

Video game classification in Australia:
Does it enable parents to make informed
game choices for their children?

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ABSTRACT

If Australian video game classification does not warn of all classifiable elements, parents may be making game choices that inadvertently expose their child to content that may be deemed inappropriate. Research shows that classification in the United States of America (USA) does not always warn of all elements, and to date there has been no comparable research in Australia. This research explored issues surrounding video game classification in Australia, and whether parents feel that provides enough information for them to make informed game choices, by asking the following questions:

1. Does video game classification in Australia provide enough information for parents to make informed decisions about what games their children play?
2. What are the factors that may prevent parents from protecting children from inappropriate content in video games?

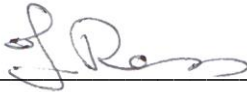
To answer the first question, a content analysis compared the classification given to video games classified 'MA15+' in Australia during the years 2009 - 2010 with their overseas counterparts. Results showed that a substantial number of video games in Australia carry different classification information than those overseas.

To answer the second question, a mixed-methods questionnaire surveyed parents of children who played video games to explore issues surrounding video game classification, and the role it plays when making game choices for children. A quasi-longitudinal process within the questionnaire explored the effect that more detailed information has on game choices. Results showed that some parents use classification to assist them with choosing games for their child, but when presented with more information some parents will make different choices. Factors which may prevent parents from protecting their child from inappropriate content in video games were also identified.

The Protection Motivation Theory underpinning this research was modified to produce the Vigilant Protection Motivation Theory. Overall, this research suggests that parents in Australia may not have enough information to make appropriate game choices.

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Except where explicit reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been relied upon or used without due acknowledgment in the main text and bibliography of the thesis.

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STATEMENT OF ETHICS APPROVAL

Principal Researcher:	Dr Charlynn Miller
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School/Section:	SHS
Project Number:	A13-068
Project Title:	Video game classification in Australia: does it enable parents to make informed game choices for their children?
For the period:	12/06/2013 to 30/11/2013

Please quote the Project No. in all correspondence regarding this application.

REPORTS TO HREC:

A final report for this project must be submitted to the Ethics Officer on:

30th December 2013

These report forms can be found at:

<http://www.ballarat.edu.au/research/research-services/forms/ethics-forms>

Ms Elanor Mahon



Ethics Officer

13 October 2017

Please see attached 'Conditions of Approval'.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

1. The project must be conducted in accordance with the approved application, including any conditions and amendments that have been approved. You must comply with all of the conditions imposed by the HREC, and any subsequent conditions that the HREC may require.
2. You must report immediately anything which might affect ethical acceptance of your project, including:
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 - Significant unforeseen events;
 - Other matters that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
3. Where approval has been given subject to the submission of copies of documents such as letters of support or approvals from third parties, these must be provided to the Ethics Office before the research may commence at each relevant location.
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8. A 'Final Report' must be provided at the conclusion of the project.
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10. You must advise the HREC immediately, in writing, if any complaint is made about the conduct of the project.
11. You must notify the Ethics Office of any changes in contact details including address, phone number and email address.
12. The HREC may conduct random audits and / or require additional reports concerning the research project.

Failure to comply with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)* and with the conditions of approval will result in suspension or withdrawal of approval.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
ACB	Australian Classification Board - the body responsible for classifying films, videos, computer games, and publications in accordance with Commonwealth, State and Territory legislation.
BBFC	British Board of Film Classification - the body responsible for classifying films in the UK, and video games up until July 2012.
CEO	Catholic Education Office - the body responsible for the leadership, and management of Catholic schools.
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development - the department responsible for education and early childhood development in Victoria, Australia.
DLC	Downloadable Content - content available online to supplement a video game including skins, expansion packs and new storylines.
DVD	Digital Versatile Disc - a type of compact disc that is able to store large amounts of data.
ELM	Elaboration Likelihood Model - a theory used to explain attitude change when someone takes the central route and accepts the voice of authority, or the peripheral route, where the subject seeks more information.
ESRB	Entertainment Software Review Board - the body responsible for rating video games in the USA.
GAM	General Aggression Model - used to explain the effects of media violence on game players.
HBM	Health Belief Model - used to explain the uptake of health behaviours.
IARC	International Age Rating Coalition - global rating and age classification system for digitally delivered games and apps.

Abbreviation	Description
ISFE	Interactive Software Federation of Europe - represents the interests of the video game publishers towards the European Union and international institutions.
NCC	National Classification Code - the principles upon which the Australian classification guidelines are founded.
NICAM	Netherlands Institute for the Classification of Audio-visual Media - the institute responsible for the content given for review for the Dutch motion picture rating system (Kijkwijzer) and the content for review for the European video game content rating system PEGI.
NCS	National Classification Scheme - a cooperative arrangement between the Australian Government and the state and territory governments to classify films, computer games and certain publications.
PEGI	Pan European Game Information - the body responsible for classifying video games across Europe and the UK.
PMT	Protection Motivation Theory - used to explain fear appeals and their role in attitude change.
QR code	Quick Response Code - a matrix bar code used to store information. Typically used for storing URLs that can be scanned by a device which takes the user to the stipulated location.
SLT	Social Learning Theory - a cognitive theory that posits that people learn behaviour from watching others.
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
VPMT	Vigilant Protection Motivation Theory - an extension of the Protection Motivation Theory developed as a result of this research.
VSC	Video Standards Council - an Administrator of the PEGI age rating system which is used in over 30 countries throughout Europe.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

There can be no doubt about the presence of electronic media, in particular video games, in the lives of children. In 2015, 77% of children in Australia between 1 and 17 years of age played video games (Brand & Todhunter, 2015), decreasing to 71% for people aged between 18 and 64 and decreasing further to 39% for people of 65 years of age and older. The average age of gamers in Australia is 33, but these figures show that as a group, children are the largest and heaviest consumers of video games.

When video games were first released, they became a popular pursuit for children. Over the years, video games have evolved and they now drive a booming industry that also provides entertainment for adults. Since the inception of video games in the 1970s, the level of mature content within them has increased, with elements such as violence, sexual content, language, and drug and alcohol use becoming a part of game content (Thompson, Tepichin, & Haninger, 2006). Realism within games has also increased. The earliest video games comprised simple animations and game play; now, they can be described as sophisticated forms of entertainment that incorporate movie-like elements (Mac Sithigh, 2010). In fact, the distinction between movies and games is often blurred, with games technology being applied to movies and movie scenes used within some games (Brookey, 2010; Mac Sithigh, 2010).

A more realistic experience for the game player might increase the impact of the game, which raises concerns about exposing children to inappropriate content that may cause them harm (Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Anderson, Gentile & Dill, 2012). Studies that have examined the effect of violence in video games on the aggression level of players return conflicting results (Attorney General's Department [AGD], 2010), with some researchers stating that there appear to be different effects on aggression levels (Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Anderson, 2004) while others claim that violent video games do not cause any more aggression than seen in life (Kasumovic, 2013). With results such as these, it is unclear as to whether there may be a lasting impact on

aggression in game players who play violent video games. Research into the impact of other classifiable elements within games (such as language and sexual content) is still in its infancy, with some results being combined with research into television effects (Walsh & Gentile, 2001).

As a result of the increased level of mature content within video games, since 1993 games in Australia have been given a classification (www.classification.gov.au). This classification advises of the recommended age or maturity of the audience, and parents can use this classification for guidance when choosing games that are appropriate for their children to play. Figure 1 below shows the graphic elements that depict the classification level in Australia.



Figure 1 - Australian video game classification labels

To complement the classification level given to games, *consumer advice* warns of any “classifiable elements” within the game such as violence and coarse language. Parents may use this advice to help them with their game choices. However, research in the United States of America (USA) shows that this information may not always warn of all classifiable elements (Thompson et al., 2006). Previous research has compared the classification level given to games in Australia compared with that of their overseas counterparts (Electronic Frontiers Australia and Ausgamers [EFAA], 2010) showing that there is a discrepancy between classification of games in Australia and games overseas. However, although there has been research into understanding of consumer advice in Australia (Australian Government, 2014), there has been little research to date that examines how the consumer advice accompanying the classification level in Australia corresponds to that given to the same game overseas.

Before the ‘R18+’ classification level for video games was introduced in Australia in 2013, the highest video game classification level was ‘MA15+’. This category is legally

restricted, only allowing those over the age of 15 to purchase (unless accompanied by an adult). Games with content that exceeded this level were classified 'RC' (Refused Classification). However, some games with content that exceeded the 'MA15+' classification level may have been "shoehorned into the [MA 15+] classification" (iTWire, 2009, p. 2). As such, there may be games legally available to those 15 years of age that are recommended for, or restricted to, adults overseas. Also, some parents do not understand the difference between the 'MA15+' (restricted) and the 'M' (unrestricted) classification levels (AGD, 2015; Brand, Lorentz, & Mathew, 2013), and some parents do not use classifications at all (Kotaku, 2012).

There are tools available to parents that enable them to manage the games their child plays. To help with game choices, parents can source information about video game content online. Game review websites provide information about game content, and some websites contain reviews from parents and game players (see www.gamespot.com and www.commonssensemedia.org respectively). These websites provide a review of the content of the game, with some providing parents' reviews of classifiable elements along with the reviewer's recommended audience for the game. To provide control over the type of games children can play, all new game consoles provide parental controls which allows parents to place restrictions on the type of games that can be played through the machine (Thierer, 2009).

In conclusion, the level of mature content in video games has increased over the years, and the literature is conflicted about whether this content has a negative impact on game players. While video game classification provides guidance when making game choices, if some games within the 'MA15+' level have been given an inappropriate classification, or the classification does not warn of all classifiable elements, the content within these games may be of an extreme nature, and parents might not be aware. Coupled with confusion about the difference between the 'M' and 'MA15+' classification levels, parents could be allowing children under 15 years of age to play games which

contain potentially harmful content, as indicated by being restricted for sale to adults overseas.

1.1 Research questions

The aim of this research was to find out whether video game classification in Australia provides enough information for parents to make informed game choices for their children. Also, it aimed to identify the issues that parents face when making these choices. To achieve this, this research explored the following questions:

RQ 1 - Does video game classification in Australia provide enough information for parents to make informed decisions about what games their children play?

RQ 2 - What are the factors that may prevent parents from protecting children from inappropriate content in video games?

To help answer these questions, this research explored the following sub-questions:

1. Are parents aware that there may be inappropriate content in the video games their children are playing?
2. Do parents feel that inappropriate content in video games can harm their child?
3. Once parents are aware of inappropriate content within the game, do they feel the classification given to video games provides them with enough information to make informed game choices?
4. What role does video game classification play for parents when making game choices?
5. Are parents aware of tools available to help keep children safe when playing games, and do they use these tools?
 - a. Where do parents source information to assist them when making game choices?
 - b. Are parents aware of, and do they use, parental controls on consoles?

The first two sub-questions looked at whether parents have an understanding of the nature of the content in video games, and whether they perceive that some content may present a risk for their child. The third sub-question, informed by the preliminary data analysis detailed in Chapter 4, explored whether parents feel they could make better game choices for their child if provided with more information. Sub-question 4 examines whether parents use video game classification to assist them with their game choices, and sub-question 5 looked at parental awareness of the tools that are available to guide them with their choices. Collectively, these questions will help illuminate any issues that parents may encounter while managing their child's usage of video games.

Understanding these issues will provide direction to educating parents on safe game usage, as well as potentially informing resource and policy development.

1.2 Research method

This research used a mixed method approach to provide a better understanding of the issues involved with the role of game classification in making game choices for children. This was conducted using two studies: the first was *Study 1 - Comparison of Video Game Classification*, which compared the classification given to video games in Australia during the years 2009 and 2010 (before the introduction of the R18+ classification) to the classification given to the same game title overseas. This was achieved by performing a content analysis that used data collected from the websites of the *Australian Classification Board (ACB)*, *Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)*, *Pan European Game Information (PEGI)* and the *British Board of Film Classification (BBFC)*. The classification level was recorded for each game, as well as the consumer advice. The classification level given to the game from each system was compared, as well as the consumer advice which accompanied it. After reviewing the results of this comparison, it became clear that the classification information given to video games in Australia was often inconsistent with that given to games overseas, in that although warnings about violence was consistent in all of the systems examined, a substantial number of games classified 'MA15+' in Australia did not carry as many

warnings for sexual content, language and drugs as the same title in the USA and Europe. This suggested that either the social norms in Australia differed widely to the norms of the USA and Europe, or the classification information given to video games in Australia did not reflect the social norms of the nation.

The second study, *Study 2 - Exploring Parental Use of Game Classification*, collected data from parents of children who played video games. This was achieved by delivering an online questionnaire to parents of children who played video games across Australia. This questionnaire explored issues surrounding video game mediation, what type of content parents find acceptable in games, and whether the classification given to video games provides enough information for them to make informed choices. This questionnaire comprised the following sections:

1. The first section asked for demographic information such as age, education level, employment and religion. This information was used to analyse the data in order to extract meaningful information.
2. The second section asked questions about what type of video game content participants feel is acceptable for their children to play, as well as how they use classification information and resources for each child. Information from this section will assist in answering sub-questions 2, 4 and 5.
3. The third section displayed the front and back cover of six video games and presented the participant with the classification information given to each game. Participants were asked to submit their opinions of the classification given to the games in three stages, with each stage showing the classification information for the ACB, PEGI and ESRB respectively. Each of the stages in this section provided an area for qualitative data. Information from this section will assist in answering RQ 1, RQ 2 and sub-questions 1 and 3.
4. The fourth section contained several questions about how participants felt about video game content and classification. It also repeated two key questions from section 2 to determine if the participant had changed their views during the

course of the questionnaire. Participants also had the opportunity to submit qualitative data at this step. Information collection from this section will assist in answering RQ 1, RQ 2 and sub-question 2.

Participants in this research were parents with children up to and including 18 years of age who play video games. Recruitment was conducted through participating schools throughout Victoria and through both online and offline methods across Australia.

1.3 Assumptions

The first study was a content analysis that compared the classification given to video games in Australia with their overseas counterparts. The data for this comparison was compiled from the Australian ACB website, as well as the ESRB (USA), PEGI (Europe) and BBFC (United Kingdom [UK]) websites. In collecting this information, it was assumed that games that were not marked as 'Modified' in the ACB system were in fact the same version as those available overseas. Without research into the version history of every game used in this analysis, there is no guarantee that the game had not been modified to suit classification guidelines in each country.

The questionnaire for the second study was delivered online, and the audience was self-selecting. As such, there is no way of verifying the validity of each of the participants. Firstly, it is assumed that participants are parents of children who play video games, and that they generally provided honest answers to each question. There are some questions for which participants may be less than honest, such as those that questioned the participant's perception of the role they play in managing video games for their child. However, the anonymous nature of the survey may mitigate any potential lack of honesty from the participants. Secondly, this study was intended for, and targeted to, Australians in order to explore the attitudes of Australian parents and as such, it is assumed that all participants were located in Australia. As the questionnaire was delivered online, there is no way of guaranteeing that all participants were from

Australia, but the IP address was recorded for each entry which indicated that each was located in Australia at the time of participation.

1.4 Significance of the study

Even though video games in Australia carry classification information, if parents do not understand this information or if they are not aware of all classifiable elements within the game, they may not be able to make informed decisions about games that their children play. This research explored whether games classification in Australia enables parents to make informed game choices for their children. This contributes to the literature in several areas: the impact of video games on children, how to protect children from inappropriate content in video games, as well as the broader area of how parents perceive and use the Australian classification system for video games.

The framework that was derived from this research to test the fitness for purpose of video game classification in Australia provides a robust system that can be utilised in future research to examine the suitability of games classification, delivering a methodology which is robust enough to adapt to changes in the classification system. Indeed, this framework may prove to be a solid foundation for research in other areas of classification such as television and music, even perhaps being adaptable to research streams such as public awareness and perception of food labelling.

This research modifies the Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) that underpins this research, forming the Vigilant Protection Motivation Theory (VPMT). This provides further understanding into the theoretical pathways of issues surrounding protecting children from inappropriate content in video games.

As *Study 1 - Comparison of Video Game Classification* has initiated a new direction into examining issues surrounding games classification in Australia, the results from this study can be used to spearhead research into the validity of consumer advice applied to video games in Australia. The results from both of the studies in this research can be

used to inform policies and frameworks that provide support to parents whose aim is to keep their children safe while playing video games.

1.5 Preview and Thesis Structure

This research explored issues surrounding video game classification in Australia, which includes the classification level given to games in Australia as well as issues that parents may face when making game choices for their children.

Chapter 2 is presented in two sections: Background to the Study, and Literature Review. The Background to the Study provides context to the research, describing issues that are related to video games, as well as video game classification and its role in making game choices. This section begins with an overview of media in general, and then moves on to the more specific area of video games where the type of content within games is described. It goes on to discuss video game classification, providing details about the Australian classification system, as well as selected international video game rating systems. Policy issues are discussed, including the ministers that are responsible for classification in Australia as well as the recently introduced R18+ video game level. There is also discussion about tools that are available to help mediate video games, as well as the roles of parents and children within the area of video games and classification. The focus then moves to the video game industry, including national revenues, as well as game franchises and merchandising.

The literature review that is presented in Chapter 2 details previous research that has been conducted into issues surrounding video games. This begins by presenting some of the theories that have been used in both video games research, as well as within health and wellbeing research. It goes on to discuss research into classifiable elements within video games, as well as research into topics surrounding video game classification including parental perception and understanding of this system. The discussion moves on to research that explored classification in the context of mediation, as well as how this applies to both parents and children. Finally, compliance testing is

discussed, describing how various countries monitor how classification guidelines and recommendations at the retail level are followed.

Chapter 3 introduces the two studies that form the data collection for this research, outlining the chapter structure in which these studies are presented. Following this is a discussion on quantitative and qualitative data, which then goes on to discuss the merits and approaches of content analysis, following through to thematic analysis. Validity of analysis is also discussed.

Chapter 4 encapsulates methods, design and results of the first study: *Study 1 - Comparison of Video Game Classification*. This study compared the classification given to some video games in Australia with their overseas counterparts by means of a content analysis. The approach to analysis is discussed, including prior research involving video games that used content analysis in order to develop a database of terms. The results of the analysis are presented which includes comparison of the classification level for ACB 'MA15+' classified games with their overseas counterparts, as well as ACB 'M' classified games which are recommended for at least 17 years of age in overseas systems. Finally, a comparison of classifiable elements is presented, showing how consumer advice that supplements the ACB classification level compares to that applied to the same game title overseas. Some of the content in this chapter has been previously published as *Video Games Classified M and MA15+ in Australia Compared with their International Counterparts: Does Games Classification Protect Australian Children?* (Ross, Miller, & Vamplew, 2014).

Chapter 5 presents the research design, approach, methods, quantitative results and analysis of the second study, *Study 2 - Exploring Parental Use of Game Classification*. This study collected both quantitative as well as qualitative data, and for clarity the analysis and discussion of the qualitative data is presented in the following chapter.

This chapter begins by presenting the research framework upon which the study was designed. The rationale for a modification to the Protection Motivation Theory is

discussed, explaining a further cognitive process that parents utilise when making game choices, as well as linking issues surrounding this research with the VPMT. The VMPT was modified again in a later chapter, with a model of the first version presented here. This chapter then goes on to discuss the research approach and methods of the study which used a survey design, presenting justification for the design of the questionnaire. Issues surrounding survey design are discussed, including sampling, pilot testing, distribution methods and recruitment. This study used a two-step recruitment method, first recruiting school communities across Victoria then inviting parents within these communities to participate in the survey. Difficulties with recruitment are discussed, as well as methods employed to bolster participation. This chapter then presents an analysis of quantitative results of the questionnaire, then presents a discussion of these results.

Chapter 6 presents a qualitative analysis of the data collected in *Study 2 - Exploring Parental Use of Game Classification*. This begins by describing the approach to analysis, as well as the strategy employed to glean meaningful information from the data. Themes were identified and linked to the constructs of the VPMT. Discussion is presented in order of the themes identified in the content analysis, including the broad areas of video game content, classification and mediation. A further modification to the PMT is discussed, and a further refined VPMT is presented.

Chapter 7 presents the conclusion for this research, discussing implications, limitations as well as recommendations for future research. This chapter also discusses contributions to the research field.

Overall, this thesis delivered insight into video game classification in Australia, how parents use this classification when making game choices for their children, and what factors may prevent them from protecting their children from inappropriate content in video games. The following chapter presents the Background to the Study and Literature Review which developed the theoretical framework upon which this research was based.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this research was to gain a measure of whether video game classification in Australia provides enough information for parents to make informed game choices for their children. It sought to uncover factors that may prevent parents from protecting children from inappropriate content in video games. This chapter comprises two sections: the first section is a background to the study which looks at the issues that surround children and video game classification, both generally and specifically within Australia. The second section is a literature review that details prior research that has been undertaken in these areas.

2.1 Background to the Study

To provide some context to the research, this section provides a brief history of media, and then proceeds to discuss how video games fit into this arena. It looks at video game content, video game classification, and related issues such as how video games are used and what tools are available to help parents with game choices. It goes on to discuss issues surrounding parents and children in the context of video game choices and usage. Finally, this section discusses video games in the media, how video games are used, as well as other types of electronic games. Finally, some financial aspects of video games are discussed.

2.1.1 Media

Media has become a ubiquitous part of society, providing both information and entertainment in various forms such as movies, books, newspapers, internet, and video games. Media content is based on cultural attitudes, known as *social norms*, *societal norms*, or *cultural norms*, which govern what type of behaviour that society finds acceptable (Hall & Hall, 1994). Each society has its own social norms, which can result

in media content being classed as acceptable in some countries but not in others (Nelson & Paek, 2005). As well, there is cultural diversity within some countries which may see these norms falling outside of national standards (Minkov, Blagoev, & Hofstede, 2012).

Media content can reflect the cultural attitudes of a society, and in doing so it may also shape how people think (Brown, 2002). Gauntlett and Ebooks Corporation (2008) explores both historical and modern roles of gender in the media, including what messages are transmitted to contemporary audiences. An example of these messages is how women are portrayed in the media, part of which is promoting the thin female body, known as the 'thin-ideal' (Harper & Tiggemann, 2008). This is where women in the media are portrayed as very thin, influencing media audiences to feel that this is how women are supposed to look. As such, it is possible that women may learn to be dissatisfied with their body, which could potentially lead to negative outcomes such as eating disorders.

The effect that media may have on society has been the subject of many studies. Some debate has surrounded some content depicted in *screen media*, which includes mediums such as television, cinema and video games. One area of debate over the years has been the impact of violence that is shown in the media. Some feel that media violence may cause an increase in violence and aggression, thus posing a threat to public health (Huesmann & Taylor, 2006). It is claimed that childhood aggression can be a predictor of aggression in adulthood, with children and adolescents who frequently watched TV violence being more aggressive as adults (Huesmann, 2007; Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski, & Eron, 2003; Johnson, 2002). However, it is not clear whether violence in the media is a catalyst for aggression, or whether people with aggressive tendencies are drawn towards violent media (Goldstein, 1998; Gunter, 1983). Savage and Yancey (2008) discuss how studies examining the effects of media violence on the most aggressive by nature may not report their effect sizes, and as such firm conclusions are not able to be drawn.

