prata med varandra, att vara nyfiken och fråga, jaha vad tittar du på och såhär, men berätta om den där varför är det så liksom. Så att jag tänker att är det nånting som hon ser som är läskigt så kan hon berätta det så kan vi bearbeta det tillsammans liksom.” (Ester, Interview 1, p. 52-53)

Appendix 1.5: Interview excerpts

Interview 4 excerpt: conversation between "Vera" (V), "Lars" (L), Interviewer (I)

I: If we zoom out a bit, and think about childrens gaming overall. What are your thoughts on that?

V: I think that parents generally have been engaged too little in that part [the playing of digital games]. It's something you do parallel to family life. And then I think it's easy to have rules around it. But you're not interested in taking part in it. There's so much positive stuff to derive form that world and then there's a lot of crap as well. You have to help your kids navigate around. I think it can become a situation where you let the children go at it and then it goes out of control and then you set up rules. That's the experience I have.

I: You said navigate, how do you feel about navigating the bad things around video games?

V: I think people generally think too much that if you read it in books like when I was small or then it was movies and now it's like the same as you would do bad stuff. That's the grown up role. It's enough to turn on the news and you see all the shit that's happening. Then I don't understand why it should be worse in a game. It brings up discussions about desirable behavior and approaches and not just outside of the game. Like we can say it's okay to swear in your room but you never do it out or to other people. That we don't accept. But now when you're sitting playing a game and let a swear fly. Yeah, I can accept that.

L: I think its the generation that sits and decides all the time because they are always old. In the 60s it was the music and flower power that would destroy people. When I was 10, 12, 14, 15 it was video violence and now it's gaming violence. There is always something, it's the wolf coming. They always call out for something new. It's like Vera says, violence is in the human nature all the time. It's just a matter of turning on Aktuell, they don't show good news there. If a plane should crash on Arlanda they tell us that. But if 250 land without crashing, then there's not a word about it. In the middle east they've been beating each other to death as long as I can remember.

V: Yeah, but, we don't believe in wrapping our children up to become cotton children. Rather, this is reality. Explain concepts. I think about this and discuss at each and every school, this GTA5 [Grand Theft Auto 5]. There could be more after that but this was a giant thing. "Can't you as a school prohibit?" But we never play these games in school. But a lot of parents want us to bring it up and discuss. There aren't nice things happening in that game, but it's up to each and every one if you want to let them play. But it's important to discuss these things. What kind of way of looking at mankind is that.

I: I find this navigating really intriguing. How do you help your children navigate? Like practically?

V: We talk a ton with the kids.

L: Especially with Gunnar, in that he often plays with headset and can communicate with the ones he plays with. It's like the rest of the world, there are a lot of nice people but there are idiots. Is it an idiot, just turn them off. Log out and log in again and get into another group.

V: Or as we also say, "tell us because we want to know". Don't try to solve difficult situations without discussing with us. We still say that to Tobbe, twenty-two. If you get into trouble, call us. Ask us how we had done. What would you have done? You can get in these troubles wherever. It's about giving them a tactical way of dealing with the problem. Tobbe had one of those, what was he? 12-13 years old? He was going to play with some Pocahontas. Who suddenly just asked him if he could take his clothes off. The he got Lars right away. To learn how to handle and that they won't be scared. We don't believe in scaring them. Of course you'll go to the wrong pages and you are going to make mistakes. We'll help out and solve the situation. Tobbe was at some time searching for Discshop and got to Dickshop. It's not dangerous to make mistakes but you have to set it right. And we've tried to teach them that mentality in everything. Yes, you might get into a fight or break a window. And we want to know if you get drunk. Yes, then you call home and we'll come and get you. It's not certain that we'll be overjoyed with what you've done, but but we'll help you with ways to get through this. We won't solve it for you. They are not supposed to be passive receptors, where mom and dad fix everything for you. But we can help you to think. Then you'll be actively getting out of these troubles and navigate past these hardships. Different social situations online but also in real life.

I: Have you discussed other parents routines around computer games?

V: No, we're pretty open with this is what we think and this is what we do. Full stop. It's not negotiable. The ones who want to discuss this, like in school, they want restrictions and rules that are easy to relate to and point to. In that case we're hopeless to deal with. We don't give answers to their prayers. Then it's not interesting.

