Navigating children’s screen-time at home: narratives of childing and parenting within the familial generational structure

# Details

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## Sample

12 children between the ages 8 and 12, alongside 18 parents across 10 British Indian middle-class families

## Implications For Parents About

Parental practices / parental mediation

# Abstract

This article draws upon my qualitative study with 8–12-year-old British
Indian children and their professional middle-class parents, to
demonstrate the ways in which parental mediation of children’s digital
leisure play out within the home. Using the relational lens of
‘generational order’, I identify the ways in which children ‘navigate’
their way around restrictive parental mediation of digital technologies
just as parents ‘navigate’ multiple moral discourses emerging from
media and policy circles imploring them to curb children’s screen-time.
Understanding these ‘navigation’ strategies around children’s digital
media use at home throws fresh light on parent–child relations,
children’s agency and their imbrications with wider generational
structures. I conclude by arguing that greater empirical analyses of the
relational aspects of parenting and childing are needed for Childhood
Studies to fully appreciate the way generational structures inflect the
lived geographies of childhood and parenthood in the context of
children’s home-based digital leisure.

# Outcome

"[P]arents and children understand and interpret mediation strategies around children’s screen-based leisure in different ways... When it comes to ICT devices, most parents in the study operationalised a restrictive mediation strategy which involved setting time limits on children’s screen-based leisure. There was no reported instance in the data where parents actively monitored children’s online activities afterwards or used digital technologies for surveillance. Although some younger children in the study were not allowed by their parents to own personal mobile phones, children regularly used a range of
media technologies including computers, videogame consoles, and smart-television either by themselves
or with other family members. As parents put in place restrictions on ‘screen time’, children
came to navigate the time-restrictions in their own way, often carving out spaces which parents felt
unable to physically monitor... time-limit on mobile usage is nested within a framework of reward and punishment... while talking to me about their children’s digital leisure activities, parents in the
study articulated a moral narrative of what their parenting obligations and priories were...The question of age further explains the lack of close monitoring of online activities of children.
Children in most participating families use communal ‘family’ laptops or parents’ mobile and computers
to do homework, play games or simply to use the internet. Even when they possess a personal
mobile, their ‘screen time’ is regulated rather than what they do during that ‘screen time’.
Parents drew on the notion of ‘trust’ to justify their lack of close monitoring of what children
do online while at the same time striving to minimise their children’s duration of ICT use... culturally coded and embodied notions of reciprocal love between generations
within Indian middle-class families inflect parent–child, grandparent-grandchild and grandparent-
parent relations which in turn reconfigure the geographies of children’s screen-time regulation
within the home.... children do not simply reproduce
parental narratives about media use. Instead, they ‘navigate’ the asymmetrical parent–child power
relations in multiple ways – such as by exploiting the leniency exercised by grandparents – to create
more opportunities for media use. At the same time, children also displayed awareness about possible health and social implications of continual ICT use and even provided examples of selfregulation." (Mukherjee, 2020: 5-11)