Concern about the effect that media can have on society is not a new phenomenon. Throughout history, some books that were deemed to contain inappropriate content have been banned. An example of this is Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, first published in 1884. This book was banned in 1885 by the Concord Library in Massachusetts, USA, because it "exerted a dangerous moral influence on the young" (Vogelback, 1939, p. 264). Today, this book is still causing controversy - not for the original reason, but because of racist content (BBC News, 2011).

Sometimes, media pushes the boundaries of what society considers acceptable; because of this, in the past organisations have been formed which attempt to regulate various types of media. The *New York Society for the Suppression of Vice*, founded in 1873, was instrumental in implementing the *Federal Anti-Obscenity Act* (Gertzman, 1994) which restricted the sale of materials containing sexually or morally objectionable content. They were also responsible for burning manuscripts and books which were considered to have content that did not match social norms.

Since the early days of film, organisations have been formed to monitor the content within the medium. To address concerns about objectionable content in movies, in 1909 *The New York Board of Motion Picture Censorship* was formed (Black, 1998), later to be called the *National Board of Review*. This organisation, along with others such as religious groups, attempted to censor or ban some movies. As a result of this, the *Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America* (MPPDA) was formed in 1922 to provide self-regulation and prevent government censorship (MPAA, 2015). This self-regulation allowed the industry to have control over its own product, which reduced the risk of movies being banned. The MPPDA was later renamed to *The Motion Picture Association of America* (MPAA), which is still in place today. Some of the roles of the MPAA are to classify films, as well as to recommend cuts and changes so that films fit within a particular classification.

Justification for regulating and restricting access to objectionable content in media may be lost on the target audience. The *third-person effect* (Duck & Mullin, 1995) occurs

when people consider themselves and those they know, including their children, to be less vulnerable to negative media content than the 'average person'. However, they do feel that the objectionable content could influence someone else - a vague, unknown person. These people see a need for censorship, but do not necessarily feel that it should apply to them. As well, heavy users of media support censorship less as they do not wish to be restricted from media of their choice (Gunter & Harrison, 2003).

2.1.2 Video games

Video games are an interactive form of media that allows the player to have some input and control over screen output. The term *video game* was first introduced around 1970 to describe electronic games that were made to be played on arcade machines. In 1972, the video game made its transition to home entertainment with the release of the *Magnavox Odyssey* home video game console (Kent, 2001). Other companies developed consoles on which to play video games, with each of these systems referred to as 'platforms'.

The very first video games for home consumption were released as a console which only ran one game (Kent, 2001). It wasn't long before games were stored on removable cartridges so that multiple games could be played on the same console. These cartridges were not interchangeable between platforms due to both the physicality of the cartridge as well as the specificity of the programming used to write the game, which was targeted to the console. Over time, some consoles replaced cartridges with Compact Disks (CDs) which, although physically interchangeable, were still platform-specific so could not be used between different consoles.

With the advent of personal computers (PC), the term *computer game*, hereafter also referred to as *games*, generally referred to games made specifically for this platform. Over the years the terms 'video game' and 'computer game' have been used synonymously to describe games that are played on either a PC or a game console. Some current game consoles are *Microsoft Xbox One*, *Nintendo Wii* and the *Sony*

PlayStation 4. There are also hand-held devices such as *Nintendo 3DS* and the *Sony PlayStation Vita*.

Games provide single player or multiplayer game play, and some games also have functionality for playing across a network if the platform allows it. The network can be a *Local Area Network* (LAN) where computers in close proximity are connected, or it can be the Internet, which has worldwide reach. Games played across a LAN usually involve multiple players participating in the same game, whereas games played over the Internet can be single-player as well as multi-player. Online games can be played individually, against a small number of opponents, or with a large number of players such as in a *Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game* (MMORPG) (Achterbosch, Pierce, & Simmons, 2008). Online gaming is increasing in popularity with websites such as *Facebook* (www.facebook.com) offering a multitude of games for members to play. Games can also be played on websites such as *Second Life*, where players interact with other people in a virtual world (www.secondlife.com). Some games are played in a linear fashion where you start at the beginning and progress through the game on a pre-set path, and others are played in an open-world environment where you have choices which set the player on alternative paths of play.

There are different perspectives of the game character through which the game player can view the game. Wolf (2001) discussed how the first-person and third-person perspective are the most common perspectives seen in games; the first-person perspective is where the game is viewed through the eyes of the character, whereby you do not see the body of the character unless you move body parts into the line of sight. This perspective is mostly seen in *first-person shooter* games, where players view the game through the eyes of the shooter. The third-person perspective is seen from a position not related to any character, so from a location around the character such as over the shoulder, or from above. The second-person perspective, not seen very often, is like the character is seen from the viewpoint of another character, and was seen

more in older-style text games, where game-play involved texts such as 'You are moving down the corridor', and 'You pick up the potion'.

2.1.2.1 Video game content

As the complexity of video games increased, their realism and detail have resulted in storylines that contain elements similar to television and movies. Although games originally contained simple graphics and game-play, after 2004 the level of mature content in some games became more extreme (Miller, 2010). This section will describe some of the elements that are present in modern video games.

2.1.2.1.1 Violence

Although some of the violence in video games is not of an interactive nature, i.e. it is viewed in cut-scenes or performed by other characters for which the player does not provide input, a lot of the violence in video games is acted out by the player. In the past, some game developers adhered to standards about what type of content would be included in their games (Kent, 2001), part of which was no human violence or blood. However, as the sophistication of video games increased so did the level of violent content within them. *Mortal Kombat*, originally an arcade game, was one of the bestselling as well as one of the most controversial fighting games due to the depiction of violence and gore (Gentile & Anderson, 2003). *Nintendo* and *Sega*, both software companies, released their own version of the game for home consoles (Kent, 2001), and whereas *Nintendo* reduced the blood and gore within the game, the *Sega* version retained these elements and outsold the *Nintendo* version threefold. As a result, some game developers may have learned that violence in video games increased sales (Gentile & Anderson, 2003; Kent, 2001).

As well as different levels of violence, there are also different types of violence depicted in video games. Some games contain realistic violence which can be replicated in life, such as the *Call of Duty* series. In this game, you play the role of a soldier fighting in a war and perform actions that you would expect the soldier to carry out in a war scenario

such as shooting opponents. Another type of violence is fantasy violence, with content that is not able to be replicated in life such as in the game *Aliens vs. Predator*, where you can play the role of the fictional creature known as '*Predator*'. In this game, as *Predator* you can kill people and are able to rip out their spinal column. It is suggested that the difference between realistic and fantasy violence can result in different effects on the aggression of game players (Krcmar, Farrar, & McGloin, 2011), with realistic violence having more impact. It has also been suggested that violence in video games can result in cognitive benefits, with one meta-analysis showing that "spatial skills improvements derived from playing commercially available shooter videogames are comparable to the effects of formal (high school and university-level) courses aimed at enhancing these same skills." (Granic, Lobel, & Engels, 2014).

2.1.2.1.2 *Blood and Gore*

It is not only violence within video games that may have an effect on aggression; the level of blood and gore depicted within games may also prime player thoughts to being more aggressive (Barlett, Harris, & Bruey, 2008; Farrar, Krcmar, & Nowak, 2006). A study by Barlett et al. (2008) used the *PlayStation 2* game, *Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance*, to study the difference in aggression levels based on the amount of blood during game-play. This game lets you play with a choice of four levels of blood depicted, where the maximum level shows varying amounts of blood falling and pooling on the ground depending on how hard a character is hit, and the minimum level shows a little blood after an extremely hard hit. Those who played the game with maximum blood level engaged in more aggressive game play, using the weapon more and having more aggressive thoughts than those who played the same game with minimal blood. However, some research into television violence has suggested that depicting the negative consequences of violence, such as the suffering from violence, could actually reduce the likelihood that the game player would learn to be aggressive (Wilson et al., 2002).

2.1.2.1.3 Sexual content

Sexual content in video games can range from suggestive content to more explicit representations. Suggestive content can include elements such as exposed cleavage and body parts that 'jiggle', as well as dialogue such as 'Are those boobies? Mine get big when I transform' in the 2012 ACB 'M' classified game *Hyperdimension Neptunia Victory* (ESRB T-rated, 13+) and comments such as 'Hooker with a heart! Happy ending!' in the ACB 'PG' classified game *The Book of Unwritten Tales 2* (ESRB T-rated, 13+). More explicit content can include exposure of 'sexual' body parts such as breasts or genitals, to sexual acts such as touching, moaning and 'performing' sexual acts such as intercourse. Dialogue in more restricted games is also more explicit, such as 'You can rape her, and then just undo it with the Time Leap Machine....why not taste the same girl's virginity over and over again' in the 2014 ACB 'MA15+' classified game *Stein's Gate* (ESRB M-rated, 17+).

Some games also contain sexual violence against women. Perhaps amongst the most critiqued games for this type of content are some of those in the *Grand Theft Auto* series, where players can have their character pick up a prostitute and engage in 'sex' with them in their car. You cannot see this act on the screen, with the exception of the car bouncing up and down. The player pays the prostitute who then exits the car, after which the player can kill her by running her over then take their money back (see <http://www.grandtheftwiki.com/Prostitutes> for more information). Engaging in sex with a prostitute in the game restores your character's health to 100%, which provides incentive for the game player to perform this act.

Female characters in video games are sometimes portrayed with non-realistic body shapes, which may affect how game players feel about their own bodies (Barlett & Harris, 2008). They may be scantily-clad, with unrealistic sexualised bodies such as large breasts and a small waist (Downs & Smith, 2009). This may promote the thin-ideal that is seen in other forms of media (Harper & Tiggemann, 2008).

Characters that are sexualised representations of women will often play supporting roles within the game, with a male character being the central player (Brand & Knight, 2003). This may promote ideals whereby the woman is generally portrayed as the non-hero, a follower instead of a leader. In contrast, Martins, Williams, Ratan and Harrison (2011) found that male characters in video games with high levels of photo-realism tend to be presented with generous-sized muscles and larger bodies than the average American male, but this body shape is considered to be attainable, and may be more like the proportions of a healthy male's body.

2.1.2.1.4 Language

As video games become more realistic, some characters in games reflect this reality by using coarse language as used in real-life. This can range from more everyday language such as *bloody* and *shit*, to stronger language that is not generally considered acceptable in public. (Ivory, Williams, Martins, & Consalvo, 2009; Thompson et al., 2006).

2.1.2.1.5 Gambling

Some video games have gambling themes, or have content that allows the player to gamble. This can range from playing poker in *Far Cry 3* to playing casino games such as *Blackjack* and slot machines in *Fallout: New Vegas*. Some games have no storyline; rather, they are a simulated casino where you can play a range of casino games, such as in *Casino Challenge*. While the game can be played for chips or credits, some casino games allow the player to deposit funds into an online casino, thus allowing them to gamble with real money.

2.1.2.1.6 Alcohol and substance usage

In some games, characters use substances such as drugs or alcohol. These substances will sometimes be given fictional names, and can be used to alter the cognitive or physical ability of the character. Sometimes drug use in games will have a

positive effect on the character, such as restoring health. When imbibing alcohol, characters will sometimes stagger around the screen, at times with blurred vision. The use of alcohol in a game can have a negative effect by impeding the player's ability to control the character effectively.

The use of substances by characters in games has existed in some form throughout the history of video games. Some substances are not so obvious, such as the power-up pills in *Pac-man* and the magic mushrooms in *Super Mario Bros* in the 1980s. Others are more obvious, such as potions taken to enhance character traits in older-style adventure games, and the sometimes-addictive 'chems' in *Fallout 3* which are likened to real-life drug counterparts. One of these was morphine, which the ACB rejected as it was a substance that may be obtained by game players. As such, the game was banned in Australia, after which the chem was renamed to *Med-X* in order for it to be classified in Australia (see www.fallout.wikia.com/wiki/Chem for more details).

2.1.2.1.7 Themes

When related to game classification, themes can be defined as social issues within the game. The *Guidelines for the Classification of Computer Games* (Australian Government, 2012) defines these themes as *crime, suicide, drug and alcohol dependency, death, serious illness, family breakdown* and *racism* (Australian Government, n.d.b). Themes represent no particular incident in games; rather, it appears that they are more like a topic upon which the game is based. The ACB does not provide an explanation of what constitutes individual themes; however, the ESRB has a definition of the following *themes* content descriptors in their ratings guide (ESRB, n.d.d):

Sexual Themes - References to sex or sexuality

Suggestive Themes - Mild provocative references or materials

The ESRB also describes the following related items, which helps to clarify the distinction between sexual themes and sexual content:

Sexual Content - Non-explicit depictions of sexual behavior, possibly including partial nudity

Strong Sexual Content - Explicit and/or frequent depictions of sexual behavior, possibly including nudity

Perhaps an example of the difference between sexual themes and sexual content could be that with themes there may be conversation of a sexual nature, or perhaps the gameplay revolves around issues surrounding sexual topics. With sexual content, there may be sexual depictions such as sexual behaviour or nudity. Following the description of sexual and suggestive themes for the ESRB, if a game contains a warning for sexual themes but not sexual content, it follows that there will be no depictions of sexual behaviour or nudity within the game.

2.1.2.1.8 Online content

Some games have online functionality which allows the player to interact online. This may include the ability to download content to be used within the game, known as *Downloadable Content* (DLC); this can include new levels of play, skin packs that change the look of your character or surroundings, as well as objects (such as weapons). This content may be free to download, or you may need to purchase it using either credits earned within the game, or real money.

Online functionality within a game can also allow players to connect to a gaming network and play their console game online with other players. These are generally subscription-based services provided by the console developer. Examples of these are the Sony provided gaming network, *PlayStation Plus* (www.playstation.com/en-au/explore/playstation-plus) and the Microsoft supplied gaming network, *Xbox Live* (www.xbox.com/en-US/live). When playing through these networks, some games provide the ability to chat with other game players. This is performed using a microphone, as well as headphones or the television speakers. This opens up contact with players of any age, anywhere in the world. These chats are generally un-moderated.

As gaming may still be perceived to be the domain of heterosexual males (Fox & Tang, 2013), there is also evidence of sexism and sexual harassment in online communities (Achterbosch, Miller, & Vamplew, 2013; Cote, 2015). Some women are objectified in online gaming communities (Fox & Tang, 2013), with some male players having a derogatory attitude towards female or gay players, using trash-talk such as insults, threats or profanity (Cote, 2015) and sometimes asking females for sexually explicit images (Fox & Tang, 2013). As some games contain terminology that may be considered to be rape-based, trash-talk can be threatening to women (Cote, 2015).

2.1.3 Video game classification

Just like classification of other forms of media, video game classification informs consumers, including game players and parents of children who play games, of classifiable elements within games. This allows consumers to make informed game choices (Australian Government, n.d.a). Numerous game classification and rating systems are in use throughout the world, some of which fall under the management of the respective government, while others are industry or self-regulated (Brand, 2003). Some are advisory in nature; others are statutory, containing legally enforceable classification levels.

Classification can be age or maturity based. Age-based classification levels state the minimum recommended age for games, and maturity-based classifications provide a level of advice that parents can use to guide their game choices. For example, if a classification advises 'parental guidance' (ACB PG level), the game contains elements that may upset some children. Video games are classified according to the standards of each jurisdiction, which may result in some game elements being classified as not suitable for certain audiences in one country, but found to be acceptable for the same audience in another country.

2.1.3.1 Games classification in Australia

Games classification in Australia was introduced in 1993 as a result of concern regarding content within video games (Reynolds, 1993). The *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995* (Office of Parliamentary Counsel, 2016), also known as the *Classification Act*, came into effect in January 1996 and stipulates the terms and procedures related to the classification of media items in Australia which includes publications, films and computer games. It also provides guidelines for enforcing these classifications. The Classification Act is modified as necessary to accommodate emerging technology and changing community standards. An example of such a change is the recent introduction of the 'R18+' classification level, resulting in modified guidelines to assist with classifying games that are deemed to have content that is only suitable for adults. As well, as games have moved into the online arena, guidelines have been introduced to allow some games to be classified using online methods, delivering a more streamlined classification process.

The *National Classification Scheme* (NCS), created by the Classification Act, is a statutory system which is administered by the Attorney General's Department (Dunstan, 2009). It comprises an appointed minister for classification from each State and Territory, as well as one from the Commonwealth. These ministers are the *Attorney General* in the case of the States and Territories, while the *Minister for Home Affairs* is the Commonwealth Minister.

Forming part of the Classification Act is the *National Classification Code* (NCC), which is a set of guidelines that contain principles to be followed when making classification decisions (Office of Parliamentary Counsel, 2013). Some of the principles that the NCC are founded on are that adults should be able to read, hear and see what they want, and that minors should be protected from material likely to harm or disturb them (Australian Government, 2005). As such, games classification needs to balance the rights of adults with the protection of children. Presently, all Attorneys General must agree for changes to be made to the NCC.

2.1.3.2 Australian Classification Board

The Australian Classification Board (ACB), established under the Classification Act and administered by the Commonwealth Attorney General's department, is responsible for classifying films, computer games and publications for sale or hire in Australia (www.classification.gov.au). The ACB is an independent body that is deemed to be broadly representative of the Australian community. The board comprises a diverse range of members who are appointed based on certain criteria, which includes experience with children as well as an ability to assess and represent community standards (Australian Government, 2008).

2.1.3.3 Classification Review Board

The Classification Review Board (CRB), also established by the Classification Act, is an independent statutory body that reviews a classification decision made by the ACB when the decision is in dispute and changes or upholds the decision based on their own review. Games reviewed by the CRB may be required to have their content modified before they are reclassified, but sometimes they are reclassified without any change. As with the ACB, the Attorney General's Department administers the CRB.

2.1.3.4 Measuring community standards

As a measure of whether classification decisions reflect community expectations, the Attorney Generals Department sometimes utilises *Community Assessment Panels* to assess whether the Classification Board decisions are consistent with community standards (Dunstan, 2009). These panels are made up of ordinary members of the community, who view rated films or video games to provide a measure of how the general community feels about classification decisions. Although the Classification Act does not appear to define a schedule under which to conduct an assessment panel, these panels appear to have been conducted approximately every four years.

2.1.3.5 Classification levels

Video game Classification in Australia comprises a mixture of age-based as well as maturity-based classification levels. These classification levels are the same as those that are applied to movies, with the exception of the 'X18+' level (explicit content) which is applied to movies but not video games.

Table 1 on the following page details each of the classification levels applied to video games in Australia.

Table 1 - ACB video game classification levels

Classification level	Classification description	Restricted
G	General, recommended for everyone	No
PG	Parental Guidance recommended	No
M	Mature, recommended for mature audiences	No
MA15+	Restricted to those over 15 or accompanied by a parent or guardian	Yes
R18+	Restricted to 18 and over	Yes
RC	Refused classification	Yes *

** RC games are not permitted to be sold in, or imported into, Australia*

The levels 'PG' and 'M' are based on whether the parent or guardian considers the child is mature enough to cope with the content of the game. According to the ACB website, both of these levels are premised on the age of 15, and the level of advice is offered according to that age. When displayed on the game cover, these classification levels do not offer any indication that they are related to age.

Both the 'M' and 'MA15+' classification levels are based on parental guidance, with the maturity of the child determined by parents. Games classified 'MA15+' have content that is not suitable for children under the age of 15 years, and by law, a child under 15 years of age cannot purchase a game with this classification. However, children under

the age of 15 may purchase the game if accompanied by an adult who has made the determination that the child is mature enough to play that game. Games that are classified 'RC' are not permitted to be sold in Australia, and are prevented from being imported into the country.

2.1.3.6 Consumer advice

The classification given to video games in Australia comprises three parts: the classification level, classification description and consumer advice. The classification description concisely describes the classification level, and the consumer advice describes classifiable elements within the game. Consumer advice is required for all games classified higher than 'G' and can warn of elements such as violence, sexual content, language or drug and alcohol use. When used in conjunction with the game classification level, consumer advice can help parents make informed decisions about the games they allow their child to play. Examples of consumer advice are *Strong Violence*, *Coarse Language*, and *Fantasy Violence*.

2.1.3.7 National Classification Guidelines

The National Classification Guidelines (Australian Government, 2012), founded on the NCC, state that video games are classified according to impact. This impact is judged according to the classification level that is applied to the game. Table 2 below presents the hierarchy of impact that is used to evaluate the warnings about classifiable elements that should accompany the classification, as stipulated by the NCC.

Table 2 - Measure of impact for classification levels as stipulated by the NCC

Classification level	Impact
G	Very mild
PG	Mild
M	Moderate
MA15+	Strong

R18+	High
RC	Very high

The NCC states that evaluation of the impact of elements takes into consideration the element itself, as well as the context in which the element is presented. For example, if an element is presented within a sequence that contains greater detail, uses close-ups, slow motion or lends accentuation such as lighting, sound, size, or the scene is prolonged, the element is deemed to have higher impact. Thus, a simple comment that contains swearing may be deemed to be mild impact unless it is presented in such a way that lends more impact, such as amplification, or emphasis placed on the words, or the context within which the language is used, which may upgrade the element to a higher level of impact.

The hierarchy of impact may provide guidance as to when classifiable elements are reported. If an element is deemed to be 'PG' impact, this element may need to be reported in a game that carries a 'PG' classification but it may not need to be reported in an 'M' classified game. Recently, the ACB has introduced an *impact grid* along with the classification information on the ACB website (www.classification.gov.au) which details the impact of elements for some games. Figure 2 below presents an example of this grid for the ACB 'MA15+' classified game *Sleeping Dogs*. The consumer advice for this game warns of the following classifiable elements: *strong violence, crime themes, coarse language and sexual references*. As can be seen in the impact grid, whereas there is drug use and nudity in the game, these elements do not require warnings as they are not considered to be strong impact as required by the 'MA15+' classification.

	Very mild impact	Mild impact	Moderate impact	Strong impact	High impact
Themes				✓	
Violence				✓	
Language				✓	
Drug Use			✓		
Nudity		✓			
Sex				✓	

Figure 2 - Example of impact grid for ACB 'MA15+' classified game *Sleeping Dogs*.
Source: <http://www.classification.gov.au>

2.1.3.8 R18+ games classification

When classification guidelines for video games were formed in Australia in 1993, the Senate Committee responsible for these guidelines recommended that games falling into the “R” category, which are games with content that is considered to be adult-oriented, be *Refused Classification* (RC). This was because, due to the level of technology involved, parents may not have the competency to provide adequate guidance for children when it came to adult material (Reynolds, 1993). Due to this recommendation, there was no legal provision for adult-rated video games in Australia for about 20 years after video game classification was introduced.