I: Are there any easy rules?

L: People who want easy rules, they often want prohibition. That's what it's about. And they want others to implement the restriction for them, so they don't have to stand for it and face their children. Rather it comes from the school to say that's it's not okay. We have done this for quite some time now with school and the tendency is that more and more of the parents of today are so busy with their own things so they'd like others to care about the upbringing of their children. They only want to do the fun things with the children. Then the school should go in and say what is allowed and not.

V: It's an easy way out in parenting. I think there are a lot who are missing a conscious parent leadership. You become parent and that's something you are. Becoming a parent is to somewhere decide what kind of outcome will be when they've grown up and what we feel are important things to go through. A lot of parents at meetings at school want to go together and decide things in the class. How much time are they allowed to play and should they do snap chats in class. Like "at what times are they allowed to do it, now we'll prohibit all children to do it past eight o'clock". It's easy to point to someone else who put up rules. It doesn't strengthen the relationship between child and parent, I feel. It builds on some kind of mutual respect because, if I would ask Gunnar [the child] if he wanted to play games more or do something else. Ask "what's important to you?". To show that I care about his world, I'm not at all interested in playing games so it would be unthinkable to me to put so much time into it. I do other things. Why would it be better to read blogs and Facebook? Or read a book or do something else. I think one builds the relationship on understanding each others lifeworlds and that's where one builds the sustainability. Then it's easy to speak up, "now this doesn't work for us anymore that you play this game" and so on.

L: It's the playing of our times that they're doing. When we we're little there weren't these resources or games. You played outside together then. But now, Gunnar can sit here, Kalle at his house and David at his and they're playing but they are in the game playing. It's exactly the same thing but in another forum. I don't really see what the problem is. Then again, I can understand a child that has nothing else to do than sit at home playing. Because they don't move about and that debate. But in our case it's easy on that front. He plays sports a ton. And like Vera says, it's his breathing hole in there when he plays. Then he can relax and doesn't need to think about anything else.

V: The other day he said; "Now I'm finished with this, it didn't go the way I wanted. No, I won't be playing more today. I'm going to do something else". I can find that cool.

I: And if we look at it from the other way, have you communicated to other people how you look at these things? Have you gotten any reactions in that case?

V: I've been engaged in deep discussions sometimes. In staff rooms and relationships with friends. I am probably... people know what I think and how I feel and I say it and show all emotions that I have around me, that I think it's corny with restrictions and that I question them. "Why do you feel like that? Why is that important?" But I also feel like I had pretty good supervision by another mother who had concerns with her child, Aspergers child, that she felt got caught more and more in the game. They thought he became another person even in the relationship at home but at the same time she was afraid because this was the way he had status in the class. And she called me, she doesn't live here or has her child with me in school; "How would you have done?" I then told her I'd sit down and talk to him and say that, "now we experience you like this". They had had restrictions on games for a while. "Now we notice these signals and can do something together". They had a great conversation and came to an agreement where the limits are and how they could tell him when they noticed that he became that way and he could himself tell them, "I want you to do this now". So it became a deal where you respect each other. So sometimes they take the coaching and other times it becomes a confrontation. But I still believe in our line.

I: And if you get a confrontation, what's the top argument then?

V: From me?

I: From others.

V: They feel that it's crazy that we are so loose. "Doesn't he play no matter what then?" Like, the ones who really know us, know that we're pretty hard in our raising [of the children]. Like what we accept in behavior and treatment. How to answer and how to do. But within that frame we are pretty open.

L: It becomes a bit like with candy. Our children can always go and take, it's not only been on Saturdays. But they always ask and they don't eat especially much candy. But when you go to a children's party, and children who can only eat on Saturdays are there. They almost go crazy and it's the same with gaming, he can play as much as he wants, but often he chooses not to play. He know that if he wants to play he can.

V: He often asks, is it ok that I go in and play now? Or is it okay that I take some candy now? The children don't know when we are going to eat. You don't take without asking and you don't do without asking. You check so it's ok. It's also a way of approaching. We work a lot with checking times. We check when they want to eat and when are you getting ready for football. Then he can ask, "do I have time for a match [in the game]?" And then we can discuss that.