For several years prior to its introduction, there had been a push to bring in an ‘R18+’ classification in Australia to allow some games that would be classified ‘RC’ to become legally available (EFAA, 2010; Galaxy Research, 2010; King & Delfabbro, 2010). Proponents for this move claimed that there were some games within the ‘MA15+’ classification level that had content of a nature that was not suitable for minors; as such, they said that introducing an adult classification level would allow some of the more violent games to be given an ‘R18+’ classification, thus making them legally restricted to minors. They also claimed that an ‘R18+’ classification would help to send a clear message to parents that these games are not suitable for children to play (EFAA, 2010). In fact, 90% of households with children below 18 years of age agreed

that the 'R18+' classification level would show adults that the game is unsuitable for children (Galaxy Research, 2010). As a result of this push, an 'R18+' classification level for video games was introduced in Australia in January 2013.

2.1.3.9 Refused classification

Before the Australian 'R18+' classification level for games was introduced, the NCC stipulated that games deemed to have adult-oriented content be classified 'RC'. To avoid an 'RC' classification, some game developers will 'tone down' the content of a game they submit for classification so that it fits into a target category (Miller, 2010). This may involve removing some of the blood and gore, or having bodies disappear after they are killed to reduce the impact of the violence. However, this may have the reverse effect; research into television violence has suggested that depicting the negative consequences of violence, such as the suffering from violence, could reduce the likelihood that the game player would learn to be aggressive (Wilson et al., 2002). Therefore, the games that have the consequences removed to avoid an 'RC' classification may in fact be promoting aggressive behaviour in game players.

Games that achieve an 'RC' classification have content that the ACB considers too extreme for the 'R18+' classification. In most cases, these games are available to consumers overseas, and although it is illegal to sell or import 'RC' games, some Australian consumers will purchase the game online and risk a fine from Australian Customs for importing a game that is classified 'RC'. Once the game is imported, it is not illegal to possess a game classified 'RC' (EFAA, 2010).

During the years 2000 - 2010, 20 games were refused classification. Of these, ten were modified and given a classification, three were submitted to the Classification Review Board for review and classified without any modification to the game content, and seven games were never resubmitted for classification. Consequently, adult gamers felt their rights were impinged upon because they were being denied from playing some games that were available to overseas game players, or they were playing modified versions of

the game (EFAA, 2010). To circumvent the Australian classification laws, some gamers downloaded non-modified copies of some games from international sources.

Since the introduction of the 'R18+' classification level in Australia, three games were refused classification in 2013: *Saints Row IV*, subsequently modified and submitted for review to obtain a 'MA15+' classification; *State of Decay*, and *South Park: The Stick of Truth / Codename* which were both modified and obtained a 'R18+' classification. There were no games refused classification in 2014.

2.1.3.10 International games classification

Internationally, games classification is generally managed by the country in which the games are available, and this classification is guided by societal norms. As these norms are reflected in the media, elements in some games may be deemed classifiable in some countries but not in others.

2.1.3.10.1 Games classification in the USA

The *Entertainment Software Review Board* (ESRB) was formed in 1994 as a non-statutory ratings system for video games in the USA and Canada. The ESRB is an industry-regulated system that provides a recommended age for the game as well as detailing classifiable elements within the game. The classification levels used by the ESRB are 'C' (Early Childhood, 3+), 'E' (Everyone), 'E10+' (Everyone, 10+), 'T' (Teen, 13+), 'M' (Mature, 17+) and 'AO' (Adults Only, 18+). Games that contain intense violence, blood and gore, sexual content or strong language obtain an 'M' classification; those with graphic sexual content and nudity, or prolonged scenes of intense violence, obtain an 'AO' classification. The small age difference between the 'M' and 'AO' ratings may be due to the fact that whereas it may be acceptable for minors to be exposed to violent content, they need to be 18 to access extreme or sexually explicit content.

As the ratings provided by the ESRB for games are only a recommendation, the sale of games to children younger than the recommended age is not enforceable by law;

however, some retailers refuse to sell to children who are under the recommended age, providing regulation at the retail level as evidenced by compliance testing (FTC, 2013). In the USA, 84% of parents are aware that video games have a rating (ESRB, n.d.a).

2.1.3.10.2 Games classification in Europe

The *Pan-European Game Information* (PEGI) system is a voluntary, non-statutory system launched in Europe in 2003 to replace national age rating systems and at this time is used in 38 European countries, including the UK (see Appendix A). This system is age-based, with rating levels of age 3, 7, 12, 16 and 18. Created and owned by the *Interactive Software Federation of Europe* (ISFE, see www.isfe.eu), PEGI is administered by *Netherlands Institute for the Classification of Audiovisual Media* (NICAM, see www.kijkwijzer.nl/nicam), and the *Video Standards Council* (VSC, see www.videostandards.org.uk/Home/), which is based in the UK. Several countries use legislation to enforce the PEGI rating levels, while in other countries the majority of stores enforce the age ratings. When it comes to awareness, 51% of people in Europe are aware that video games carry a PEGI rating (Ipsos MediaCT, 2012) with France being the most aware at 72%, Great Britain awareness at 50% and the Czech Republic having the least awareness at 28%. On average, 33% are aware of the content descriptors that form part of the classification.

2.1.3.10.3 Games classification in the UK

The BBFC is a statutory classification system in the United Kingdom (UK) which currently classifies films. At one stage, the BBFC were also responsible for game classification, but handed this role over to PEGI in late 2012. The following information is included because, as can be seen in Chapter 4, early research in this work included collecting data related to games classified by the BBFC. As such, this body of work includes information about the BBFC classification system to provide background and context to these results.

The classification levels that the BBFC applied to games are as follows: 'U' (suitable for all), 'PG' (parental guidance), '12' (suitable for 12 years and over), '15' (suitable for 15 years and over), '18' (suitable only for adults) and 'R18' (only through licensed outlets, to those over 18 years of age). Classification levels from age 12 and over were restricted categories, and games released in the UK also carried a PEGI rating.

Most games released in the UK under the BBFC classification system were exempt from classification, only carrying a PEGI rating. However, a game lost this exemption if it contained elements such as sexual activity, gross violence towards humans or animals, criminal activity or drug use. The VSC advised publishers whether their game required formal BBFC classification. As such, games released in the UK would contain a BBFC and/or a PEGI classification, with the BBFC classification of 12 and above statutorily enforced over the PEGI rating. This means that there were fewer games classified under the BBFC than those classified under the ESRB, PEGI and ACB.

A report of harmful content on the internet and in video games (Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2008), ordered by the House of Commons in the UK, found that whereas a single classification system in the UK would be ideal, it recommended that the BBFC continue to rate games with adult content to ensure statutory oversight. In addition, the British Government maintained that the BBFC classification was more rigorous than PEGI, which offered greater confidence to parents. As such, some game developers voluntarily submitted their game to the BBFC for classification, even though they were not required to do so, in order to gain the confidence of parents.

As a result of findings and recommendations in the Report of the Byron Review (Byron, 2008), an independent review of the risks children face from the internet and video games, the BBFC are no longer responsible for games classification in the UK other than those containing pornographic game content falling into the 'R18' category (BBFC, n.d.). From July 30th 2012, games classification in the UK has become the role of the VSC, an Administrator of PEGI, and PEGI classification levels for age 12 and over are statutorily enforced in the UK.

2.1.3.10.4 Consumer advice for international games

Just as Australia uses consumer advice to provide more information about the classification given to games, other countries also apply advice which is predicated on their cultural norms. Within the PEGI system they are called *content descriptors*, which will hereafter be referred to as consumer advice.

The range of consumer advice used across each of the classification systems examined in this study varies in theme, wording and the number of advice items used. For example, PEGI uses the least number of descriptions with *Violence, Language, Fear, Sex, Drugs, Discrimination, Gambling* and *Online Game*. These are visual-based warnings, using an icon for each item. The ESRB, BBFC and ACB use text-based warnings, with each of these using several dozen different descriptors such as *Blood and Gore, Violence*, and *Use of Drugs*. These can also be graduated in the level, such as *Strong Violence, Fantasy Violence, Intense Violence, Strong Language*. Some countries have descriptions that other countries do not use, which may be a reflection of localised societal attitudes; for example, PEGI uses the *Discrimination* description, which does not appear to be used by the other systems. Similarly, the ACB and PEGI use *Horror* and *Fear* respectively as part of the description, which is not used by the ESRB.

Table 3 - Comparison of classification systems

Country	System	Levels	Statutory
Australia	ACB	'G' (General), 'PG' (Parental Guidance), 'M' (Mature), 'MA15+' (Mature Audiences 15+), 'R18+' (Restricted 18+)	Yes
USA	ESRB	'C' (Early Childhood, 3+), 'E' (Everyone), 'E10+' (Everyone, 10+), 'T' (Teen, 13+), 'M' (Mature, 17+) and 'AO' (Adults Only, 18+)	No
Europe	PEGI	3, 7, 12, 16 and 18	No
United Kingdom	BBFC	'U' (suitable for all), 'PG' (Parental Guidance), '12' (suitable for 12 years and over), '15' (suitable for 15+), '18' (suitable only for adults) and 'R18' (only through licensed outlets, to those over 18 years of age)	Yes for levels/age 12 and over

2.1.3.11 Game classification or rating process

Board members for the ACB are selected based on several requirements which include maturity, common sense and the ability to apply reason when carrying out their duties (Australian Government, n.d.a). The board is considered to be a representation of the Australian community, and members are allocated certain items each day to review and allocate a classification. The Australian Classification Board Director can appoint an *Authorised Assessor*, usually someone that works for the publishing company, who can submit a report along with a recommended classification for games that are expected to carry a classification of 'G', 'PG, or 'M'. The board uses this information to assist them with the classification process. Board members use the Guidelines for the Classification of Computer Games to assist them in making classification decisions.

The ESRB rating process is carried out by a team of at least three people, known as *raters*, who are experienced with children either professionally or as parents/caregivers. These raters collectively deliberate on which rating should be given to a game (ESRB, n.d.c). Game publishers submit a detailed questionnaire about the game, along with a DVD that contains footage of the most extreme classifiable content within the game. This information is reviewed by the team, who agree upon the most suitable classification to assign the game.

The PEGI rating process is similar to that of the ESRB, except that when the questionnaire is submitted, the game is given a provisional age rating based on the information provided (PEGI, n.d.). The game is then reviewed by a PEGI administrator to double check that the provisional rating awarded to the game is valid. The administrator is assigned depending on the rating provisionally allocated to the game: NICAM checks the games that are awarded 3 and 7 ratings, and VSC checks games that are awarded the 12, 16 and 18 ratings.

2.1.3.12 Classification of games through app stores

As a result of the popularity of mobile games and the need to ensure that games available in Australia are classified, the ACB has joined the *International Age Rating Coalition* (IARC) and is currently trialling classification of games that are available through app stores (Minister for Justice, 2015). To obtain a classification for these games, publishers fill out an online questionnaire that asks for information about game content and play. On submitting the questionnaire, a classification is automatically applied to the game. This classification will apply to any games that are available for download in app stores from locations within Australia. If a game is deemed to have content that is too extreme for the 'R18+' classification level (thus classified RC) they will not be available to download from locations within Australia. At the time of writing, searches conducted by the researcher show that it appears that games available through app stores tend to carry an Australian classification if they have been classified by the ACB, and those that have not will carry the ESRB rating.

Searches on the Australian Classification Board website for games that have been refused classification bring up a multitude of titles for mobile devices. One example is *Madhouse Gang Undercover* which is classified RC under the ACB, and at this time is not listed in the online database of either the ESRB or PEGI. This game does not show up in a search on Google Play from Australian locations; however, the game does appear in a search performed from international locations, offering the game app for download with a PEGI rating of 16 when searched from locations within that jurisdiction, and an 'M' (17+) rating for searches conducted within the USA.

As classification through app stores was introduced after this research had been started and it is still being trialled, classification of mobile games falls outside the scope of this research and as such is not included in either of the studies presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

2.1.3.13 Games as an interactive medium

Video games have the unique characteristic of providing a level of interaction that movie and television viewing does not offer, and there has been discussion about whether this interactivity results in a higher level of impact of some types of content in games on game players (Lin, 2013). This has been noted in the latest Australian Classification Guidelines for video games, which states that:

Due to the interactive nature of computer games and the active repetitive involvement of the participant, as a general rule computer games may have a higher impact than similarly themed depictions of the classifiable elements in film, and therefore greater potential for harm or detriment, particularly to minors.

Interactivity may increase the impact of some content: for example, impact may be higher where interactivity enables action such as inflicting realistically depicted injuries or death or post-mortem damage, attacking civilians or engaging in sexual activity. Greater degrees of interactivity (such as first-person gameplay compared to third-person gameplay) may also increase the impact of some content. (Australian Government, 2012).

That the Australian Classification Guidelines instructs to take interactivity into account when assessing the impact of content on game players suggests that the Australian Government is stating that interactivity can result in heightened media effects from video games.

2.1.4 Children who play video games

Children across all age groups play video games, and Digital Australia 2014 (Brand et al., 2013), a report that examined the state of video games in Australia, provides some insight into the culture of video games in a child's life. The most frequent game players are males aged 11 - 15 years (playing every 1.75 days), who are also amongst the highest group for duration of game-play (play for 2.2 hours). In comparison, females within the same age group don't play as often (every 2.3 days) and just over half as long (1.25 hours). The game players who play for the longest are males within the 16 -

25 age group (2.5 hours every 2 days) compared to females within the same age group who play for 1.5 hours every 2.4 days. These statistics show that males are more likely to play video games more often, and for longer periods of time, than females.

Outside of the home, most children spend the majority of their time at school. Some schools will require children to have a laptop, net-book or tablet for school use, which is used in class for research purposes as well as completing work electronically (Fluck, 2011). These children are permitted, indeed required, to take their computer home at night so that it can be charged as well as being used to complete homework tasks. These computers are for the personal use of the child, and the child is able to install games on the system to be played in free time. Schools generally have policies that govern how children can use their computer (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development [DEECD], 2014), and it falls to the supervising teacher to deal with any breaches of these policies while the child is at school.

In general, children learn socialisation skills that reflect the values of the broader community in order to become responsible and contributing members of society (Grusec, 2002). Parents will also raise their child with their own set of beliefs in order to meet their expectation of outcomes for the child. This results in children being raised with different sets of values. Knafo and Schwartz (2003) explored how parenting style affected the accuracy of adolescents' perception of their parent's values. Their study involved 547 Jewish parent-child dyads located in Israel, with the child aged 16 - 18. Results showed that girls perceived their parent's values more accurately than boys, and that a higher level of acquaintance with their parent's values may result in children being effectively primed to understand these values. They conclude that being warm and supportive can result in parents building a relationship with their child whereby the child is more likely to understand their values, and that the accuracy of the child's understanding of their parent's values can be enhanced "by providing consistent value messages and models." (Knafo & Schwartz, 2003, p. 610).

2.1.5 Parents of children who play video games

This research refers to parents of children who play video games; in fact, it is not only parents that make game choices - some children do not live with their parents, and some children may be in the temporary care of an adult who allows the child to play video games under their care. Without intent to detract from the importance of those who do have care of a child who is not their own, from herein for simplicity within this discussion they will be referred to as parents.

Parents have the right to make their own choices for their children, as long as those choices fall within the bounds of the law. Parents may not be happy about interference from 'outsiders' who may take on the role of making some of these decisions (Wyness, 1997) as parents tend to pass their values on to their child (Whitbeck & Gecas, 1988). As well, parents may use different parenting styles with each of their children to suit the needs of the child, or in relation to gender or birth order (McHale, Updegraff, Jackson-Newsom, Tucker, & Crouter, 2000). The Australian classification system supports the role of parents with a maturity-based system that provides parents with the right to decide the suitability of games for their child. Indeed, the EFAA (2010, p. 12) argues that "Australian parents are responsible parents who, with the right guidance, can effectively manage their children's game-playing habits and limit their children's exposure to adult content". Parents can use the classification system to guide them in making game choices for their children.

Research by Brand et al. (2013) shows that most parents will talk about games with their children (73%) and about half of parents (53%) are aware of parental controls on gaming consoles or PCs. More than half of parents (63%) are reasonably familiar with games classifications, and 44% say that the classification has a lot of influence on their games choices for their children. However, 11% of parents feel that the 'M' and 'MA15+' classification levels are unclear and 7% feel the 'R18+' classification is unclear. This suggests that some parents may not use classification information when making game choices, or they may be using it but do not understand it fully.

There have been repeated studies that explore how parents view and manage video game classification (Brand, 2007; Brand et al., 2013; Gentile, Maier, Hasson, & de Bonetti, 2011; Kutner, Olson, Warner, & Hertzog, 2008; Lenhard, Kahne, Middaugh, Macgill, Evans, & Vitak, 2008; Office of Film and Literature Classification [OFLC], 2005b) but an area that does not appear to have been examined is how those who use English as a second language (ESL) understand the classification given to video games. A comprehensive search of the literature using a combination of terms including 'ESL', 'media classification', 'video game classification' returned no discernible results. This lack of research leaves a gap in knowledge of how ESL parents understand the video game classification system in Australia.

Although information about game content can be researched using the internet, when parents are making game choices at the point of purchase the information available to them is the classification level, consumer advice and the game description available on the cover. This information can be used to determine game suitability. As stated by one participant in research conducted by Brand, Borchard and Holmes (2009, p. 43), "I often look for the classification on games to see what sort of content they have and if I am not happy with the content then my son/s do not get to hire or buy them".

Parents desire granularity in video game classification so they can make game choices that suit the needs of their child (Byron, 2008). This granularity not only helps parents make informed decisions, it also allows for a dialogue between the parent and child about the elements in games that are suitable for the child to play. This can educate the child, building intrinsic values about their own game choices for times when they are required to make their own decisions such as when playing games with friends.

Some parents are happy to let their children make their own game choices, which may result in the child playing games that are not recommended for their maturity level, or that are restricted for their age. This may be because the parents feel that it is 'just a game' that cannot hurt the child, or that they feel their child is mature enough to play the content within the game.

With the increasing internet speeds that are available to households, this opens up the ability for children to download games from the internet. Downloads may circumvent efforts made by parents to monitor which games their child is playing, as without sitting down and watching the game being played, parents may not be savvy enough to realise that the game being played is a different game to the one that was purchased with their knowledge and mediation. These downloadable games may be sourced internationally, which could also cause confusion for parents who may, for example, think that the 'M' (17+) rating on an ESRB game is equivalent to the 'M' (not recommended for children under 15) classification given to video games in Australia.

2.1.5.1 Tools to help parents mediate video games

There are a variety of tools that are available to parents that assist them with mediating the games their child plays. Some of these are discussed below, grouped into parental controls, online resources and apps for devices.

Parental controls - To complement the classification given to video games, some game consoles have parental controls, which allow parents to set the highest classification level that can be played on that machine. Sometimes this is applied to the account that the child logs in with; other times, it applies to the whole machine. Some games also allow you to turn off aspects of graphic content, such as blood and gore. This gives parents further control over the type of content their children are exposed to in video games.

Online resources - There are multiple online sources that provide information to help consumers make informed game choices. These sources include websites that detail classification information, as well as websites that detail the content and game-play of the game. Some websites also collate reviews from game players or parents, providing peer-to-peer information which lends more relevance.

Each of the classification systems detailed in this research publishes their classification decisions on their website¹. The classification information on these sites is searchable, usually by game title or classification level. Both ACB and PEGI provide concise information, with classification level and consumer advice. The ESRB provides a summary of classifiable elements for many 'M' rated games, detailing elements and game-play that may be of concern to consumers.

Apps for devices - Both the ESRB and PEGI have released an app which allows consumers to research classification information on a smart phone or tablet. The ESRB app makes this easier by providing a bar-code reader within the app that allows you to scan the bar code of the game with the device, which then brings up the information for the game. Accessing content on a smart phone or tablet allows consumers to view classification information as well as game reviews at the point of game purchase.

2.1.5.1.1 Opportunities for mediation

There are four observable stages at which parents may have the opportunity to perform mediation of video games: before game purchase, at the time of game purchase, at the time of game play, and post-game play.

¹ The BBFC no longer displays information about games classification on their website due to PEGI taking over the role of game classification in that country.

Table 4 on the following page describes at which stage each of the aforementioned tools can be used. Whereas there is a collection of tools that can be used at the first three stages of opportunities for mediation, there does not appear to be any tools that lend themselves to the post-game play stage of mediation.

Table 4 - Stages at which there is an opportunity for parents to mediate video games

Stage	Available tools
Before game purchase	Classification websites Media review / gaming websites Knowledge from friends
At the time of purchase (without internet enabled device)	Classification information Game cover - design and information Retailer may provide advice
At the time or purchase (with internet enabled device)	Classification information Game cover - design and information Classification websites Media review / gaming websites
At time of game play	Parental controls
Post-game play	Parent-child discussions about game content

2.1.6 How video games are used

Video games are primarily used for entertainment, with genres such as adventure games, simulation games, competition games, puzzle games and cooperation games (Dempsey, Lucassen, Gilley, & Rasmussen, 1993). There can be no doubt that they are an attractive form of media that captures the attention of children (and adults) due to their animation, interactivity and the level of engagement that they can command. Because video games can effectively engage children, education researchers are exploring how they can enhance learning by including interactive games with educational content in the curriculum (Annetta, Murray, Laird, Bohr, & Park, 2006; Beavis, Muspratt, & Thompson, 2015; Nankervis, Meredith, Vamplew, & Fotinatos, 2012; Turkay, Hoffman, Kinzer, Chantes, & Vicari, 2014). Students can use this medium to build academic knowledge in areas such as mathematics, language, and history, as well as improving motor skills, cognition and hand to eye coordination. Indeed, video

game play has been linked to increased brain plasticity (Kühn, Gleich, Lorenz, Lindenberger, & Gallinat, 2013).

Video games can also help with the development of social interaction skills. Game players will often discuss games with their friends, giving them a common topic of interest with which to initiate conversation (Olson, Kutner, & Warner, 2008). Games can provide a method of interacting with other game players during game play, either through personal contact by playing at the same machine or over a LAN, or playing over the Internet. The chat functionality available in some games allows players to communicate with each other, either through text or voice chat. This gives video games a social dimension that was lacking with earlier consoles.

Playing video games can offer a range of benefits for children. A study by Sweetser, Johnson, and Wyeth (2013) discusses how video games can improve cognition and problem-solving skills, as well as the benefit of physically active video games such as those played on the *Wii* and *Kinect* for *Xbox* which motivates children to exercise. These researchers state that negativity regarding video games is not well supported, and that any negative effect that can be seen is based on a small minority. However, they do conclude that screen-time should be limited, stating that "Clearly, certain forms of media such as violent video games are not appropriate for children, and games should be played in moderation" (para. 14).

2.1.6.1 Video game simulators

The realism in modern-day video games provides an immersive experience for the player where they can explore environments and simulate actions that otherwise may not be possible. When playing video games, players get to not only watch a story line as they do when watching television, they also get to experience what it is like to be the central character (Rigby & Ryan, 2011). In fact, the more immersive a game is, the greater the chance that the player will identify with the character (Przybylski, Weinstein, Murayama, Lynch, & Ryan, 2012). They can be playing the part of a plumber who rescues the princess in a whimsical, unrealistic game of *Mario Bros*. They can also play

the part of an orphaned child, who performs quests to ultimately save his sister from bandits that destroyed his village in *Fable*. More disturbingly, they could also play the part of a character walking through an airport lounge with a group of terrorists who gets to watch, or participate in, shooting the civilians waiting at the airport in *Call of Duty - Modern Warfare 2*.

Simulation games have been used by various organisations to provide training for real-life situations. For example, Sony and the *Academy of Interactive Entertainment* allows gaming students to play a game which teaches them the business processes involved with making and marketing a video game (Dominguez, 2013). On a much larger scale, the US Army is using video games as a cost-effective method of teaching soldiers tactics, letting them practice shooting with replicated weapons, and allowing them to practice their driving (Martin & Lin, 2011; Plunkett, 2012). The army may even be using video games to reach children as young as 13 years of age, exposing them to what life in the Army is like, with the aim of boosting recruitment (Hsu, 2010). In fact, as far back as 1999, Dave Grossman, a retired Army Ranger and West Point psychology professor, claimed that video games teach children to be killers by giving them the same training that soldiers might receive (Grossman & Degaetano, 2009).

2.1.7 Video games in the media

Parents are being presented with seemingly inconsistent information in the media which may confuse them about the suitability of some types of games for their child. Some reports state that violent video games can have negative outcomes, and warn against letting children play them (ABC Science, 2014; Sydney Morning Herald, 2015). On the other hand, other articles state that the benefits of video games, including those with violence, can improve fine motor skills (Merrill, 2013) and cognition (Griffiths, 2013; NZHerald, 2013) by inducing brain plasticity (Steffens, 2009).

Kasumovic (2013) opines that aggression that may stem from video games is no different to the aggression that we may feel in everyday situations such as being cut off

when driving. He states that this will not necessarily lead to violence, and the aggression shown during testing might simply be likened to a show of dominance or a victory display.

2.1.8 Other forms of electronic games

Along with console games, which include games played from a disc or cartridge, there are other forms that can be played. These are mobile games, online games (played through websites) and games played in virtual reality. A brief discussion of each of these follows.

2.1.8.1 Mobile games

Games that are developed specifically for mobile devices are becoming increasingly popular due to the widespread use of devices such as the *Smartphone* and *Tablet Computers* (Newzoo, 2014), with games on mobile devices making up 27% of the market share in 2014, up from 18% in 2012. Games written specifically for these devices are built as an application, more commonly known as an *app*. These can be downloaded from outlets generally known as *app stores*, such as *App Store* (Apple devices) and *Google Play* (Android devices) (Kotaku, 2015) either free of charge or for a small cost. These games may contain an age rating which is calculated when the developer submits the game to the app store for distribution (TechCrunch, 2009) (classification of these are discussed in section 2.1.3.12). Some games offer in-game purchases, such as unlocking new levels and obtaining new objects such as weapons.

2.1.8.2 Online games

Online games, not to be confused with online content discussed in section 2.1.2.1.8, are games that are played on line through websites, for example *Facebook* (www.facebook.com). These games are not covered by Australian classification legislation, most likely due to the rapid and widespread explosion of the medium as well as difficulties raised with monitoring these games.

As online games are not covered under the Australian classification system, the scope of this research will not examine classification for online games.

2.1.8.3 Video games played in virtual reality

As the technology of video games has advanced, the play arena is also changing. Moving on from arcade games and gaming consoles used within the home, some games are now played in virtual reality. Companies such as *Zero Latency* in Melbourne, Australia (www.zerolatencyvr.com) and *VRcade* in Washington, USA (www.vrcade.com) offer a truly immersive first-person shooter experience by allowing the player to don virtual reality gear and move through a virtual world while shooting zombies. Entry to *Zero Latency* is limited to those over the age of 13.

2.1.9 Financial aspects of video games

As video games have become an intrinsic part of life, the global market reflects the success that the industry has experienced. The worldwide gaming market was projected to be worth \$91.5 Billion USD in 2015 (Newzoo, 2015) with China being the top earner at an estimate of around \$22.23 Billion USD, followed by the United States at around \$22 Billion USD. The Australian games industry was estimated to be worth \$1.2 Billion USD in 2015, up from \$1.14 Billion USD in 2014 in a worldwide market of \$81.5 Billion USD. The income that is generated by the video game industry in Australia indicates that this industry has grown to be an important part of the Australian economy.

2.1.9.1 Video game franchises

When a game proves to be popular, subsequent titles are often released that follow the same characters or theme (much like sequels in film). Games such as these form a series, or *game franchise* (King, Delfabbro, & Griffiths, 2010). Game players will often look forward to the release of the new title in the franchise, perhaps being already primed by previous games in the series. Players will often pre-order the game in order to ensure they obtain a copy the day it is released, as well as to garner bonus content

along with the game (Bakalar, 2012). Game franchises go back to the inception of video games, with exemplars from the early days of video games being *Pong*, *Pac-Man*, *Donkey Kong* and *Mario*. More recently, franchises such as *Grand Theft Auto*, *The Sims*, *Halo*, and *Call of Duty* have seen long-term success (King, Delfabbro, & Griffiths, 2010).

As game franchises may span 10 or 20 years, technological advances see later game releases in a franchise being more realistic than earlier releases. As well, over time the level of mature content in newly-released games may increase. This may result in different games within the same franchise having different classification levels. For example, in the *Halo* series, there are games that have either a 'PG', 'M' or 'MA15+' classification. The *Grand Theft Auto* series has games classified 'MA15+' or 'R18+'.

2.1.9.2 Video games and convergence with the movie industry

Since their inception, there has been a convergence between video games and film technology. Movie franchises have successfully created *tie-ins*, or partnerships with other organisations, in external markets which help to promote their product. Brookey (2010) discussed how one of the earliest forays into this arena was in 1982, when film director Stephen Spielberg teamed up with *Warner Entertainment* to create a spin-off game to the movie *ET*. This proved to be a disaster, as production of the game was rushed in time for the Christmas period which resulted in a low-quality game that proved difficult to sell. The reason for this failure was considered to be because the two-dimensional character *ET* did not evoke the same emotion or attachment as it did in the movie. Since the failure of the video game *ET*, advances in technology have seen more of a confluence of games and films. In 2006, eight out of ten of the top films were associated with video games, a situation known as *tie-ins* (Brookey, 2010). More recently, movie franchises have successfully created tie-ins in external markets which help to promote their product. For example, the *Harry Potter* franchise partnered with the *Electronic Arts* software company to release a series of video games which coincided with every movie in the series (Gunelius, 2008).

Historically, movie merchandising has proven to be a lucrative industry, selling licensed products related to movies such as books, figurines, toys, and clothing. Once considered a by-product of films, merchandising is now a strategic tool used to promote the film before it is released (Litwak, 2013). Along with tie-ins with video games, the same merchandising that is sold for film audience can be sold to the game audience. As such, the synergistic relationship between video games and movies means that the film can help boost game sales, and vice versa. Merchandising can potentially boost game consumption by allowing consumers to role-play with props such as swords and bow and arrow, building a synergy which may encourage consumers to transition between the movie and the game tie-in. Merchandising has also moved into other areas such as the mobile phone arena, with downloads such as wallpapers, ringtones and mobile games.

2.1.10 Summary

Whereas the positive outcome of playing video games may be improved cognition, heightened reflexes or problem solving, it may be prudent to acknowledge that there may be negative outcomes from playing some types of games of which researchers cannot agree on any harm it may cause. The plethora of discussions and opinions about the benefits of video games shows that this is a complex medium that touches on many areas of our thinking. Any research into this area needs to be approached in a multi-faceted manner, and until we can devise a reliable method of measuring the effect of video game violence on game players it cannot be assumed that playing violent video games is entirely good, bad or neutral. Even though video games in Australia carry classification information, if parents do not understand this information or if they are not aware of all classifiable elements within the game, they may not be able to make an informed decision about games that their children play.

2.2 Literature review

Research into topics surrounding video games have been founded on different theories in order to explain effects or cognitive processes. This section begins by looking at some of the theories and models used when researching the effects on game players from playing video games, as well as theories that are used when researching issues surrounding protecting children from harm. It then goes on to look at prior research on issues surrounding video games. This starts with the impact of video game content on game players, continues on to research into video game classification, and then looks at how retail outlets comply with classification information. Lastly, mediating video games is explored from the parents' point of view.

2.2.1 Theories related to this research

Theories provide a systematic method with which to guide research that delivers insights and understanding to a situation or behaviour by connecting individual facts to give them meaning (Reeves, Albert, Kuper, & Hodges, 2008). Theories can help with research design by uncovering issues that may have been overlooked. A well-tested theory can help to predict behaviour and outcomes; it can also help to explain reasons for the outcome. Theories are tested by applying them to situations or behaviours to see if they fit the model described by the theory, sometimes being modified to provide a more complete theory to suit the current research. In placing this research into theoretical context, it falls across two areas of the literature: effects of video game content, and child health and wellbeing. This section presents a brief overview of some of the theories related to these issues.

2.2.1.1 Theories and models used in video game research

Anderson and Bushman (2002), and Warburton and Anderson (2015), have described some of the theories that have been used for issues related to video game research in the past. These are *Social Learning Theory*, *Cognitive Neoassociation Theory*, *Script Theory*, *Excitation Transfer Theory*, and *Social Information Processing*. Each of these

theories helps to provide an explanation for certain behaviours related to video game usage.

2.2.1.1.1 Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Bandura, 1977) has been used since the early days of research into video games (see Griffiths, 1999) to provide insight into the effects of violent content on game players. This theory propounds that people can learn new behaviour by watching other people, and can be used to explain a wide range of behaviours. Three core concepts form this theory:

- that people can learn through observation
- that internal mental states are an essential part of this process
- that just because something has been learned, it does not mean that it will result in a change in behaviour

This theory has been used to explore aggressive behaviours related to video game play. However, causes of aggression are not as simplistic as watching and adopting aggressive behaviour so other theories have also been used to explore the effects of video game content on aggression.

2.2.1.1.2 Script Theory

Script Theory describes how someone learns behaviours like they are learning from a script, which then guide how they react in certain situations (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). If the behaviour is performed often enough to be entrenched in memory, when faced with a similar situation the person is more likely to consider using the learned behaviour if they deem that behaviour to be appropriate to the situation (Warburton & Anderson, 2015). If used often enough, these scripts tend to become automatic. If the behaviour is aggression, there is an increased likelihood of aggression throughout different areas of the person's life.

When translated to video game play, the player may be rewarded for aggressive actions which might take the form of weapons or increased health. Script theory suggests that without real-life consequences, the game player may form attitudes whereby only the rewards are recognised, not the consequences. This may create an entrenched memory for the game player whereby their first instinct is to feel that aggression has rewards.

2.2.1.1.3 Cognitive Neoassociation Theory

This theory helps to describe hostile aggression (Anderson & Bushman, 2002) by explaining that negative experiences such as frustration, loud noises and discomfort can automatically invoke negative responses such as thoughts, memories and physiological responses resulting in fight or flight feelings (Warburton & Anderson, 2015). The fight feeling can result in feelings of anger and aggression, which may be tempered depending on the characteristics of the person affected.

This theory has been used in the past to explore the effect of violent game play on aggression (Anderson & Dill, 2000; Bushman & Gibson, 2010). However, the validity of this method has been questioned in regard to whether participants respond to stimuli as they would in the real world (Ferguson & Rueda, 2009), and whether they believe that their display of aggression is actually reaching the intended target which may impact on the level of aggression they display. As such, researchers are still exploring methods of measuring aggression that will return meaningful results (Ferguson, 2015).

2.2.1.1.4 Excitation Transfer Theory

The Excitation Transfer Theory has its basis in arousal, and the fact that physiological arousal may dissipate slowly (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Warburton & Anderson, 2015). If instances of arousal occur close enough together that the first instance of arousal has not dissipated, then the second instance of arousal may be compounded. For example, if the arousal is a result of anger, then the second instance will result in the person being angrier.

Jeong, Biocca, and Bohil (2012) explored the effect of arousal on aggression by examining responses to different colour of blood, whether there were sounds of pain, and first-person vs third-person perspective. This involved 160 participants with an average age of 20, of which 128 were male. Participants were asked to play the ESRB 'M' (17+) rated game *Half-Life 2*, which was modified to allow the researchers to change observable factors. Skin conductance tests during game play showed that blood colour and screams of pain had a significant effect on physiological arousal, but that the player's perspective had no effect. Moreover, whereas the level of immersion had an effect on aggression levels, arousal had no significant effect, thus not supporting the excitation transfer theory.

2.2.1.1.5 Social Information Processing Theory

This theory provides understanding into how a person interrelates with other people (Warburton & Anderson, 2015) by how they perceive the behaviour of others, and how they ascribe the other person's motives. A key part of this theory is a propensity to interpret ambiguous events as being a result of hostile intent - for example, being bumped into. This theory is thought to be able to reliably predict aggressive behaviour (Warburton & Anderson, 2015).

Yang, Huesmann, and Bushman (2014) explored this theory by examining the difference in game play between using a male or female avatar. Their study involved 242 undergraduate students who played against a same-sex avatar. Aggression was measured after the game by how much hot sauce they would allocate to their partner, and results showed that those who played the game as a male avatar displayed a higher level of aggression. Although this had a greater effect on males, this effect was also seen for female participants. These results suggest that players may be primed by the characteristics of the avatar. The authors opine that the greater effect seen for males may be a result of the script theory, whereby males may identify with male avatars, thus retrieving scripts related to past play.

2.2.1.1.6 Discussion about theories presented

This brief sample of theories show that aggressive behaviour does not occur from any one source, but from multiple avenues: by watching others aggress, by performing aggressive behaviours repeatedly, that it can be triggered by undesirable events, by being aroused repeatedly while being in contact with someone who is angry or aroused, and by interpreting someone's intentions as being hostile. As each of these theories examines different pathways to aggression, they are unable to provide a complete picture when used individually, as well as possibly resulting in different outcomes. Instead of being theories to help understand behaviour, these theories effectively become mini-theories (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; DeWall, Anderson, & Bushman, 2011), being used collectively to produce clearer outcomes.

2.2.1.1.7 General Aggression Model

To address the limitations that mini-theories present when researching aggression, a more unified approach was needed. Figure 3 presents the *General Aggression Model* (GAM), which was developed to encompass the mini-theories into one centralised theory in order to allow a multi-faceted approach to researching aggression (Anderson & Bushman, 2001, 2002; Anderson & Carnagey, 2014; Warburton & Anderson, 2015). Predicated in the supposition that exposure to violence causes aggression, this model helps to explain aggression originating from several motives, providing a deeper understanding of aggression by exposing all of the factors surrounding the issue. An extension to the GAM is the *General Learning Model* (GLM), which also provides pathways to explore other social issues.

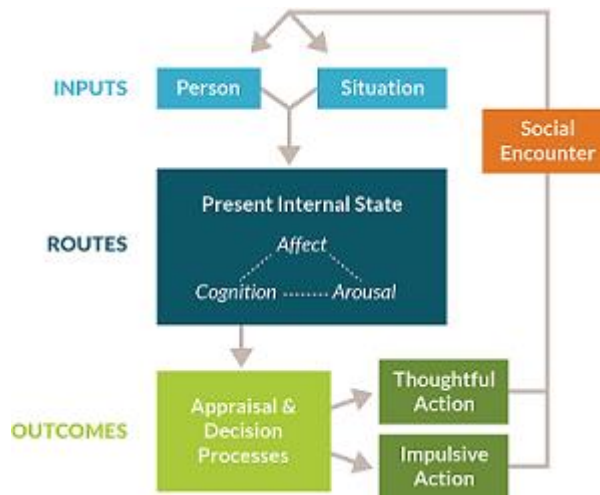


Figure 3 - Single-episode General Aggression Model. Source: Anderson and Bushman (2002)

Although the GAM appears to be supported for researching the effects of violence in video games on player aggression (Anderson & Dill, 2000; DeWall, Anderson, & Bushman, 2011), Ferguson and Dyck (2012) state that there needs to be a paradigm change as the GAM has not proved reliable enough to provide an adequate explanation for aggression. They claim that the GAM is an end product of social cognitive paradigm of aggression that “primarily focuses on external learning-based inputs and the development of cognitive scripts and affective related desensitization as well as arousal” (Ferguson & Dyck, 2012, p. 222), and that it does not sufficiently provide an explanation for aggression. Their suggestion is to move into a more trait-driven model, which takes into account biological or innate tendencies of the individual towards violence.

2.2.1.1.8 Catalyst Model

The *Catalyst Model* provides an explanation for aggression based on the genetic predisposition, or traits, of the person playing the game (Ferguson, Olson, Kutner, & Warner, 2010). This model takes into account genetic make-up as well as long term environmental factors such as parental abuse and teenage delinquency (Elson & Ferguson, 2014) as a catalyst for aggressive behaviours. Whereas this model agrees with the GAM in that an aggressive personality is a causal agent for violent crime

(Ferguson et al., 2010), they differ in explaining how the aggression is fostered. As stated earlier, the GAM assumes that aggression is learned from repeated exposure to aggressive behaviours such as playing video games; the Catalyst Model explains how trait aggression can utilise violent video games as a model for aggressive behaviours, which makes playing these games a catalyst rather than the cause.

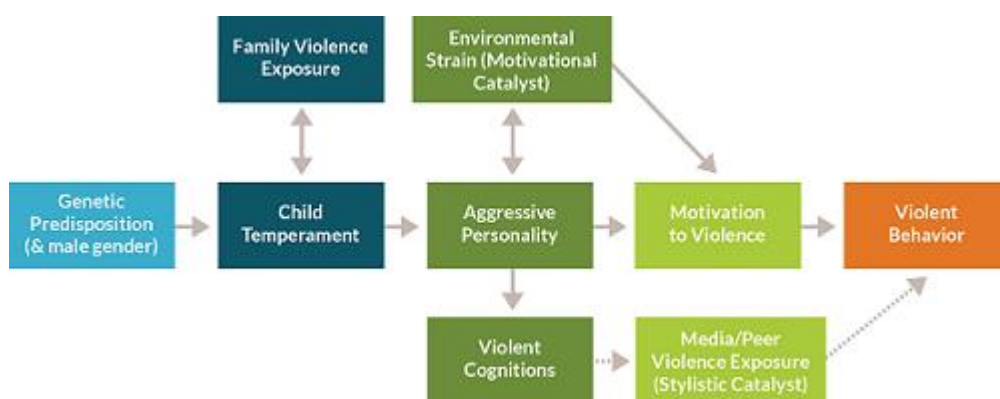


Figure 4 - Catalyst Model of Violent Crime. Source: Ferguson et al. (2008)

2.2.1.2 Health and wellbeing theories and models

This research explores issues surrounding protecting children from harm that may result from playing video games with inappropriate content. The aforementioned theories and models have been used to examine issues related to aggressive behaviour as a result of video game play, but they do not address the pathways that are needed to ensure the wellbeing of the child. The following models and theories are presented in order to identify processes associated with health, wellbeing and protection, which help to explain how parents can protect children from inappropriate content in video games.

2.2.1.2.1 Elaboration Likelihood Model

The *Elaboration Likelihood Model* (ELM) is a theory that involves the thought processes that occur during attitude change (Bryant & Oliver, 2009; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). This theory posits that some people will invest more thought into decisions than others, seeking elaboration on the topic (Chaiken & Trope, 1999). The likelihood of seeking elaboration is impacted by a person's motivation and their ability to evaluate the

message. Petty and Cacioppo identified two routes that can be taken during attitude change: the *central route*, and the *peripheral route*.

The central route is taken when the desire for elaboration is high. This is where the person gives careful consideration to the information at hand, which, after scrutiny, can lead to attitude change. People who take this route will have a higher level of involvement (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), and are more likely to consider the quality of the message; i.e., how accurate are the arguments.

The peripheral route is where desire for elaboration is low (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). This is where the person does not give much thought to the message itself, but will respond to cues about the message which may also lead to attitude change. This route is more likely taken by those with a lesser level of involvement (Bryant & Oliver, 2009), and people who take this route are more likely to form their decision based on the messenger, such as their looks or expertise, the reliability of the source, or from a perceived assimilation with their own values.

Using this theory, people do not take one route or the other. Rather, they may fall anywhere between both paths (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The higher the motivation is for elaboration, the closer the person is to the central route (Bryant & Oliver, 2009). Each of these routes is not a method; rather, they are an illustration of how attitude may change. As such, these routes are fluid in nature. People who take the central route may also take cues as described for the peripheral path, just as those who take the peripheral route may perform low-level analysis of information. However, attitude change via the central route is more likely to be lasting than those changed via the peripheral route (Bryant & Oliver, 2009; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

2.2.1.2.2 Third Person Effect

When it comes to negative messages such as violence in the media, people tend to feel that they are less vulnerable to these messages than vague, unknown people (Duck & Mullin, 1995; Shah, Faber, & Youn, 1999). Some people feel that themselves, and

people that they know, will not be harmed by negative messages, but agree that 'someone else' could be affected. In addition, the more the person does not agree with the message, the more likely it is that the third-person effect may be strengthened (Kim, 2014). Conversely, it follows that when the message becomes more positive, the third-person effect is reduced. This seems to show that people do not think that they can be hurt by negative messages, but that they feel they will respond to positive ones. It may also be possible that people who feel that they are smarter than others are also more likely to feel that they are impervious to these messages. It also appears that messages may be interpreted differently depending on the abstraction of the subject matter. For example, if a person is familiar with a game, they may find it difficult to rationalise whether the game has harmful effects even though the classification may indicate the presence of harmful elements (Ivory & Kalyanaraman, 2009), or conversely, they may be supportive of censorship of the game based on their own knowledge of the game.

If someone has experienced negative situations in life, the third-person effect may not be as strong as they are more likely to feel that they, and those around them, are vulnerable to negative messages. Shen, Palmer, Kollar, and Comer (2015) explore the third-person perception, including how threat appraisals can affect how people perceive negative messages. They found that the third-person effect was weaker when someone felt that the message could impact them more. If the receiver felt that the message applied to them, then they were more likely to take action to prevent the event about which they warned. Also, Shah et al. (1999) found that the third-person effect is bigger for susceptibility than it is for severity. This means that while people feel that someone else is a lot more susceptible to something that is harmful than they are, they agree that the impact, if it happened to them, is similar to the impact on someone else.