L: Then it's the second journey for us as there is 10 years between Gunnar and Tobbe. A lot of the ones that Gunnar is together with are first time parents. Then you're often more on edge and it's easier to take out the restriction whip all the time. You don't want to take chances on how it will go. We sit pretty calm and safe with what we're doing.

I: A closing question, the parents that are worried, do you get a sense of what they're worried about? Like what could happen?

V: That others won't find them good enough as parents. Almost all the times it's others expectations on their parenting leadership or "can my child really be up this late? Is my child allowed to play these games?". You want to find some acknowledgement that this is really okay. You are fed with worry, these games are not good, it's violence and this much time, they're sitting still, they eat this much candy. Parents today are so paranoid over fitting into the blueprint. Not only fit in, but be the best somehow. I think it's often there it is. A really big insecurity over what others expectations are. What if my child does wrong? Then parents of today are very interested in being friends with their children. You don't want to have to be the nasty mom and tell them not to do this. Then it's easier to lean on other rules, that we have decided in class. What you can and cannot do.

I: They don't talk about the consequences with the children?

V: It's that they will get fat if they play too much. Or purely violent so that they become crazy and beat someone in the schoolyard. We have so many insecure parents. In our school we have a parenting education where I talk a lot about these things. Be brave to make active choices, connected to everything, homework, food, everything. You want to support parents to just be brave enough to just be.

[...]

Interview 7 excerpt: conversation between "Anna" (A), "Hans" (H), Interviewer (I)

I: When watching TV or streaming services, are you usually the whole family or how does it look?

H: Usually we are a little by ourselves I can imagine. We may sit together on a Friday night, but otherwise in the weeks everyone will spread out in different places.

A: No, I guess it's not as common to sit all four of us. It's not. It happens, but often not that long. It might be that we watch an occasional movie together maybe. But otherwise they rather sit and watch their own. She wants to see hers and Linus maybe wants to play games instead of watching TV.

H: Then I watch a lot of football. That's nothing you're interested in.

A: No. After all, when having an open layout as we have, you can have tv on the background without watching and hearing the TV instead. It will be a little bit of news that you can have as well, you can go on and fix other stuff and you'll have a bit of it in the background. But playing on the TV... I can't remember anyone doing that.

H: No, we have done it occasionally but not often.

A: No.

I: When you purchase new technology, new services or games. What do you think about when you make such purchases?

A: I'm not thinking about it because I don't really like it. I'm like a little anti everything like gaming and so on. I think it's completely uninteresting. To me it's just important that it looks nice and that it works. So I'd rather put a hold on all the purchases. From my perspective.

H: So, it's a bit like... I want to get upgraded the best technology, but sometimes I have to take a step back because I do not want to step on any toes. But we keep quite high standards.

A: We just bought a new TV and it was pretty... you managed to persuade me. But games and what Linus buys, it's what's hot right now and he convinces his dad that he has to have it. He wishes it for a Christmas present, for example.

H: The game he is playing now is an online game that is huge all over the world right now. Have you heard about it, Fortnite?

I: Yeah, a little bit.

A: Yeah, it's become this superhype, it hasn't been that way before around a game concerning Linus, in my experience.

H: No, the other games he bought to his PlayStation, but this is an online game. He plays against people all over the world.

A: But it's you who adds AppleTV and all these things and whatever it is, I can't answer for it. Because that's what you want, all the things that are accessories, if you will.

H: Because they're good to have. No, I've also watched British TV so I've got one of these, there are many such Play services that you can not watch outside of England so I have a VPM to England so I can watch British TV, to example through a VPM. One has to have the best quality.

I: When you say "looks nice", what do you mean?

A: I'm thinking TV or whatever it is. Because I don't see any value in those things. They must not be in the way or disturb me too much. And I don't like when Linus is stuck in the game and can't get out either. I'm not so positive about it. Even so, this game has a bit too much violence and so, I don't like it at all. I am the one who tries to put the brakes on all that. Linus is very active as luck

would have it, like in the summer when he's out playing ball in the yard and out and about. He's not locked in playing games. If he would have been doing that, we might have had to deal with it even more, but he's naturally one of those who wants to run around, but you can see how fast you engulfed in this like, the kick you get when you play. He gets totally into it.