In a telephone study which involved 70 parents of children between 3 and 18 years of age, Hoffner and Buchanan (2002) found that parents perceived their own children to be less affected by television violence than other children. However, when parents perceived that their own child might be at risk, they were more likely to censor their

child's viewing than those who did not foresee any risk. This study concluded that if parents underestimate how much their child could be affected by media content they are less likely to implement mediation.

Children themselves appear to display third-person effect. A study involving 118 students that were 11 - 13 years of age in the USA looked at how the third-person effect applied to this age group (Scharrer & Leone, 2008). The study was conducted as a questionnaire which explored children's attitudes towards restrictions applied to video game usage. Participants were presented with imagery of the game cover, including game rating information and a brief description of the game that was gleaned from Amazon.com, and asked whether rules surrounding the usage of these games applied to them. They were asked about the rules that their parents applied to games that they played. Results showed that this age group felt that they should be allowed to play games more-so than other children their age, and even more-so than younger children. Results also showed that they did not perceive there to be much difference between 'T' (13+) and 'M' (17+) games. As the game rating became more restrictive, the third-person effect was weakened for girls, but boys felt they were more impervious to the negative effects of the game. The third-person effect was less for those whose parents were more restrictive in their rules for video games, which suggests that the message was being passed on to children about how the game could negatively affect them.

2.2.1.2.3 Forbidden Fruit Effect

Although classification clearly provides benefits for parents by allowing them to implement informed mediation, the information that makes up the classification and warnings may lead to unintended results. The content rating labels given to media may result in a *forbidden fruit* effect, whereby the labels themselves may make the game more attractive by making the content more desirable, increasing viewer expectations of the content (Bijvank et al., 2009; Kutner & Olson, 2008).

A study of 310 Dutch children aged 7 - 17 (Bijvank et al., 2009) measured whether age and content ratings affected the desirability of games. Participants were presented with ratings information on a card and were asked to record how desirable they found the game. Results showed that children found the game to be more attractive when the age ratings were more restrictive, particularly boys. Also, children in the 7 - 8 years of age group found the labels to be the most attractive. However, a meta-analysis by Bushman and Cantor (2003) found that children under the age of eight were not affected by the forbidden fruit effect as much, and that they were more likely to be deterred by the ratings.

Although research into age and content ratings has shown that the forbidden fruit effect can make games more attractive, an experiment by Gosselt, De Jong and Van Hoof (2012) found that the context in which the ratings information was presented could make a difference. This study involved around 650 students between 9 and 15 years of age, and presented the rating information as it would naturally be presented, on the game or DVD cover. Results showed that the forbidden fruit effect evidenced in previous studies was not present, and the researchers discuss how this might be because the ratings information pictograms on the cover sit amongst other more vibrant elements, rather than this information being isolated as in some of the previous studies (Bijvank et al., 2009). The researchers discuss how this result shows that the benefit of rating labels to parents is not compromised by a forbidden fruit effect on the children.

2.2.1.2.4 Health Belief Model

The *Health Belief Model* (HBM) was developed by social psychologists who sought to explain why people did not participate in health behaviours (Champion & Skinner, 2008; Hayden, 2013; Rosenstock, 1966). The theory of this model is to encourage the uptake of health services, founded on the idea that a person's health behaviours depend on two core areas: perceived threat, and outcome expectations. Perceived threat is determined by how serious the person considers a problem to be, coupled with how susceptible they feel they are to the problem. Modifying factors to this such as age or

cultural beliefs can impact someone’s perception of a problem, as can previous experience which adds to their knowledge of the issue (Hayden, 2013).

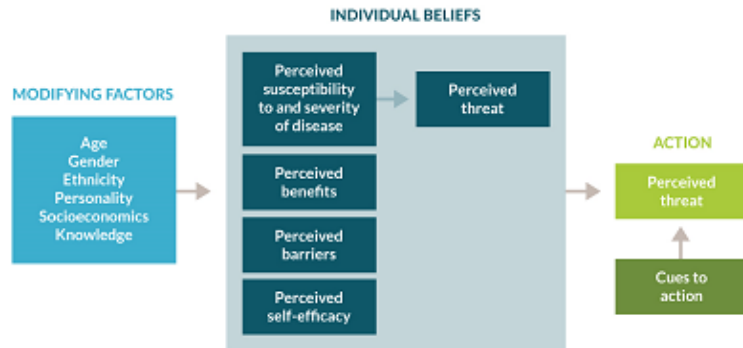


Figure 5 - Health Belief Model. Source: Champion and Skinner (2008) p. 49

One of the strongest predictors of change is the *perceived barriers* construct (Champion & Skinner, 2008). This is the person’s perception of the barriers that might prevent them from adopting the recommended behaviour. Countering this is the weakest predictor of change, the *perceived threat* construct, whereby a person may not consider themselves to be at risk, thereby are not motivated to instigate change. Balancing the threat against any perceived benefits and barriers to adopting a particular course of action can initiate behaviour change (Hayden, 2013). However, Champion and Skinner discuss that whereas the HBM identifies constructs that lead to behaviour change, this model is cognitive in nature and does not consider the impact of emotional involvement on behaviour. As such, these researchers recommend that the HBM be modified to incorporate an emotional component.

2.2.1.2.5 Protection Motivation Theory

The *Protection Motivation Theory* (PMT), a modification of the HBM, was developed to engender behaviour change based on fear (Neuwirth, Dunwoody, & Griffin, 2000; Rogers, 1975; Wu, Stanton, Li, Galbraith, & Cole, 2005). This theory posits that protection motivation is a result of perceived threat and desire to protect, and comes about as a result of attitude change. The PMT differs from the above HBM in that it

encapsulates the beliefs into *threat appraisal* and *coping appraisal* constructs. Figure 6 on the following page presents the constructs of the PMT.

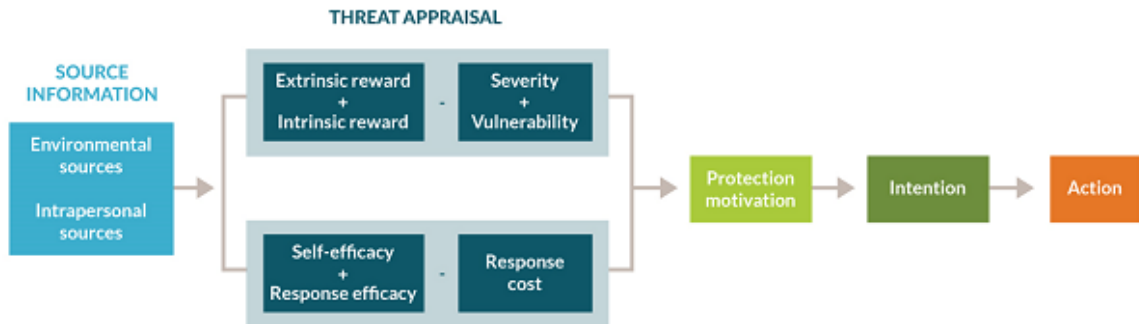


Figure 6 - Protection Motivation Theory. Source: Wu et al. (2005)

The threat appraisal construct of the PMT comprises two components. The first component is the maladaptive *response rewards*. Neuwirth et al. (2000) describe these components as *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* rewards, where intrinsic rewards are intangible, relating to personal satisfaction or pleasure, and extrinsic rewards relate to something tangible, such as personal recognition or social approval. These are the rewards that will be attained if the recommended actions to allay the threat are *not* carried out. For example, an intrinsic reward of not restricting video games is that the child will be happier, and cause the parent less grief.

The second component in the threat appraisal construct deals with fear; this considers the severity of the threat and how vulnerable one is to the likelihood of the threat occurring. When a person considers both the severity and vulnerability to be high, this outweighs the rewards they will achieve by *not* carrying out the recommended action. Wu et al. (2005) explain that when response-efficacy is high, and/or self-efficacy is high, then an increase in the perceived threat can increase protection motivation in order to avert potential danger. Conversely, when response-efficacy and/or self-efficacy is low, raising the perception of threat may result in feelings of futility, whereby the person knows there is danger but feels they cannot do anything about it.

The coping appraisal explains how someone will act in response to the situation based on the perceived threat, and one's ability to carry out the recommended course of action. This is made up of *response-efficacy*, which is a perception of recommendations to allay the threat, and *self-efficacy*, a perception of one's ability to carry out the recommendations. Also in this component is the *response cost*, which is a perception of the cost involved in carrying out the recommendations. This can be areas such as financial, time involvement, and resentment from children as a result of carrying out the recommendations. This threat appraisal, coupled with the coping appraisal, is a predictor of protective behaviour (Rogers, 1975). If parents feel that the threat is high, they feel that their children are vulnerable, and they feel that the recommendations that form part of the response efficacy will allay the threat, they will be more motivated to apply protective measures.

A combination of the PMT and the ELM was applied in a study into gambling (Munoz, Chebat, & Suissa, 2010) to see whether fear-arousing messages as part of the threat appraisal mechanism would promote responsible gambling. This study involved 258 participants who gambled on *Video Lottery Terminals*. An experiment was conducted where each person received messages of differing severity when they played, and at the end of the experimental period they were asked to fill out a questionnaire. In this questionnaire, they were presented with a statement that related to the messages they received throughout the experiment and were asked to record their thoughts about it. This provided a measure of threat appraisal. The questionnaire also measured any attitude change as a result of the experiment, as well as any behavioural intention.

Results of this study showed that threatening warnings may help to change behaviour related to problem gambling. The authors proposed that an emotional response pathway added to the PMT as part of the coping appraisal would provide for decisions based on emotions as well as fear. In testing the theories in this study, the ELM theory illustrated how those that who took the central route, seeking elaboration on information, were more likely to perceive the threat and consider themselves to be

vulnerable, and in turn assess the danger of the threat as severe. In testing the PMT, the perceived threat resulted in a higher level of information processing (invoking the ELM), but it did not have a significant effect on perceived severity or vulnerability.

The suitability of the PMT for exploring child protection issues is illustrated by a study conducted in the USA that used this theory to explore the issues surrounding the take-up of guidelines for parents assigning appropriate chores to children working on farms (Ashida, Heaney, Kmet, & Wilkins, 2011). This study was designed using the constructs of the PMT as a guide, which allowed the researchers to identify barriers to carrying out recommended actions, as well as providing pathways for solutions. The results from this study showed that the threat appraisal was quite clearly supported in that parents recognised the severity of farm-related accidents, but felt that whereas these incidents could harm children, they did not perceive their own children were at risk. Part of this attitude was formed from the fact that these parents had not experienced a history of injury from accidents, but had heard from friends of others being hurt. This attitude highlights that both the severity component as well as perceived vulnerability component are required in the threat appraisal; it usually takes both of these to be appraised as high before protection motivation occurs.

Ashida et al. (2011) found that the coping appraisal was supported; some parents had a low self-efficacy, feeling that farm accidents happen, and they could not do anything to change the outcome. Also, they felt that even if they were to implement safety practices, children would not respond to the changes. This fatalistic approach forms part of the self-efficacy structure, which predicts that protection motivation is less likely to occur if one does not feel that they can implement the recommended changes to reduce the severity of the threat.

To help improve the self-efficacy in Ashida et al.'s (2011) study, parents were provided with information about how implementing some guidelines would reduce the risk and severity of accidents happening. They were also advised that whereas children might not appear to listen to their parents, in the long run, they were influenced by what their

parents had to say. This was to encourage parents to persist with safety guidance even if their child was noncompliant. A one-year follow-up focus group of five parents returned positive responses to the information that was presented to them, and showed that parental attitudes and processes towards the safety of their child while performing farm chores had improved.

Ashida et al. (2011) acknowledged that using the PMT in their study assisted them to identify important factors of their research. They state that without this theory, any educational literature they provided would have been no different to any other publications that provide information about keeping children safe while working on farms. This study has demonstrated how providing education related to both the coping and threat appraisals can support and encourage protection motivation, resulting in safer outcomes for children.

2.2.1.3 Summary of theories and models

Each of the mini-theories described in this section provides methods to explore issues surrounding the effect of video game content on game players. However, when the severity, or even existence, of effects might depend on a combination of traits or situations, the problem becomes more complex and requires a multi-faceted approach. The GAM and Catalyst Model address this problem by allowing researchers to explore a wider range of issues, albeit grounded on different assumptions. However, the third-person effect shows that there may be a disjoint in how rules are applied if subjects do not feel that the rules should apply to them.

The PMT addresses the third-person effect by providing pathways that help to identify threat and susceptibility. This model has proven to be useful when exploring issues that relate to protecting a group of people from perceived harm. It provides a robust framework by lending structure for study design based upon the theory constructs. This theory helped the researchers to identify barriers and allowed them to explore strategies to overcome these barriers. The information gathered during this process

was used to assist parents in implementing safety measures on their farm which would protect their children while doing farm chores.

Using the ELM in conjunction with the PMT can help to expose the thought processes that can lead to changes in attitude. Understanding these thought processes may provide granularity of the steps that need to be taken to initiate this change.

The theories discussed here can be considered as stand-alone theories, but some may provide a granularity to constructs of another theory. For example, the third-person effect can be considered to be part of the threat appraisal pathway of the PMT which takes into account the level of threat vs. susceptibility as a motivation to change.

2.2.2 Video game content

As video games are an evolving medium, the state of the literature surrounding them is constantly changing. As such, some studies into the effects of violence in video games become dated within a relatively short period of time. Conversely, studies into media violence in general, as well as childhood behaviour, are more established which allows us to draw some conclusions from these areas.

A review of the literature shows that research into the negative impact of video game content is primarily focused on violence, which could be a result of attitudes towards violent content. However, although violence is the most common element of games (Smith, Lachlan, & Tamborini, 2003), and parents feel this, as well as drugs (AGD, 2014), is the element of most concern (Nikken, Jansz, & Schouwstra, 2007; Urbis Keys Young, 2005), other types of classifiable content within video games may also be harmful to children (Dill, Brown, & Collins, 2008; Earles, Alexander, Johnson, Liverpool, & McGhee, 2002). Indeed, Australian parents are also concerned about nudity, coarse language and themes (AGD, 2014).

Not all research returns a discernible outcome, which can result in a *null finding* (Kepes, Banks & Oh, 2014). Sometimes research with null findings are not published, as

researchers or publishers may feel that an unclear result does not contribute to the body of literature. However, null findings may indeed offer a contribution by exposing how a difference in the process may change the result, thus identifying potential confounders. Adding complexity to the differing results, some research has attracted criticism for their work, with some research being retracted (see <http://retractionwatch.com/2017/01/20/boom-headshot-disputed-video-game-paper-retracted/>).

Because of the evolving nature of video games, exploring the effects of video game content on game players presents some challenges. Researchers are still searching for relevant theories that will return meaningful and consistent results, and in some cases, are using movie and television theory for video game effects research (Sherry, 2007). The crossover between the effects of content in video games, movies and television is evidenced by the multitude of research studies that examine the effects of all of these mediums interchangeably (e.g.: Walsh & Gentile, 2001).

2.2.2.1 Violence

Long before video games existed, there was discussion about the effect of violence in the media (Eysenck & Nias, 1978; Lange, Baker, & Ball, 1969); since the emergence of the video game, the increase of violent content within them fuelled has the debate regarding the impact of this violence on the aggression level of game players (Anderson, 2004; Arriaga, Esteves, Carneiro, & Monteiro, 2006; AGD, 2010; Barlett et al., 2007; Bushman & Gibson, 2010; Olson, 2004; Sherry, 2007). There is some evidence that violence in video games may have a short-term effect on aggression (Anderson & Dill, 2000; Bushman & Gibson, 2010; Sherry, 2007; Krcmar et al., 2011; Wallenius, Punamäki, & Rimpelä, 2007). Conversely, other research has found that these effects are not evident (McCarthy, Coley, Wagner, Zengel & Basham, 2016).

A study by Bushman and Gibson (2010), which involved 126 college students, analysed causal effects of violent game play on aggressive behaviour. The students were asked to play a violent video game and ruminate on the game for 20 minutes afterwards.

Students were then asked to return the next day and complete a short questionnaire and participate in a task which involved blasting a loud noise in an opponent's ear, with the measure of violence related to the intensity of the blast. Results showed that men who thought about the game afterwards were more violent when tested 24 hours after playing than men who did not ruminate, and that there were no significant effects for women. However, Anderson and Dill (2000) conducted a study involving a similar group of 210 university students, but measured the effects straight away. This study found that whereas aggression levels were higher in both genders, women showed more aggression than men.

As a result of a study by Sherry (2007), which found that the age of the player, the amount of time played and variables in game stimulus affected the degree of aggressive results, Krcmar et al. (2011) explored whether games with more realism led to more aggression. This was achieved by using the games *Doom* and *Doom 3* to test the effects of greater realism on game players. These games are nearly identical except for technological advances in graphic realism in *Doom 3*. The findings of this study showed that those who played *Doom 3* exhibited higher levels of verbal and physical aggression than those who played *Doom*, and discussed how different types of violence in a game may result in different outcomes on aggression such as killing a three-headed monster having less impact than killing a human character.

It is prudent to note that not all research into the effects of violence in video games on game players has returned a clear result. McCarthy et al. (2016) tested the effect of violent video games on aggressive inclinations. This study involved 386 university students, who were randomly allocated to play a violent video game (*Left 4 Dead 2*) or a non-violent video game (*Portal*). Participants were instructed to only use shooting weapons, and sound was muted in both games to eliminate effects due to the different sound of the weapons used. Results on aggression were measured by the player being presented with an outline of a person who represented their game partner, and asked to stick pins into this person to inflict harm. They were also asked whether they would

actually harm their partner if they were given the chance. Results showed that there was no significant difference between players of a violent and players of a non-violent video game. However, the researchers did speculate whether a difference in results to that of previous research may have been a result of different methods employed, contributing to the null findings.

Whereas the literature appears to be conflicted about the effect of violence in video games on aggression (AGD, 2010), past meta-analyses show that there is a correlation between media violence and aggression (Bushman & Anderson, 2001; Paik & Comstock, 1994) and that there may be a significant link between video game violence and aggressive behaviour (Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Anderson, 2004). More recently, a meta-analysis by Ferguson (2015) examined 101 studies to determine whether aggression has any effect on children. These studies were a mixture of experimental, correlational, and longitudinal designs. The author discussed confounding issues that arise in these studies, such as using unstandardized aggression measures, and how it is difficult to relate aggression measures with real-life aggression. Results showed that there was minimal negative effect on aggression and prosocial behaviour, but that there may be a need to examine specific sub-populations, such as those with mental health issues, to determine whether they are more susceptible to negative influences in video games.

One factor that may impact how violence in video games affects aggression levels is the length of time spent playing the game. Whereas Goranson (1970) states that media violence does not reduce aggression, Sherry's (2001) meta-analysis of studies into the effects on aggression from video games found that there may actually be a cathartic effect, where the player gets to work through any anger or aggression that they may be feeling. Sherry discussed two studies that used the game *Mortal Kombat* to test the effect on aggression (Ballard & Wiest, 1995; Hoffman, 1995, as cited in Sherry, 2001). Both of these studies had nearly identical conditions except for length of game-play. Ballard & Wiest's study examined game-play after 10 minutes, compared to 75 minutes

in Hoffman's study. Those that played for 75 minutes showed much lower signs of aggression, which Sherry suggests may indicate that after the initial physiological reaction that indicates an aggressive response, the player may then get bored with the moves.

Barlett, Harris, and Baldassaro (2007) used the GAM to explore the relationship between violent video game play and aggression. This study involved 99 participants, of which 85 were male. They used a first-person shooter game, where the player sees the game through the eyes of the character, thus only seeing what is in front of them and not the character itself. Just as Sherry (2001) observed, this study found a cathartic effect in that whereas violence in a game did increase aggression, this aggression level plateaued shortly into the game.

The cathartic effect may be explained in a different light. It may be more a case of desensitisation, rather than dispelling aggression. Carnagey, Anderson, and Bushman (2007) also used the GAM to explore the link between video game violence and real-life violence. Heart rate and galvanic skin changes were measured, and it was found that players could be desensitised to real-life violence after playing violent video games for around 20 minutes. There was no effect on these results by factors such as gender and trait aggressiveness; rather, the response was generalised across all areas.

A study by Lin (2013) explored whether interactive media had a different effect on aggression when compared to passive media such as films and television. Lin discusses how the cathartic effect may actually be a case of poorer technology in video games, resulting in a lower level of realism than is seen in passive media. A discussion of previous research into how interactive media exerted more influence on aggression ensued, a summary of which is that game players take on the role of the character, momentarily feeling what the character feels, as well as rehearsing violent behaviours. Lin's study concluded that media interactivity does have a greater effect on aggressive outcomes, but that the underlying process was not clear. Lin opined that the difference in outcomes between the two mediums could be due to the fact that the audience was

able to identify with characters in passive media more readily, as opposed to video games where the length of game play during the study may not have allowed enough time for the player to become emotionally involved.

There is some evidence of a correlation between exposure to violent video games and risk factors for delinquency (Anderson & Dill, 2000; DeLisi et al., 2012). Despite this, as the sale of video games has increased, violent juvenile crime has reduced (Ferguson et al., 2010; Olson, 2004; Thierer, 2006). FBI data of crime rates shows a 43% reduction in juvenile crime from 1995 - 2004 with a steady decline to 1999, which then remained reasonably level until 2004. As well, homicides in schools, which had maintained a reasonably steady rate, dropped by about 50% in 1999. Although there is no claim that there is a causal link between the reduction in these crimes and video game play, they certainly do not appear to have increased because of games. In fact, boys may use video games as an outlet, allowing them to experience thrills and engage in antisocial behaviour (Bijvank, Konijn, Bushman, & Roelofsma, 2009).

A literature review released by the Attorney General's Department (2010) showed that results from research into the effects of violent video games on aggression is divided; whereas there may be short-term effects, there is no conclusive evidence that violence in video games has a higher impact than other forms of media. Other issues such as a lack of parental supervision, personality traits, poverty, and protective factors, even gender may influence these results (Anderson, 2004; Anderson et al., 2012; Arriaga et al., 2006; Ferguson & Dyck, 2012; Markey & Markey, 2010; Olson, 2004). The use of college students for research may also present a skewed audience, which may not provide results that can be generalised across a wider population (Olson, 2004; Peterson, 2001).

Some research may also have a flawed design if games used in experiments are not well-matched. Adachi (2011) discusses how violent games may be more competitive than non-violent games, but the effect of this competitiveness may not have been examined. Some meta-analyses discuss the limitations of empirical research into the

effects of violent media on aggression (Elson & Ferguson, 2013; Savage & Yancey, 2008), arguing that there is not enough evidence to support claims that violence in video games is harmful.

Overall, the literature does not provide a clear answer as to whether the impact of violent video games has an adverse effect on children. In fact, instead of violent games increasing aggression in children, children that show aggression might be drawn to violent games, which in turn might reinforce their aggressive behaviour (Olson, 2004; Unsworth, Devilly, & Ward, 2007). Some children and adolescents may indeed have a more synergistic relationship with games, with their aggression drawing them to violent games, and the violence within the game feeding their aggression (Slater, Henry, Swaim, & Anderson, 2003).

2.2.2.2 Sexual content

A search of the literature shows that there are scant results for studies of the impact of sexual content in video games on children and adolescents. Research into this area tends to be cross-sectional, using selected games chosen for their relevance to the topic under examination. An example of this is research by Yao, Mahood, & Linz (2010), who explored issues surrounding objectifying women after playing a sexually-explicit video game. Their study involved 74 males between 18 and 57 years of age. Each were assigned to play a sexually-explicit, ESRB 'M' (17+) rated video game (*Leisure Suit Larry: Magna cum Laude*), a non-sexual control game (*The Sims II*), or a non-social, non-sexual control game (*PacMan II*). Participants played the game for 25 minutes, and then completed a *lexical decision task* (see Meyer & Schvaneveldt, 1976) with two sets of words: one sexual, and one neutral. After this task, they then completed a questionnaire to determine whether it was likely that the participant would sexually harass someone. This contained Likert items which recorded their responses to how they would react in situations where a female could be sexually exploited. Results of this study showed that after playing a sexually explicit game, men's thoughts are primed

with thoughts about women as sex objects, and are more likely to sexually harass than participants playing the control games.

In contrast, Breuer, Kowert, Festl, & Quandt (2015) conducted longitudinal research to explore whether long-term video game exposure cultivated sexist attitudes. This research spanned three years, and rather than using selected games, participants were asked about their video game consumption using games of their own choice.

Participants aged from 14 years were randomly selected from a representative sample, and completed a survey each year which recorded their video game usage and genre preference. Results from this research suggest that whereas there is a negligible negative longitudinal association between video game play and sexist attitudes in males, overall, long-term video game use does not promote sexist attitudes, and there are no links between preference of game genre and sexist attitudes. These findings are also supported by Ferguson, Nielsen and Markey (2017) who found minimal effects on the impact of media on teen sexuality.

Effects of media on body image may also have a small positive effect. A meta-analysis that examined the effects of media on body image includes studies that explored topics such as perception vs. actual body size and the importance of body appearance to determine body dissatisfaction (Holmstrom, 2004). This analysis showed a small correlation between exposure to media and body satisfaction - the longer participants were exposed to media, the better they felt about their own bodies. The researcher points out how inconsistent constructs may lead to disparities in outcomes, and that it is important that outcome measures represent a measurable effect to reduce inconsistent results.

2.2.2.3 Alcohol and substance usage

It appears that children who are exposed to more screen time are more likely to engage in risky behaviours. A longitudinal study in the USA (Robinson, Chen, & Killen, 1998) involving 1533 students at around 14 - 15 years of age looked at associations between media exposure and adolescent alcohol use. Students were asked to report their usage

of television, video tape, music videos, computer and video games over the previous 30 days, and as well as report any alcohol use. This was repeated 18 months later.

Results showed that whereas television and music video viewing were associated with an increased risk of drinking, watching video tapes and playing video games showed no significant association with a subsequent uptake of drinking during the 18-month interval. One reason for these results was offered by Robinson et al. (1998) who posited that high-risk adolescents, who might be more pre-disposed to alcohol usage, are more likely to be drawn to music videos and television. Or, it could be a case of bored children with nothing better to do. Robinson et al.'s study did not elaborate on the type of video tape or video game content that was used in this study, as to whether they contained portrayals of alcohol. Indeed, as mature content in games has increased over time, in 1998 when this study was conducted the incidence of alcohol in video games may not have occurred as much as it does now, thus rendering the difference between the two subsets as outdated. Another

More recently, a cross-sectional study looked at associations between electronic media use and violence, alcohol and drug use (Denniston, Swahn, Hertz, & Romero, 2011). This study found that adolescents who played video games as well as used a computer for non-school activities, each for more than three hours a day, were more likely to have imbibed alcohol before the age of 13 (30%), and were currently drinking (43%), than those who only watched television for more than three hours a day (27% and 41% respectively). This study concluded that there is a significant association between frequent TV, computer and video game use and an increased risk of the onset of drinking. More research into media exposure and adolescent drinking was recommended.

Finally, it appears that research into the effects of alcohol in the media on children may tend to return skewed results. Whereas Grenard, Dent and Stacy (2013) found that exposure to alcohol in the media predicted an increase in alcohol usage in students in

the seventh through to ninth grades, they also discussed how pre-teens and young teens as a group have a low level of alcohol use, which may result in minimal findings.

2.2.2.4 Language

Ivory et al. (2009) performed a content analysis using around 100 of the most popular video game titles sold over a one-year period from March 2005 to gain a measure of how much, and what type of, profanity is within video games. They examined the first 30 minutes of each game and recorded each occurrence of profanity. About half of the games were rated 'E' (everybody, 5+) by the ESRB, 28% were rated 'T' (teen, 13+) and 14% were rated 'M' (17+). Their results showed that 21% of all games had profanity occurring in the main dialogue. There were 8% of games that had extremely coarse language, and this occurred both in the 'M' as well as 'T' rated games. It is possible that these games did not carry warnings about this language; in their review of ratings applied to video games, Thompson et al. (2006) found that only around 45% of games that contained profanity carried a warning of this content.

There is a scarcity of research into the effect of profanity in video games, with the few studies found indicating that this type of research has only recently started. One study into the effects of profanity on behaviour (Coyne, Stockdale, Nelson, & Fraser, 2011) involved 223 students aged between 11 and 15 years. Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire to rate on a Likert scale any aggressive behaviours they may have, such as whether they kicked others or gossiped about others. They were then asked to identify their favourite television shows and video games, and to describe their attitude towards profanity and their profanity use. Finally, they were asked to provide a measure of how much screen time they consumed. Results from this study showed that consuming media with profanity resulted in more acceptance and supportive attitudes towards profanity use, but that it did not increase aggression. Also, it was found that coarse language increased hostile expectations - or the expectation that others will react with aggression.

In a later study that involved 321 university students aged 18 - 32 years, participants played a custom-made video game for 12 minutes to gauge the effect of profanity on behaviour (Ivory & Kaestle, 2013). This game contained a sound track with differing levels of profanity. After play was finished, participants were asked to complete a written task which described how a character would feel in certain situations. The results were similar to those of Coyne et al. (2011), showing a positive result for hostile expectations but no direct link to aggression. Both of these studies state that they consider their research to be exploratory, calling for further research to provide insight into this issue.

2.2.2.5 Themes

The use of the *themes* descriptor in classification appears to cause confusion. A study by the Attorney General's Department (2014) shows that whereas only 22% of participants considered themes to be extremely important, there was confusion about what themes actually are. As such, this result may not be a valid reflection of societal values. Participants in this study suggested that to provide clarity, subcategories of the term themes be used, such as 'suicide themes', 'bullying themes' or 'smoking themes' (p. 29).

A study by Barlett and Harris (2008) explored issues surrounding body image, which may fall under the themes category. This study explored attitudes after playing video games that have characters with an idealised body shape. They conducted two studies, one for males (51 participants) and one for females (32 participants). The average age for both groups was 19. Each group was asked to play a game that involved either a control character or a male with well-defined muscles (game played by males) and a female with a small waist wearing a bikini (game played by females). The length of time in the game totalled 15 minutes (including setting up the character), and each of the games zoomed in on the character throughout the game play. Questionnaires that were completed before and after game play provided a measure of how player attitudes changed as a result of exposure to an idealised body shape. Results showed that after

playing games with a character with an idealised body, both males and females had a decreased attitude towards their own body.

2.2.2.6 Online content

Whereas there is a steadily growing collection of research exploring the issues of playing online games such as MMORPG (Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game), there is a paucity of research into the effects of playing console-type video games online compared to playing the same game offline. Beginning research into the effects on aggression between playing violent games online compared to playing violent games offline (Hollingdale & Greitemeyer, 2014) shows that there may be no significant difference in the impact of aggression on game players between the two modes of play. However, with some games having the ability to chat to online opponents, new issues are introduced which distinguish them from offline playing. As the online chat environment is generally un-moderated, one issue is the potential for a child to be exposed to adult-type conversation. This could range from sexually explicit references, to hearing, or being the target of, abusive language. Language has been shown to increase hostile expectations (Coyne et al., 2011), so participating in chat while playing may result in greater effects from violent content in the game.

There also appear to be problems with sexism in some online gaming communities. Fox and Tang (2013) looked at issues that face some women when they participate in networked gaming. Their online study involved 301 people from 18 - 44 years of age (220 males, 75 females, 6 not reported). Participants were sourced from online avenues such as forums, blogs and social media sites, and filled out a questionnaire which asked them to convey their attitude about topics surrounding game play, masculine norms, social dominance and empathy. Results showed that males with a higher level of masculinity and those with a higher feeling of social dominance tended to have sexist attitudes. Sexism was not found to be related to a higher level of game play.

Teens have also experienced anti-social behaviour when playing online. Lenhard et al. (2008) found that 63% of teens have experienced people being mean or too aggressive

while playing, and 49% have experienced people being hateful, sexist or racist. At least 27% of teens play online games with people they have met online. Most teens reported that some of the time, someone would ask the aggressor to stop.

2.2.2.7 Summary of video game content

It is clear that violence is the classifiable element that is of most concern to parents, and attracts the most political and research interest. Most studies have focused on the effects that violent content has on game players. It appears that violence may have a short-term effect on aggression, and this may be subjective to age, gender, the level of realism within the game and duration of play.

The cathartic effect (Sherry, 2001) suggests that playing games for a longer period of time may alleviate any effects of aggression that may be induced as a result of playing violent video games. If this is indeed the case, then restricting the amount of time the game is played may have a detrimental effect on players by removing the player from the game before they have a chance to diffuse any aggression. However, how does this sit with the effect of long-term exposure to other types of content such as substances, language and sexual content? According to the Script Theory, the more often a situation is played out, the more likely it is that a script will build up in the person's mind which may result in them following the script in certain situations.

It appears that games with an online component may open up safety issues. By being able to chat online, children are able to communicate with strangers. This may expose children to aggressive behaviour and language, and in some cases sexism. This may result in online game playing being a negative environment for children, possibly more so for girls.

2.2.3 Video game classification

A study conducted by Dogruel and Joeckel (2013) compared three major international rating systems, the ESRB, PEGI and USK (ratings system in Germany) to explore how games that adolescents in the US and Germany play might be rated under the other systems. They compared 50 of the most popular games for the years 2008 - 2010 from each country. As some games were popular in both countries, and some remained in the top 50 list for several years, this delivered a total of 186 titles. The results showed that each system was similar in outcomes, with insignificant differences that could be attributed to the cultural differences between countries.

A content analysis compared games classified 'MA15+' in Australia with the classification given to them by other countries (EFAA, 2010). The results of this study show that in 2009, 50% of games classified 'MA15+' in Australia were recommended for adults in USA, UK and Europe. This study only looked at the classification level; although there has been research into consumer advice in overseas systems (Thompson et al., 2006), a search of the literature shows that there do not appear to be any studies that test the validity of consumer advice awarded to video games in Australia compared with that given to their overseas counterparts.

2.2.3.1 Consumer advice

To provide insight into the accuracy of consumer advice given to M-rated video games in the USA, Thompson et al. (2006) compared the ESRB consumer advice with actual game content. A database of 147 M-rated games was compiled and randomly selected games were played for 1 hour. Any classifiable elements observed within each game were documented, and then compared to the content consumer advice given to the game. The result of this research showed that 81% of games contained more classifiable elements than evidenced in the consumer advice, and it was noted that parents and guardians needed to be aware that M-rated video games might contain a wide range of unlabelled content.

Parents use classification information to help them choose games for their child (Brand et al., 2013). They need, and in fact desire, detailed information to help them make informed game choices (AGD, 2014; AGD, 2015; Byron, 2008; Dowd, Singer, & Wilson, 2006; Nikken et al., 2007; Urbis Keys Young, 2005). Australian research shows that 79% of those surveyed felt that the consumer advice provided with games was about right (Galaxy Research, 2007), with 9% stating it was a 'little too strict'; however, parents might not be aware of all classifiable elements within the game, as Thompson et al., (2006) showed that some games rated in the USA do not warn of all classifiable elements. Still, parents are less concerned about content found in video games than they are about that found in social media, and on the internet in general (Brand & Todhunter, 2015).

Game-playing parents rely less on classification information than parents who do not play games (Brand, 2011); however, when choosing games for children, the classification information has some influence when purchasing for children most of the time (Brand et al., 2013). With clear labels for consumer advice, when choosing a game that only has advice for violence, the expectation is likely to be that the game has no strong language or sexual content. In the USA, Thompson et al. (2006) found that within a given category level, the ESRB "assigns content descriptors to some games but not others with the same content, which creates confusion for parents who seek accurate and consistent rating information" (p. 410).

The Handbook of Children, Culture, and Violence (Dowd et al., 2006) states that it is the responsibility of the video game industry to "clearly and accurately label the content of games, so that parents know what they are getting before buying" (p. 237). This view is supported by Bushman and Cantor (2003) who state that "parents and other caregivers need reliable, understandable information about media content" (p. 140). As well, Byron (2008) said that the UK ratings system needed "clear accompanying descriptors which explain game content" (p. 170) to enable consumers to make sensible, informed

decisions about games. The importance of providing information about game content substantiates the need for accurate consumer advice in game classification.

A report by Urbis Keys Young (2005), which involved community assessment panels made up of 18 to 20 members of the general Australian community, found that “There was more widespread concern across the Panels about violence and how it is treated in classification than the other classifiable elements” (p. 28), and that they “strongly believed that the frequency of language increases its impact, and that frequency should be a consideration in the classification process” (p. 29). However, parents also agree that children should be protected from exposure to games containing nudity or sexual acts (Kutner et al., 2008).

2.2.3.2 Understanding the M and MA15+ classification levels

Although most parents say they know what games their children are playing at home (Brand et al., 2009), research in Australia shows that there is confusion between the ‘M’ and ‘MA15+’ classification levels (AGD, 2015; OFLC, 2005b; Brand, 2007; Brand, 2013). Almost half of consumers interpret both of these levels to mean ‘Recommended for mature audiences’, unaware that the ‘MA15+’ level is legally restricted (OFLC, 2005b). Brand (2007) also found that 20% of people did not know the difference between these two classifications. More recently, Brand et al. (2013) found that around 15% of parents feel that the ‘M’ and ‘MA15+’ classifications are unclear. These figures indicate that parental awareness of the classification levels may be increasing. The confusion surrounding these two classification levels may be due to the analogous nature of ‘MA’ occurring in both the ‘MA15+’ classification and the ‘Mature Audiences’ description for the ‘M’ classification. This confusion might result in some parents unknowingly purchasing restricted content for children under the age of 15. For parents to make informed game choices for their children, they need to understand the classification levels that are given to games. They should also be involved and informed about the video games their children play, as well as understand any tools available to help them make safe game choices (ESRB, n.d.b).

2.2.3.3 Perception of the accuracy of classification information

The Diverse Worlds Project (Brand & Knight, 2003) examined 130 of the top-selling games in Australia for the first half of 2002 to document the nature of games. Part of this study examined the slick (game cover), handbook, introductory cinematic and the first 10 minutes of play to see if these items reflected game content. Although they found that the portrayal of game excitement shown on the slick and the handbook provided an accurate representation of the level of excitement within the game, the cover did not always provide an indication of some of the more extreme elements.

In 2001, Walsh and Gentile (2001) looked at whether movie, television and video games ratings in the USA accurately reflect the contents of the products they label. Parents evaluated video game ratings and felt that 18% of games rated for children 3 - 7 years of age were not suitable for them to play, and that 72% of games classified for teens were not suitable for them to play. The latter appeared to be due to a 'ratings creep' where content from games suitable for 17+ years was making its way into the 'T' (13+) category. The study concluded that consumer advice is not applied systematically and that ratings can be misleading.

Classification information is only useful if it is used. Many parents report that they only sometimes use the classification given to games. Just over half of parents sometimes check the rating, and 19% of parents say they never check the rating at all (Lenhard et al., 2008). There are 32% of teens who state that at least one of their favourite games is rated 'M' (17+) or 'AO'; also, boys make up 79% of those who play 'M' or 'AO' games (Lenhard et al., 2008), and parents will restrict boys from playing certain games more than they do girls, possibly due to the fact that boys are more likely to play 'M' or 'AO' rated games.

Gentile et al. (2011) discuss how a content-based system, as opposed to an age-based system, would record the presence of an element without making judgement. This would allow parents to form decisions about the suitability of a game for their child. It is suggested that this would avoid ratings-creep, where games with more extreme content

may find their way into a ratings level that was not appropriate for the content within the game.

2.2.3.4 Barriers to understanding video game classification

Parents who speak English as a second language may face difficulties when using the Australian classification system. There appears to be a lack of research into how ESL parents manage game choices for their children, and especially so in the context of the Australian classification system. The issues they face are uniquely different to parents who speak English as their first language (EFL), as ESL parents may miss nuances and interpret classification information different to EFL parents. A study in the USA explored barriers to ESL parent involvement with their child's schooling (Cassity & Harris, 2000). Not surprising, this study found that the main barrier was language, where ESL parents may have difficulty communicating and understanding materials written in English. Recommendations were to reach out to these parents to build a relationship, as well as providing communications in their native language.

Guo (2006) also looked at the barriers that prevent Chinese ESL parents from engaging with their child's teachers. It appears that these parents are in fact quite interested in their child's schooling, championing them from home. However, there are cultural differences between how parents in China communicate with teachers to monitor their child's progress, and how teachers in the USA like to communicate how a child is progressing. This suggests that ESL parents may approach some issues surrounding children differently to how English-speaking cultures expect.

A literature review which explored the challenges that ESL nursing students face in education noted that these students had a higher attrition rate than EFL students (Choi, 2005). This was attributed to several reasons, including difficulty in articulating nursing concepts. There were also difficulties understanding the nuances and idioms that are used in the English language, which could take several years to acquire. This study showed that nursing students who integrated more with their English counterparts are more likely to acquire these skills earlier. As less than proficient English skills can

hamper learning, Choi suggested that a visual style of learning be adopted, and that ESL students find this method useful, most likely not because of cultural difference, but because visual cues provide more meaning to them, and are able to transmit the required message.

2.2.4 Mediation of video games

To provide insight into what parents know about the games their children play, Kutner et al. (2008) explored parents' and sons' perspectives on video game play to gain information which could help policy makers to develop effective regulations as well as effectively counsel parents on wise media usage. The research, conducted in the USA, involved 42 participants comprising 21 boys aged 12 to 14 and one parent or legal guardian of each boy. Focus groups of adults and groups of children, held in separate rooms, discussed adolescent game play. Results showed that adults were concerned about the balance between video game play and other activities, restrictions placed on game use, content of video games and the influence these games could have on boys. Parents said that they are sometimes not aware of game content until after the game was purchased, at which time parents attempted to restrict usage. Most sons felt that their parents were ignorant about video games in general, particularly the content of the games they played.

Most of the parents in the focus group were aware of game ratings, and most reject all M-rated (ESRB, 17+) games. However, there did not appear to be an understanding of the difference between 'T' (13+) and 'M' (17+) rated games. One mother stated that she "can imagine that the 'M' game, by definition, would not have things like nudity or would not have things like - I pray to God - like drugs. Or it would not have excessive violence. But I don't know; I've never seen one" (Kutner et al., 2008. p. 86). This suggests that there is a lack of parental awareness about game content in relation to the classification, a situation that could impact mediation.

2.2.4.1 Content mediation

Research into issues surrounding children viewing television has provided insight into how parents manage their children's media usage (Austin, Bolls, Fujioka, & Engelbertson, 1999; Nathanson, 2001; Valkenburg, Krcmar, Peeters, and Marseille, 1999). One issue that has been the subject of many studies is how parents mediate television programs for their children. This body of research has identified three methods of mediation: *active mediation*, *restrictive mediation*, and *co-viewing* (Nathanson, 2001; Nathanson, 2002).

1. **Active mediation** - occurs when parents discuss the content of the program with their children, which can include voicing their approval or disapproval.
2. **Restrictive mediation** - occurs when parents restrict the program that their children view. This can take the form of researching program information, specifying which programs are appropriate for the child to watch and forbidding the child from watching some programs.
3. **Co-viewing** - occurs when parents view the program with their children, encompassing viewing together at the child's or parent's request. This is a passive form of mediation and does not include discussing what is happening within the program.

Both active and restrictive mediation could be classed as interventions as their purpose is to modify the process that would normally occur when consuming media (Austin et al., 1999; Nathanson, 1999; Nathanson, 2004). The co-viewing method is not interventional as it does not modify the normal process - rather, the parent shares the process with the child.

Parental mediation may be able to be applied to video games in much the same way as it is to television (Martins, Matthews, & Ratan, 2015; Nikken & Jansz, 2003), and there have been some studies which have extrapolated the information about television mediation to video game mediation (Nikken & Jansz, 2006; Nikken et al., 2007). Instead

of the term co-viewing, video game mediation uses the term *co-playing* (see Nikken & Jansz, 2006).

In studies that examined mediation for both television and video games, mothers were more likely to use active mediation with their children than fathers (Nathanson, 2001; Nikken & Jansz, 2006; Nikken et al., 2007), and parents co-play more with younger children. Parents who play video games themselves are also more likely to co-play with their child (Nikken & Jansz, 2003). Also, parents will tend to employ restrictive mediation if they feel there is a negative influence in the game, and co-play if they perceive that the game or program has a positive influence (Nikken & Jansz, 2003; Nikken & Jansz, 2006; Shin & Huh, 2011).

2.2.4.2 Active mediation

Research into active mediation explores the reasons why certain mediation strategies are effective whereas others aren't. Active mediation is dichotomised into three types: *positive mediation*, *negative mediation*, and *neutral mediation* (Buijzen & Mens, 2007; Nathanson, 2001a). Nathanson (2004) discussed *factual approaches* as well as *evaluative approaches* to mediation. The factual approach, classed as neutral mediation, is where parents discuss the technical aspects of the program being watched with the child such as lighting, animation etc. The evaluative approach is where parents engage in a more critical discussion, encouraging children to develop critical thinking skills about the content under discussion (Collier et al., 2016). These comments can be either positive or negative, and are differentiated by the tone that is adopted when discussing negative content with the child.

Positive mediation draws attention to elements in a favourable light, such as 'Good job stealing that car!', and 'this game is great fun' when talking about content that has a negative tone, as opposed to negative mediation which discusses these elements in an unfavourable light: 'He shouldn't be doing that, it's not right'. By doing this, the parent conveys their opinion towards the type of content in the game. This may encourage the child to connect with how the victim feels, instead of identifying with the perpetrator of

wrong-doing. Positive attitudes towards the content may convey a message to the child that the parent is favourable towards the content (Nathanson, 2002).