H: He has some friends just sitting in front of it.

A: Who are gamers, yes.

H: All day actually. Because they have no other activity, but Linus has his football and so he plays when he can, but it does not interfere with his football interest. He still wants to work out and, yes, not just sit in front of the TV.

[...]

I: Would you say there are any rules in your family regarding digital games?

H: The game can't be too violent, that's a rule. But we're usually around when buying games for their video games, so that's okay. The times he has, is that he has to shut down half an hour before going to bed.

A: But, if we are to be honest, we have had recent problems because he has started with Fortnite and it's very hard to get out of it. He shouldn't really play as much as he does in the evening.

H: A typical evening if he goes to bed around half past ten and I come in saying that it's time to shut down, then Linus says he just wants to play. Half an hour later I go in and then he's still playing. "You have not finished playing in half an hour, you're on it again". He is a little addicted to it.

A: Yes, that's what I'm saying, he has not been before. This has been a source of conflict now for perhaps a month's time. In the morning when he's on his phone watching YouTube, instead of getting ready.

H: It's not a game. The YouTube clips he's looking at is about the game. He wants to get some more tips on how to proceed in the game. It's the movies he's watching.

I: So that goes hand in hand?

A: It does. We've discussed it, and I want to limit. We limit it on weekends, he can only sit for a certain period of time. He can't spend a whole day playing. Then he gets grumpy, of course, because his friends are allowed to do that. But I want to go in and break it off because he gets a headache and he gets dizzy and he hurts his eyes and so on. First and foremost, he gets headaches. It's not working properly, but it's really hard to stop when you sit there.

H: When you start it's hard to quit, but for example he's not played today. He has been out all day, no problem there. So he's not dependent on playing every day but as soon as he starts playing it's hard to stop.

A: Yes, because it's a high all the time. But we don't have a pronounced rule that it's like maximum of an hour, from time to time, or so. We do not have that, but we limit it especially at the weekend if he is at home, so he doesn't sit all day and the whole evening before he gets a headache and feels sick. Right?

H: Yes.

A: But we should probably steer it up a bit more because it has not been a problem before but it has become one now. But it's hard now because now everybody's playing it [Fortnite] all the time. Tina has also said that the guys in her class are completely obsessed with it. Everyone's playing it.

H: There is someone who earns a lot of money on this game. Because there is a lot to buy in the game, you buy extra lives and so on. This way you can progress in the game faster.

I: You talked about violence in games, what do you think about that?

H: I have a really good grasp of it.

A: He has a good grasp of it.

H: Because I know what the games are. Because if I don't know the games, I can read up online about them, so it's cool. Then most of them have age limits, so you read up a bit.

A: But we are not completely there because you allow more than I allow. Then we have friends who have older children where he has been trying to play "larger" games that are really awesome of course. "But I'm just playing these parts," he said. Whatever the game's called.

H: GTA. But the games he's playing most right now is Fortnite. It's one of those "shooting games", no blood or anything like that. One wants to move on in the world by shooting people.

A: But it's not really the most appropriate to sit all day long and shoot people.

H: Yes but ...

A: Yes, but we don't have the same view. It's just like that. I'm having a hard time with it.

H: Most games are based on shooting things in the game.

I: So if he's talking about some games, you look it up beforehand?

H: Yes.

I: Do you think there are some other problems if he would sit too much, except for headaches?

A: I think it can have many consequences, both physically and just sitting still, is not good. Now it would not be a problem for Linus anyway, because he is way too frolicsome anyway, but purely theoretical, it's not good health wise to just be still all day long. Even basic social abilities and everything like that will come to a halt. You can look at some of Linus friends who are real gamers.

They can't communicate with those in their world, they can't talk to us at all. They have no social skills. It's not just that they're shy but they've just been locked up. Unlike the other children who have had other activities, so that's one aspect too. Then you can always wonder how much all violence can lead to simplifying or what to say, that it's not so dangerous with violence. That's a side I've always had problems with, which I do not like. There I have let go of it, but I do not think it's good to sit and just go on shooting all the time. Because in some ways, it's stripping away that it's about shooting, I think. But you do not think so, we think, we're different. After all, I think that, because it is so addictive, it's triggering addiction in general and I think it may trigger other dependencies as well. You are so immensely dependent on this dopamine effect all the time, that you feel the need to be stimulated all the time. Then the rest of your life becomes bland and boring when you don't get these "highs" all the time and it's hard to find and chase those kicks elsewhere. So you have to learn how to live regularly as well and not only have the kicks as you get when you sit and play. So I think that's also a danger if you play far too much. If I can speculate. I don't know what you say?