Nathanson (2004) conducted a study which explored why some strategies in mediating children's violent television worked where others failed. This study involved 123 children, separated into two groups aged between 5 - 7 and 10 - 12. The results showed that whereas using the factual approach to mediation may help a child learn more from educational programs, it may worsen the impact of negative media on children's behaviour. It was thought that this may be because this type of discussion may make children more interested in the material, which in turn could have heightened any media effects. Nathanson also discussed how previous studies have found that using the factual approach with children to mediate programs can result in a higher level of aggression than children with no intervention at all. Negative comments were found to have produced less imitative behaviour.

Utilising an evaluative approach towards mediation proved to be more successful than other forms of mediation (Messaris & Kerr, 1984; Nathanson, 1999; Nathanson, 2004; Rothschild & Morgan, 1987), resulting in children liking both characters and violent content less when a parent discussed aspects of the program with the child while viewing. This was particularly so with the 5 - 7 years of age group (Nathanson, 2004), possibly because that age group may be more interested in character and issue analysis than a discussion about the technical aspects of the program. Older children may respond better when parents raise questions and engage in dialogue about the game, presenting this in a non-threatening manner without lecturing (Nathanson & Yang, 2003). This is thought to help develop the child's critical thinking regarding the content. Active mediation was found to be a predictor of lower aggression, and also resulted in decreased desire for substances, later and fewer sexual outcomes (Collier et al., 2016).

2.2.4.3 Restrictive mediation

Restrictive mediation, can have successful outcomes with younger children but can lead to negative attitudes from the adolescent to the parent (Nathanson, 2002). This may damage the parent-child relationship, possibly due to the adolescent feeling that their burgeoning independence and autonomy is being curtailed. Restrictive mediation may also lead to positive attitudes towards the mediated content, which can promote the forbidden fruit effect. This may result in adolescents viewing the restricted content without their parent's knowledge, usually with friends. However, Collier et al. (2016) found that restrictive mediation did not influence younger and older children differently, possibly because it was difficult to ascertain the shift in rules and boundaries as a child attained more autonomy.

Not all cases of restrictive mediation provoke a negative response; Nathanson (2002) found that negative effects of restrictive mediation may be mitigated when coupled with negative active mediation, whereby children have better attitudes towards their parents than those who just receive restrictive mediation. Also, Collier et al. (2016) found that adolescent boys who receive a high level of active mediation alongside restrictive mediation like the mediated content less, and are less likely to view the mediated content with friends. They also found that restrictive mediation may also result in later and fewer sexual outcomes, but appears to have no impact on substance use or aggression (Collier et al., 2016). Older, non-game-playing parents are more likely to use restrictive mediation (Martins et al., 2015), which is used more for younger children than older, and for girls rather than boys.

2.2.4.4 Co-playing

Co-playing may have more of a positive effect on girls than it does boys. A study into the effects of co-playing on relationships between adolescents and their parents (Coyne, Padilla-Walker, Stockdale, & Day, 2011) involved 287 families with an adolescent child that played video games. Both parents and children filled out a questionnaire that explored game playing habits along with behaviour. Several

measures were used to assess internalising and delinquency, aggression, pro-social behaviour and the parent-child connection. About 50% of children reported playing games with their parents, with boys reporting about the same level of co-playing with their parents as girls. Results showed that there was little effect of co-playing for boys when playing both age-appropriate and age-inappropriate games. However, parents who co-played with girls experienced a slightly better parent-child connection when playing age-appropriate games. It was speculated that this may be as a result of the communication that occurred during the game, quality time in general, or a result of showing an interest in the child's interests. In addition, girls who co-played with their parents were less likely to internalise, although this effect was not seen if the co-playing occurred with games that were age-inappropriate. The authors propose that this may be due to the fact that exposure to mature content may dampen the mood, or that the nature of the content calls for more immersion. This may result in less time for conversation, thus reducing the parent-child connection.

2.2.4.5 Children and mediation

A study of 2606 child-parent dyads (Dalton et al., 2013) explored links between parent mediation and risky behaviours of children aged 9 - 12. This study found that 55% of children reported that their parents allowed them to watch ESRB 'R' (18+) rated movies, and of these, two-thirds reported that they were sometimes permitted to watch these movies without an adult present. This may present risks for the child. Dalton et al. discussed a significant association between children who watched these types of movies and a higher risk of smoking and drinking. They said that parents who allowed their children to watch these movies needed to engage the child consistently in active mediation when co-viewing to lower the risk of smoking to that of children who did not watch R-rated movies.

Olson et al. (2007) looked at the factors that were correlated with violent video game play, polling 1254 teenagers using a self-reporting method in two schools in the USA. This study found that boys are more likely to play ESRB 'M' (17+) rated games, and

play more frequently, than girls. Also, that positioning a game console in the bedroom may lead to greater time playing as well as playing higher rated games. These authors cautioned against the older child introducing younger siblings to inappropriate content in video games, as children were more likely to play ESRB 'M' rated games with an older sibling.

There may need to be a different approach to mediation depending on gender. Males are likely to be more aggressive than girls are after viewing violent content (Nathanson & Cantor, 2000), and although this aggression was mitigated with active mediation, it indicates that violence in video games may have more impact on males. This suggests that more care might need to be taken with the management of males playing video games.

2.2.4.6 Parents and mediation

There is a negative relationship between the age of the child and parental checking of classification (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2002; Shin & Huh, 2011). As a child gets older, parents tend to check ratings less. There may also be unwanted effects of mediation for older children, who may see mediation as a threat to their burgeoning freedom (Nathanson, 2002). As children get older they are less responsive to parent's attempts at active mediation (Nathanson & Yang, 2003), maybe because they see the comments to be condescending, or they have 'heard it all before' and are already aware of the concepts pointed out. Mediation is used more by mothers than fathers, with mothers restricting games or discussing game content more often than fathers (Nikken & Jansz, 2003).

Parents need to be careful that mediation does not result in the outcome that they were trying to prevent. Although negative mediation might work with younger children, it might lead to higher delinquency in older children (Martins et al., 2015), possibly because older children find this method to be condescending. Also, when parents co-viewed objectionable content with their children, it led to more co-viewing with peers (Nathanson, 2001). This suggests that children may feel that parents have given them

implicit permission to watch that particular type of program (Nathanson, 2001), as well as giving tacit approval towards the content (Gentile, Reimer, Nathanson, Walsh, & Eisenmann, 2014), which may also result in children having a more favourable attitude towards objectionable content (Nathanson, 1999).

Both Nathanson (2001) and Lee (2013) identified predictors of mediation by exploring the attitudes of children and parents towards different forms of mediation. They each used similar methods, which involved surveying parents and children to discover which forms of mediation are mostly used, and which are the most effective.

Nathanson's study involved 394 parent-child dyads and looked at whether parental attitudes could predict mediation approaches. The children were chosen from second grade to sixth grade in several schools in the USA. This age group was selected because there was likely to be a range of mediation methods used, as it encompassed ages that were deemed neither too young or too old to receive all three types of mediation. This study found that co-viewing was predicted by more favourable attitudes towards the content, and negative active mediation, where the parent discusses unfavourable content in a negative light, was motivated by a belief that the content can harm the child. Restrictive mediation is predicted by the parent's belief that the content can harm the child, and is strongly linked to how the parent feels about the content themselves. If the parent disagrees with the type of content for themselves, they will restrict the game in an attempt to socialise their child in order to mould their viewing habits to fit their own.

Lee's study gathered data in face-to-face separate interviews from 600 parent-child dyads where the child was aged between 10 and 15 years of age. Most of the parent respondents were the mother (566) so the data from interviews with fathers was removed to remove the effect of gender misrepresentation. The results of this study showed that significant predictors of restrictive mediation were parents who had a negative view of the internet, parents who perceived their child to have low self-control, and the age of the child. It was also found that checking classification was the biggest

predictor of game playing; children whose parents checked game classification played more frequently than those who did not. However, those children whose parents checked the classification were more likely to be deceptive about the games they played.

Parents appear to be more stringent with television viewing than with video games. Other than restricting the amount of time that children play games, supervisory techniques are the lowest for this medium amongst TV, music and internet usage (Woodard & Gridina, 2000). Overall, 49% of parents forbid particular game content, and 35% will turn off objectionable content, compared to 72% of parents forbidding particular television content and 74% turning off objectionable television content. Finally, 58% of parents of children aged 6 - 11 years of age report being concerned about video games compared to 89% being concerned about television. However, a more recent study of 536 Dutch parent-child dyads with the child aged between 8 and 18 years (Nickken & Jansz, 2003), found that parents are more likely to co-view and perform evaluative mediation for television, and restrict video games. They say that this is possibly due to the fact that parents may find a common interest in television, but not video games, or maybe because some consoles are single-player. They also state that parents may feel that television content is relatively unpredictable, thus requiring more vigilance than video games, as they restrict their child from playing games they do not feel they should be playing. This supports the findings of the study by Woodward and Gridina (2000), which showed that parents appear to be more concerned about television content than they are about video game content.

2.2.4.7 Summary of mediation

Due to the third-person effect, some parents may feel that negative content in video games will not harm their child. These parents may be less likely to consult the classification given to games, and are less likely to monitor which games their child is playing. Parents who perceive harm from video games are more likely to moderate their usage by checking ratings or restricting access. Mediation of video games tends to

decrease with the child's age. Parents who participate in evaluative mediation with their child may help reduce the impact of media effects that may influence the child.

However, older mothers are more likely to be responsive to classification information than men, as are parents of younger children (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2002; Shah et al., 1999). As well, those who play video games may be less likely to use classification information. This may be a result of the third-person effect, or it might be that this group of people has more awareness of game content.

It appears that parents who play video games with their children can offset some of the harm that may be caused by their apparent acceptance of the content by discussing the game content with the child from a moralistic aspect, whereas those who play along with their child and do not discuss the content may be implicitly giving approval for the behaviour. However, if parents who do not co-play can open a dialogue with the child discussing the merits and impact of negative characteristics then this may prove to be a better form of mediation than co-playing without discussion. As well, parents who restrict children from playing games may find that some children will secretly play the game elsewhere. Restrictive mediation may also trigger feelings of resentment with older children towards the parent because they feel their independence is being curtailed. In all, active mediation appears to be the method most likely to help enrich the relationship between parents and teens, and it also presents the opportunity to mediate games post-play as discussed in section 2.1.5.1.1.

The apparent lack of concern that some parents have about video games could be attributed to information they have about the medium. Objectionable content on television is usually heralded by visual information at the start of the program, as well as audio warnings about the nature of the content. Video games do not have these types of warnings, and as some parents may not play some games with their children, even if the warnings existed they would most likely not reach many parents.

2.2.5 Pester power

Children learn consumerism from a young age (Gaumer, Arnone, & Ashley-Cotleur, 2013). They decide what products they would like through means such as television or friends, and make requests to their parents for these products (Lawlor & Prothero, 2011). An example of this behaviour is seen at Christmas, when children are encouraged to ask for what they want as gifts, including sending a letter to *Santa* with their requests. Parents are more likely to agree to cheaper requests such as sweets, and tend to defer requests for more expensive items by telling their child 'maybe next week' or 'wait and see what you get for your birthday' (Lawlor & Prothero, 2011; Gaumer, Arnone, & Ashley-Cotleur, 2013). When parents refuse the child's request for an item, some children may use tactics such as persuasion and crying to help ensure that they get what they want (Lawlor & Prothero, 2011). Known as *pester-power*, this has been used across several retail sectors such as confectionery, toys and entertainment products (Gelperowic & Beharrell, 1994; Lawlor & Prothero, 2011).

Although parents do not feel that they always give in to pester-power, they tend to respond in different ways. Turner, Kelly and McKenna (2006) found that mothers are more likely to say yes if they feel a product is good for their child, and tend to respond more to pestering, whereas fathers tend to respond to outright asking. These authors also discuss how some parents tend to buy their children treats so that their child likes them, which can be seen with the non-resident parent of split families, as well as parents who do not spend much time with their children.

2.2.6 Effect of franchises on sales

There is a paucity of research into merchandising and tie-ins for video games. One study by Young and Marchegiani (2010) explored brand congruency of video games in relation to expanding into new markets. This study involved 111 participants split into two groups: the first group, 'low fans' exhibiting a low level of fanaticism towards video games, and the second group, 'high fans' showing a high level of fanaticism. This study

found that high fans are more likely to purchase products of varying brand congruence that are released into different markets, but that low fans will consider quality of the brand in the new product when forming their intent to buy. This suggests that fans are more likely to respond to marketing of products, such as a new release of a game within a franchise, or movie brands released into the video game arena.

2.2.7 Compliance with Code of Practice for video games

Research in the UK that investigated whether video games are advertised in a responsible fashion, and whether children were encouraged to play games that are unsuitable for them, showed that 99% of video games adverts were compliant with their advertising codes (PEGI, 2010). PEGI also conducted research into compliance of game labelling and advertising, which was strict about following the exact guidelines (such as precise placement of the age label), and found 76.9% compliance in the UK, and 83.2% compliance across Europe (including the UK). While Switzerland does not legally enforce games ratings, a mystery shopping session performed in 2010 resulted in the child shopper being asked for ID from every store at which he tried to purchase an unsuitable game (PEGI, 2010). However, a mystery shopper session in the Netherlands (Gosselt, Van Hoof, & De Jong, 2012) found that most children were able to purchase games when the child was close to the restricted age, but with a large difference between the child age and restricted age, there were still 75% of 11-year-old children that could purchase a video game that was restricted to 16 year olds. This study also looked into the reasons why compliance may be low, and found that even when it could be determined that the child was too young, vendors were unfamiliar with the ratings system or they felt that they could get away with making the sale as they did not feel that they were being monitored.

Although the rating given to video games in the USA isn't enforced, as mentioned earlier, some retailers will refuse to sell ESRB 'M' (17+) games to children. Compliance testing in the USA, which includes video games, is performed by the Federal Trade

Commission, which regularly conducts *Secret Shopper* surveys whereby children aged between 13 and 16 years of age are sent to purchase restricted forms of media unaccompanied by an adult. The children were asked to purchase a video game rated “M” (recommended for persons aged 17 and older) from national and regional chain stores across the USA. The results for compliance testing in 2011 showed that 13% of these children were able to purchase an ‘M’ rated game, continuing a downward trend from 85% in 2000, 69% in 2003 and 20% in 2008 (FTC, 2011). A press release by the FTC (2013) shows that figures for 2012 show greater compliance, with only 13% of underage children able to purchase an ‘M’ rated game. One retailer achieved 100% compliance, and several others over 90%. However, one retailer only attained 75% compliance.

Compliance testing in Australia to examine classification markings was carried out a short time after the new system of classification markings came into force. This testing showed that at least 76% of video games were marked correctly, but classification information on flyers and websites tended to be non-compliant (OFLC, 2005a). There does not appear to be any publically available formal compliance testing of retail video game sales in Australia.

In an experiment carried out by 14-year-old Peter Bae in Sydney, Australia, 5 out of 6 shops sold him games classified ‘MA15+’ with content such as murder, mass shootings, stabbings, drug dealing, sexual violence and child abductions without asking for age verification (Sydney Morning Herald, 2010). The ease with which a child under the age of 15 purchased these games would seem to suggest that, even though the ‘MA15+’ classification is legally restricted in Australia, children find it easier to access these games than children from countries that do not enforce classification legislation. This would suggest that games classification in Australia is not being enforced in a rigorous manner.

2.2.8 Summary

The issues that surround protecting children from inappropriate content in video games is multi-faceted, with complexities such as the child's desires, the child's sense of independence, and the parent's ability to cope in the face of a child who may be making demands for a medium that the parent may not fully understand. It has become clear that there is concern over some content in video games and the effects of exposing children to this content, and there are several methods of mediation that parents can use which either restrict their child from the content, or mitigates any negative impact. Some of these methods work better than others depending on the age, gender and personality of the child. However, children may be more favourable towards content that has been restricted when active mediation has not been provided.

Video game classification is a tool that can be used by parents to assist them with some forms of mediation, but this may not be as informative as parents may desire or expect. If parents do not have the right information on which to base decisions, this compromises their ability to make informed game choices. Between different forms of mediation and the apparent lack of information provided with the classification given to some video games, making game choices is not a simple task. This issue may also be fraught with uncertainties for parents who speak English as a second language.

The issue of forbidden fruit goes somewhat hand-in-hand with that of pester power. A child that is denied from playing a game may see that game as a prize which they want to pursue, thus increasing their desire to play it. This desire may fuel their campaign to change their parent's mind due to pestering. The forbidden fruit dilemma may also result in children playing these games elsewhere without their parent's knowledge, or the child may even purchase the game unbeknownst to their parents. This raises the situation whereby if the game is restricted and retailer compliance is low, children may circumvent their parent's attempts at mediation by being able to purchase the restricted games themselves. Although compliance tests in Europe and the USA show promising results that most times children cannot purchase video games that are not suitable for

their age, the apparent lack of compliance testing for video games in Australia leaves a void in our knowledge as to whether children may be purchasing these games without being accompanied by a parent.

The theories and models that have been utilised in the realm of video games have proved useful in identifying the areas that may give cause for concern. However, these are limited in their ability to provide insight into issues surrounding keeping children safe within the realm of video game play. Basing this research on health theories lends some clarity to these issues, opening up channels to explore parental perception of the importance of mediation when faced with threat. The following chapter introduces the studies conducted in this research, as well as describing methods of content analysis and validity as it relates to each study.

CHAPTER 3: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDIES AND THESIS STRUCTURE

The purpose of this research was to explore whether video game classification in Australia provides enough information for parents to make informed game choices, as well as to discover what factors may prevent parents from protecting children from inappropriate content in video games. To achieve this, two studies were conducted that explored how video game classification in Australia compares to overseas systems, and the role that classification plays in parental game choices. Each of these studies used different methods of *content analysis* (discussed later in this section) to explore the data. In the interest of clarity, these two studies are presented in the following chapters:

Chapter 4 - this chapter encapsulates the design, methods, results and analysis of *Study 1 - Comparison of Video Game Classification*. This study compared the classification applied to video games in Australia during the years 2009 - 2010. This utilised a thematic content analysis which identified overarching themes for consumer advice, and then organised the consumer advice for each game into these themes. This information was quantified, which delivered information that could be counted and compared. This showed how the classification level awarded to games in Australia compared to their overseas counterparts, as well as showing how the consumer advice awarded to these games compares to those overseas. Results from this study were used to inform Study 2, which explored parental use of video game classification.

Chapter 5 - this chapter details the design and methods of *Study 2 - Exploring Parental Use of Game Classification*, which used an online questionnaire to survey parents in order to determine the role that video game classification plays when they make game choices for their children. This questionnaire collected quantitative data as well as asking some open-ended questions. The results and analysis of the quantitative data is included in this chapter, and discussion of the qualitative data is presented in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6 - this chapter presents an analysis of the qualitative data collected in *Study 2 - Exploring Parental Use of Game Classification*. This analysis attempts to quantify the trend of the themes within the data, as well as discuss the issues that arise in relation to the results observed in this study. Factors that prevent parents from protecting their child from inappropriate content are identified.

3.1 Quantitative and qualitative data

Data from research falls into two types: quantitative, which is data you can count or measure, and qualitative, which is of a textual nature that can be described, not counted. The type of data that is collected by research guides the method of analysis, as well as shaping the language that surrounds it. When analysing quantitative data, this language includes words such as quantity, statistics, correlation, and significance. With qualitative data, the language moves towards more descriptive terms such as feel, explain, and quality. Whereas quantitative data allows the researcher to manipulate numbers to help explain a phenomenon, qualitative data allows the researcher to explore the ideas and intent of the information. This is a valuable technique to use when examining texts such as books, films, websites, social media posts and blogs, and even texts derived from conversations.

This research employed two studies that collected qualitative data in order to learn about the role that games classification plays when making game choices for children. Each of these studies required different approaches with which to explore the data as both the source of information and outcome expectations were of a different nature. *Study 1 - Comparison of Video Game Classification*, presented in Chapter 4, categorised the classification information given to a subset of video games in Australia in order to identify patterns within the data. Analysis outcomes for this data was quantitative in order to establish occurrences of each category.

The second study, *Study 2 - Exploring Parental Use of Game Classification*, presented in Chapter 5, collected both quantitative as well as qualitative data. In contrast to Study 1, the qualitative data collected in Study 2 was open-ended, allowing participants to enter data which described their thoughts and feelings. As such, this data was potentially more emotive in nature. To gain an understanding of this data required analysis that not only identified themes within the data, but also explored the intent of the participant.

3.2 Content analysis

When exploring qualitative data, the researcher needs to employ methods and processes with which to extract meaningful information from the data. One technique that has gained popularity is *Content Analysis* (Riffe, Fico, & Lacy, 2014; Stemler, 2001). This type of analysis allows the researcher to identify categories within the data which can then be quantified. There are numerous variations of content analysis, with subtleties between each one making them difficult to differentiate at times (Braun & Clarke, 2014; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). Each variety of content analysis offers guidelines within which to study occurrences of terms, patterns or concepts within texts. These can be explicit occurrences (obvious, easy to see), or implicit (euphemisms, having a similar meaning but not as obvious). Implicit occurrences require a depth of knowledge about the topic under examination in order to recognise the implicit nature of the term. Information gleaned from a content analysis can reflect the tone, as well as the mood of the text (see Strapparava & Mihalcea, 2008). Once keywords and terms are identified within the text, the researcher can go on to quantify this information.

As both of the studies employed in this research were grounded in different styles of data sources as well as different outcomes, analysis methods needed to account for these differences. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) identified three approaches to content analysis: *conventional*, *directed* and *summative*. Each of these methods sets about the analysis differently, with timing and source of code identification being key differences

between them. Table 5 below presents these approaches, showing the difference in the timing of identifying codes or keywords, and from where these items are sourced. This is followed by a description of each type.

Table 5 - Three approaches to content analysis.

Type of Content Analysis	Study Starts With	Timing of Defining Codes or Keywords	Source of Codes or Keywords
Conventional content analysis	Observation	Codes are defined during data analysis	Codes are derived from data
Directed content analysis	Theory	Codes are defined before and during data analysis	Codes are derived from theory or relevant research findings
Summative content analysis	Keywords	Keywords are identified before and during data analysis	Keywords are derived from interest of researchers or review of literature

Source: Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1286)

Conventional content analysis

Conventional content analysis allows the terms, or keywords, to emerge as the researcher is immersed in the review of the data. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) explain how this type of analysis is typical when existing theory or research literature is limited, and allows the researcher to present any questions without any preconceived bias. Also, that challenges of this approach include loose coupling to theory, which may result in the researcher failing to identify key categories. Thus, any outcomes may not deliver an accurate representation of the data. Results from a conventional content analysis are quantified to produce measurable results.

Directed content analysis

Directed content analysis is used to extend an incomplete or inadequate theory by identifying categories before the data collection stage. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) explain how questions for the data collection tool are constructed to target these categories, and during analysis, data is coded and any items within the text that cannot be categorised are coded to a new topic. These new topics are then analysed to see if

they represent a subcategory of existing categories, or if they suggest an extension to the theory. Hsieh and Shannon state that challenges of this approach include bias that may be introduced as a result of grounding the research in current theory. Results from a directed content analysis are quantified to produce measurable results.