H: Of course it's like that, but it's also a competition ... eh, he likes to compete. He likes to play football.

A: He wants to win all the time.

H: In games he wants to win.

A: Otherwise he'll get really pissed. It doesn't matter what he takes on. There will also be, there will be a lot of aggressions. He gets crazy.

H: He gets pretty grumpy when he's playing and doesn't win.

A: Not just grumpy, he gets angry and fights. Strikes the floor and ...

H: Then we go in and say it's time to close down. Then he gets really grumpy.

A: He knows that he's not allowed to sit and swear and hit the floor and so on. That's a bit over the limit. But then you understand that when you're in it and it doesn't go the way you want, because he's really determined to win. So, it's going to come out, but it has nothing to do with the game. It's like, around football or if they're going to cycle to ICA the fastest, it doesn't matter what it's about, he'll compete. So that's this competition instinct. But I think it doesn't matter if you sit and play a little or a lot or all the time, it does not affect that part. I do not believe that anyway.

I: What are your thoughts on regulations?

A: We've talked about it a lot lately, just because we see it's not really working now, it's affecting life. It affects Linus because he doesn't get to bed, it affects the morning routine. It's an impact... as case, an impacted on everyday functions, as it has never done that before but it does now. So now it doesn't work and that's the conclusion, but it's just now in the last few weeks it's been like that.

H: He doesn't play in the morning.

A: No, but he's anyway ... he's watching it, but it's connected to it.

H: It's connected yes.

A: Then you can say that it's become a problem. And then you have to trek control of it, we've done a bit of that but not fully. After all, if you go to bed, you cannot fall asleep after being "pumped up" in a game and hit your fists on the floor and then five minutes later go, "okay, I'll sleep now". It does not work, you should not have that at all in your head for several hours before going to bed to unwind. So there may be sleep issues as well. It's not turned out that way right now, but I think that could be a problem. Because it's hard to go from being agitated to suddenly lay down. And because we don't get him to shut down, or we do get him to do it because we'll go in and shut it off for him sometimes too, and then there will be conflict over that. Then it'll be all dramatic and it'll be hard to come down when you're angry. Then, when trying to fall asleep, it's not that easy, then he'll be awake for later and then sleep will be less good. So, we should actually say that you can't play after eight or something like that.

H: I have a work colleague who limits the children's gaming to the weekends. They are not allowed to pick up the iPad either.

A: I think that might be a bit excessive, but ...

H: But they're a little younger, they have a small younger child. They only limit play to the weekend.

A: It hasn't felt like it has been necessary to regulate before, it hasn't affected life before now. You have heard of many who have played a lot and so but we have not ... Linus hasn't been at that point. But now he's there. Even though he says, "You think I'm addicted to gaming, but it's nothing," he says.

H: We have friends who have children who have been very "into" games and they're playing all the time.

A: But you're also surprised when he's sitting and having talks with friends in the headphones, and you hear them, then there are many in his class that when we shut down they'll just continue to play, even on weekends. It may be very late, and you think "My god". So Linus believes that he's the one who can play the least, more or less. But it's certainly not the case, but if you compare with William and others, then Linus plays a lot less, much less. We shut down much earlier, but everything is relative.

H: Everything is relative.

A: Moderate gaming is best, but it's hard to find the balance because it's so addictive. Now I almost forgot what the question was.

H: But, of course, if it continues, we have to limit it.

A: But we're already there Hans, if we're to be honest.

Appendix 2: Links to empirical material for text analysis

1. Dataspelsakuten (2017): <http://dataspelsakuten.se/>, Specific page "Definitioner av dataspelsmissbruk": <http://dataspelsakuten.se/definition-av-dataspelsmissruk/>.
2. Logopeditjänst (2016): <http://logopeditjanst.se/>, Specific page "Datorspelsberoende": <http://logopeditjanst.se/datorspelsberoende/>.