Summative content analysis

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) describe summative content analysis, where initial keywords are identified at the time of reading the data. After this, the researcher immerses themselves in a review of the data, at which time further keywords and terms are identified. These are categorised and quantified in order to expose patterns within the text. This approach differs from conventional and directed content analysis in that it allows the researcher to proceed beyond identifying keyword and terms, allowing them to use *latent content analysis*, where underlying meanings are deduced, to draw out the underlying intent of the writer. Challenges of this approach are that it focuses on keywords and euphemisms, and fails to allow the researcher to explore the underlying intent of the text as a whole. Additionally, the outcomes may be questionable as interpretations depend on the perspective of the researcher. This can be somewhat mitigated by supporting the interpretation with textual evidence, such as revealing coding methods.

Each of the methods discussed above provides the ability to identify keywords and terms, quantify their occurrences and offer discussion about the implications of these terms in respect of the topic being researched. What they fail to do is to enable identification and discussion of overarching issues that may run through the data. Being able to explore these issues allows the researcher to address complexities that may intertwine throughout the data.

3.3 Thematic content analysis

In order to address some of the shortcomings of analyses approaches described by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), Braun and Clarke (2014) describe a *thematic content analysis*. This is a technique that builds on these approaches to offer the researcher a framework with which to identify and analyse underlying themes that occur within the data, as well as enabling them to explore the intent and essence of each theme. This technique offers methods that are valuable when analysing open-ended information such as that gathered in *Study 2 - Exploring Parental Use of Game Classification*. Table 6 below presents the six phases of a thematic analysis as defined by Braun and Clarke.

Table 6 - The six phases of a thematic content analysis as defined by Braun and Clarke (2014)

Phase	Description
1. Data familiarisation	Read through all of the texts in order to become familiar with all aspects of the data. Take notes on ideas for coding based on patterns and themes that appear to stand out.
2. Generate initial codes	Define codes that describe ideas identified after the initial reading in Phase 1.
3. Theme identification	Develop themes from coded data. Sort through all of the codes identified at Phase 2, categorising them into broader themes and sub-themes.
4. Theme review	Review coded data for each theme to verify that the themes reflect the shape of the data. Review themes to verify that they reflect the meanings of the data set as a whole.
5. Defining and naming themes	Define the themes in preparation for analysis by identifying the essence of each theme. Ensure that complex themes are organised into sub-themes to provide structure and clarity. Consider the name that each theme will have in the final analysis.
6. Reporting	Write up a concise, coherent, logical report of the data to convince the reader of the validity of your analysis.

A thematic analysis begins by reading through the text to gain familiarisation with the content. This process is immersive and iterative; the researcher reads through the data at least once before coding starts, taking notes about ideas and terms that stand out. The data is then re-read in an active manner, searching for patterns and ideas. This

reading process occurs repeatedly, each time furthering understanding of issues that are within the data.

Using the notes from the first phase, the researcher then generates codes that represent the terms and ideas identified within the data. These are granular in form, not broad and overarching. The researcher then works through the data applying codes to text, and creating new codes as unidentified terms or ideas are discovered. Different meanings of the word are identified which can take the form of either *latent content* or *manifest content* (Clarke & Braun, 2017). This includes explicit occurrences such as *permit, permitted* and *permitting* (manifest content), as well as euphemisms such as *allow* and *let* (latent content). These terms may be ambiguous when taken out of context, so it is important to read them within the context of the data in order to capture the intent of the writer. In addition, the researcher can explore the meaning of the text in order to identify the intent of the writer.

Once the codes within the text have been identified, these are organised into categories in order to establish themes. These themes are then reviewed to ensure they provide an accurate representation of the topics within the data. At this stage, the researcher considers what the theme will be named in the analysis, going back and reviewing the data to ensure that the essence of the theme is captured. As well, complex themes are organised into sub-themes in order to provide structure and clarity to the analysis.

The outcome of phases 1 - 5 is a database of codes and their occurrences which present the data in an ordered, quantitative manner, allowing the researcher to gain an understanding of the data by viewing the terms and ideas collectively, as well as in order of importance. The importance of the term within the text can be determined in several ways: the number of times the term occurred, or the amount of space in centimetres the term occupies within the text. As well, in the case of web-based sources such as blogs and social media, importance can be determined by the number of interactions or 'likes'. This database informs the reporting phase, encompassing the themes that have been defined through each of the previous phases. These themes are

embedded within an analytical narrative, and will ideally include extracts from the data which capture the essence of the theme under discussion.

The process of marking keywords or codes throughout the text, known as *coding*, is where pieces of text are marked according to the theme identified within the text. The person who performs this task is a *coder*. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) say that a successful content analysis depends on the coding process. Liamputtong (2009) describe principles to adopt when coding data: start coding early, read and re-read the data to become familiar with the context and meaning, and critically examine the text regularly. By repeated review of the data, patterns may emerge which went unnoticed at the start of the analysis. Different meanings may be extracted from the same piece of text, which allows the researcher to explore multiple facets of the topic. For guidance, Flick (2006) compiled a list of questions that the coder should repeatedly ask while iterating over the data to increase the opportunity of eliciting multi-faceted meanings from the text. This list of questions, presented in Table 7 below, formed the basis for an iterative process with which to approach the content analysis for Study 2 in order to identify multiple facets of a discrete piece of text.

Table 7 - Basic questions used for coding strategies

Questions	What to look for?
What?	What is the concern here? Which course of events is mentioned?
Who?	Who are the persons involved? What roles do they have? How do they interact?
How?	Which aspects of the event are mentioned (or omitted)?
When? How long? Where?	Referring to time course and location: When does it happen? How long does it take? Where did the incident occur?
Why?	Which reasons are provided or can be constructed?
What for?	What is the intention here? What is the purpose?
By which?	Referring to means, tactics and strategies for achieving the aim: What is the main tactic here? How are things accomplished?

Source: Liamputtong (2009, p. 134)

3.4 Qualitative analysis software

The coding process can be performed by hand, or the coder can use qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo (www.qsrinternational.com) to digitally categorise sections of text. This type of software enables the coder to identify and highlight meanings within the text according to theme and intent, building a database of keywords and ideas that is categorised for easy review. Using this method, the researcher is able to track nuances throughout the text which allows themes to emerge. Once the themes are identified, the researcher is able to export a report which shows the number of occurrences for each theme, as well as how much of the text is related to each theme. This delivers a quantifiable view of the tone and meaning of the text. Due to the ability of this software to develop complex and nuanced framework of terms, it was used to perform the analysis of the qualitative data collected in *Study 2 - Exploring Parental Use of Game Classification*.

3.5 Validity

When conducting a content analysis, the validity of the analysis is crux to the reliability of the outcome. Perception of this validity is dependent on whether the analysis is quantitative or qualitative in nature. Validating a quantitative analysis is straight-forward, in that it lies in the realm of confirming that numbers are correct, repeatable and reliable, involving processes such as comparison, correlation, and significance. Riffe et al. (2014) discuss four measures of validity of quantitative content analysis as identified by Holsti (as cited in Riffe et al., 2014). The following is an overview of these measures:

Face validity

With face validity, the researcher presents an argument that a measure makes sense when taken at face value. This can have risks, in that when presented in a different light, the same measure may be construed differently. This can be seen with summative content analysis, where the researcher interprets textual content and may derive a measurement based on their interpretation.

Concurrent validity

Concurrent validity occurs when previous research suggests a particular outcome, and the quantified results from the current study correspond with this outcome. Concurrent validity can support face validity, adding trustworthiness to the analysis.

Predictive validity

Predictive validity occurs when outcomes correspond with a predicted outcome, lending confidence to the results thus strengthening validity. Once again, this type of validity can support face validity as well as being linked to concurrent validity.

Construct validity

Construct validity measures whether outcomes of the analysis match theory, and whether changing an underlying measure results in expected changes to the outcome. If change occurs and there is no other cause found for the change than that predicted by theory, then construct validity is supported.

When it comes to qualitative content analysis, validity can be a contentious and subjective term. As discussed in Creswell and Miller (2000), there are many perspectives that have been used in research exploring qualitative validity such as authenticity, adequacy, plausibility, trustworthiness, credibility and verisimilitude. These authors stated that there is such a broad array of terms that there may be confusion surrounding this issue. They then proceeded to discuss that validity of qualitative data can be confirmed using multiple perspectives: that of the researcher, the participants, and reviewers and readers. When looking at it from a researcher's perspective, Creswell and Miller discuss how validity involves *triangulation*, *disconfirming evidence* and *researcher reflexivity*. An overview of their discussion about these procedures is presented below.

Data triangulation

The process of theming the data exposes recurring themes. The stronger the evidence for the theme, for example a large number of occurrences, the more valid the theme

can be considered. Triangulation occurs when the resultant information is cross-checked with two other distinct sources, such as verifying that identified themes correspond with those identified in previous research.

Disconfirming evidence

In an effort to apply rigour, after triangulation the researcher attempts to disprove the themes identified within the data. This occurs by examining all of the perspectives of a theme to discover information that might discount it, thus rendering the theme invalid.

Researcher reflexivity

The stance of the researcher can influence the context within which they analyse the data. By informing the reader of their beliefs, values and any potential bias they may have, the reader is able to view the results within this context, allowing them to form opinions based on their perception of the researcher's stance.

Each of these methods offers confidence to the outcomes by applying rigour to the analysis. As the two types of analysis presented in this research employed use slightly different approaches, each will use a combination of these methods in order to demonstrate validity.

3.6 Summary

In sum, the approach to content analysis depends on the expected outcomes of the research, as well as the type of data being analysed. The method employed to ensure validity is dependent on whether the analysis is quantitative or qualitative, but methods for each type serve the same purpose: to ensure that outcomes of the analysis are valid. The following three chapters present the results of both quantitative and qualitative analyses for both Study 1 and Study 2, with each chapter discussing the approach and validity of the presented analysis.

CHAPTER 4: STUDY 1 - COMPARISON OF VIDEO GAME CLASSIFICATION

This research aimed to discover whether video game classification in Australia provides enough information for parents to make informed game choices, as well as exploring what factors may prevent parents from protecting children from inappropriate content in video games. This chapter presents the methods, results and conclusions of the content analysis that compared the classification level and consumer advice applied to some video games in Australia with their overseas counterparts.

4.1 Method

In order to explore issues that surround exposing children to inappropriate content in video games, there was a need to identify the classification given to video games. To inform this research, a content analysis was performed on the classification data from the ACB, ESRB, PEGI and BBFC classification systems to identify the classification information applied to games classified 'MA15+' in Australia during the years 2009 - 2010.

The classification information collated as a result of the content analysis was examined for patterns. These were coded to provide a list of stem elements that were derived from variances of a term. For example, the elements 'Strong Violence' and 'Mild Violence' were coded to the core term 'Violence'. The classification level, such as ACB 'M', 'MA15+' was also recorded to allow the classification level to be compared.

Comparing the classification given to a game by different classification systems can only be accurate if the game content is the same. Some games in the ACB database are marked as modified, meaning that the game was changed after it was submitted for classification (possibly because the game failed to meet classification standards). As the content may have been different between both versions of the game, games marked as modified were removed from the sampling. However, this may not take into

account the fact that games may have been modified before being submitted for classification, possibly to target the game towards Australian classification. The ACB does not record whether the version released in Australia is the same version released in other countries, and as such, this comparison does not take into account whether games were modified before being submitted to the ACB.

The classification information on the ACB website sometimes states the platform for which the classification was applied. This could be for specific platforms such as *PlayStation 4* or *Xbox 360*, but most games state the platform is *Multi-platform*. Sometimes, a game listed for Multi-platform in Australia was listed under a specific platform in the ESRB, PEGI or BBFC database with a lower rating. For example, games for the Nintendo DS (a hand-held game device) can have lower quality graphics, which results in content of lesser impact, therefore attracting a lower classification level. In this situation, the platform for each game was compared and if it appeared that the platform contributed to a different classification level than expected, the game was omitted from the comparison for that classification system.

4.2 Research design

4.2.1 Analysis approach

Content analysis has been shown to be a powerful tool that can deliver qualitative as well as quantitative results from qualitative data. An example of how conventional content analysis has been used in the area of video game research is the study by Thompson et al. (2006) which used this method to explore whether the classification given to video games in the USA provided an accurate representation of the classifiable elements within the game. This was done by identifying classifiable elements within video games, then coding these elements so they could be categorised. The output of this analysis was a quantified list of the classifiable elements within the game.

As well, Brand and Knight (2003) used a content analysis to identify the characteristics of a collection of video games in order to determine the spread of gender, race, mode of dress etc. By identifying this information, it allowed the researchers to develop a meaningful catalogue of characteristics of video game content. This data was then quantified to present the number of occurrences within the data.

Because of the success seen in previous studies with similar research goals, this study used a conventional content analysis, described in 3.2, to explore and categorise the classification information given to games. Firstly, the consumer advice was reviewed to identify stem categories. This allowed the classification information for each game to be categorised into themes, after which the data was grouped into these themes. The resultant list of themes primarily relies on face validity; however, they correspond with the consumer advice provided by the ESRB and PEGI, which lends some measure of predictive validity to the outcomes. The resultant information was then quantified, delivering quantitative outcomes.

4.3 Results

The results of the analysis for this study are presented in two sections: comparison of the classification level assigned to the game, and comparison of the consumer advice detailing classifiable elements within the game. The comparison of consumer advice does not include results from the BBFC, as the number of games classified under this system is much less than the ESRB and PEGI, and including BBFC classified games in this section would result in a smaller population used for the comparison.

4.3.1 Comparison of classification levels

Of the 144 games in the criterion, 21 games were marked as 'Modified' and were not used in this research. This left 123 ACB classified games. The comparison between ACB classified games and ESRB classified games found 107 common games. Table 8

below shows that 93% of games rated 'MA15+' are rated 'M' (17+) through the ESRB with the rest obtaining a 'T' (13+) rating.

Table 8 - How games classified 'MA15+' in Australia are classified by the ESRB (n = 107)

ESRB Classification	Count	% of AU 'MA15+' classified games
M (17+)	100	93.5%
T (13+)	7	6.5%

The comparison between ACB classified games and PEGI classified games found 106 common games. Table 9 below shows that 66% of games rated 'MA15+' are rated '18' through PEGI with 33% obtaining a rating of '16', and 1 % being rated '12'.

Table 9 - How games classified 'MA15+' in Australia are classified by PEGI (n = 106)

PEGI Classification	Count	% of AU 'MA15+' classified games
12	1	0.9%
16	35	33%
18	70	66%

The comparison between ACB classifications and BBFC classifications found 65 common games. Table 10 below shows that 54% of games rated 'MA15+' were rated '18' through the BBFC with the rest obtaining a '15' rating.

Table 10 - How games classified 'MA15+' in Australia are classified by the BBFC (n = 65)

BBFC Classification	Count	% of AU 'MA15+' classified games
15	30	46.2%
18	35	53.9%

4.3.2 Identifying games overseas systems consider unsuitable for children

Table 11 below shows that there are 41 titles classified 'MA15+' by the ACB during 2009 - 2010 which were classified 'M' (17) by the ESRB, as well as being classified '18' by PEGI and '18' by the BBFC (if classified by the BBFC, otherwise the PEGI rating is used).

Table 11 - Games rated for age 17 and over in the USA and 18 and over in the UK and Europe, and 15 and over in Australia

1.	<i>Afro Samurai</i>
2.	<i>Aliens Vs Predator</i>
3.	<i>Arma II Operation Arrowhead</i>
4.	<i>Army Of Two - The 40th Day</i>
5.	<i>Bioshock 2</i>
6.	<i>Borderlands</i>
7.	<i>Borderlands Double Game Add-on Pack: The Zombie Island Of Dr Ned & Mad Moxxi's Underdome Riot</i>
8.	<i>Call Of Duty: Black Ops</i>
9.	<i>Dante's Inferno</i>
10.	<i>Dead Nation</i>
11.	<i>Dead Rising 2</i>
12.	<i>Dead Rising 2: Case West</i>
13.	<i>Dead Space Extraction</i>
14.	<i>Dead To Rights: Retribution</i>
15.	<i>Deadliest Warrior: The Game</i>
16.	<i>Dragon Age - Origins</i>
17.	<i>Fallout: New Vegas</i>
18.	<i>Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage</i>
19.	<i>God Of War III</i>

Table 11 (Cont.) - Games rated for age 17 and over in the USA and 18 and over in the UK and Europe, and 15 and over in Australia

20.	<i>God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta</i>
21.	<i>Grand Theft Auto IV: The Lost And Damned</i>
22.	<i>Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days</i>
23.	<i>Madworld</i>
24.	<i>Mafia II</i>
25.	<i>Medal Of Honor</i>
26.	<i>Morphx</i>
27.	<i>Prototype</i>
28.	<i>Red Dead Redemption</i>
29.	<i>Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare Pack</i>
30.	<i>Rogue Warrior</i>
31.	<i>Saw</i>
32.	<i>Saw II</i>
33.	<i>Serious Sam</i>
34.	<i>Shank</i>
35.	<i>Silent Hill: Homecoming</i>
36.	<i>Singularity</i>
37.	<i>The Godfather 2</i>
38.	<i>Wet</i>
39.	<i>Wolfenstein</i>
40.	<i>Yakuza 3</i>
41.	<i>Zombie Apocalypse</i>

4.3.3 Games refused classification

During the years 2009 - 2010 there were six games that were refused classification in Australia and fall under the 'RC' rating. Table 12 below shows that four of these games are available under the ESRB, PEGI and BBFC systems, one was submitted to the Classification Review Board and reclassified 'MA15+' with no alterations, and three were modified to allow the game to fall under the 'MA15+' classification.

Table 12 - Games classified 'RC' in Australia during the years 2009 - 2010

Game	ESRB	PEGI	BBFC	Outcome
<i>Aliens VS Predator</i>	M (17+)	18	18	Submitted for review to the CRB and reclassified 'MA15+' with no modifications
<i>Crimecraft</i>	M (17+)	NF	NF	Not resubmitted - remains RC
<i>Left 4 Dead 2</i>	M (17+)	18	18	Modified and reclassified MA15+
<i>Necrovision</i>	M (17+)	18	18	Modified and reclassified M
<i>Risen</i>	M (17+)	16	NF	Not resubmitted - remains RC
<i>Sexy Poker</i>	M (17+)	12	15	Modified and reclassified M

* NF = Not Found

4.3.4 Discussion

These results show that there are a large number of games classified 'MA15+' in Australia that are recommended for at least 17 years of age in the US, UK and Europe and very few rated for lower ages. A 16-year-old person can purchase all of these games if they are in Australia, 7% of the games if they are in the USA, 34% of games if they are in Europe, and 46% of games in the UK.

The results from the PEGI and BBFC systems show that most games are divided between the '15' (BBFC) or '16' (PEGI), and '18' classification levels. This indicates that

some games may be rated 'M' (17+) by the ESRB that might be suitable for a lower age, but are placed into this rating level as they have content too mature for the 'T' (13+) rating.

Although the results of this analysis shows that some games classified in Australia may have been given a higher rating overseas, Table 9 shows that there was one game classified 'MA15+' in Australia (*Agarest: Generations of War*) that was classified for those aged at least 12 years of age under the PEGI system. This suggests that there could be some cases where games that are given a 'MA15+' classification in Australia may not necessarily have content that is deemed to be inappropriate for the age or maturity of the child. This further supports the need for relevant descriptions of game content to accompany the classification level, which in turn helps the game publisher by opening up the market to a younger age group if the game is in fact appropriate for that level.

The number of games given an 'RC' classification during the years 2009 - 2010 is small, with only two games not making it to the Australian market. Most of these 'RC' decisions were for games that are recommended for at least 17 years of age overseas, with the exception of *Sexy Poker*, which is rated for 12 years of age in Europe. The classification of 'MA15+' given to *Aliens VS Predator* after review by the Classification Review Board made that game available in Australia without modification to those 15 years of age, even though the ACB decision of 'RC' reflected the fact that the game is rated 'M' (17+) under ESRB and '18' under PEGI and BBFC.

It becomes obvious that the Australian 'MA15+' classification level encompasses games that overseas systems deem suitable for children of at least 15 or 16 years of age, as well as games that are only recommended for over 17 or 18 years of age. Some differences in classification between each country may be attributed to differing societal attitudes. However, as 'MA15+' was the highest classification level in Australia in the years 2010 - 2011, this may be the reason that some of these games were given this classification.

4.4 Identification of ‘M’ classified games with a classification level of at least 15 years of age in at least one overseas system

In light of the results of the content analysis which shows that there is a number of games classified ‘MA15+’ in Australia that may be recommended for those at least 17 years of age overseas, this research also looked at whether there were any games within the ‘M’ classification level in Australia that were classified for an older age group overseas. The following section details the results of games classified ‘M’ by the ACB compared to the same title overseas, where the game is classified for at least 15 years of age by at least one overseas system.

4.4.1 Comparison of classification level

Table 13 below shows that when comparing ‘M’ classified games with the classification given to them by the ESRB, 76% of these games are recommended for 13 years of age and over, and 16% are recommended for 17 years of age and over. Seven games in the sample were not classified by the ESRB.

Table 13 - How the sample of ACB games classified ‘M’ are rated by the ESRB (n = 93)

ESRB Classification	Count	% of AU M classified games sample
T (13+)	71	76.3%
M (17+)	15	16.1%
Not found	7	7.5%

Table 14 below shows that when comparing 'M' classified games with the classification given to them by PEGI, 96% of these games are recommended for 16 years of age and over, 1% for 12 years of age and over and 2% for 18 years of age and over. One game in the sample was not classified by PEGI.

Table 14 - How the sample of ACB games classified 'M' are rated by PEGI (n = 93)

PEGI Classification	Count	% of AU M classified games sample
12	1	1.1%
16	89	95.7%
18	2	2.2%
Not found	1	1.1%

Table 15 below shows that when comparing 'M' classified games with the classification given to them by the BBFC, five games are restricted to 15 years of age and over, and no games restricted to 18 years of age and over. Eighty-eight games in the sample were not classified by the BBFC.

Table 15 - How the sample of ACB games classified 'M' are rated by the BBFC (n = 93)

BBFC Classification	Count	% of AU 'M' classified games sample
15	5	5.4%
18	0	0%
Not found	88	94.6%

4.4.2 Games classified 'M' that are only considered suitable for at least 17 years of age overseas

Table 16 below shows there are 16 games with an ACB 'M' classification that are recommended for at least 17 years of age in at least one overseas system. Two of these games are recommended for 18 years of age by PEGI, of which one is also recommended for 17 years of age by the ESRB (*Dead Space Ignition*).

Table 16 - Classifications of ACB 'M' classification games with a recommended age of at least 17 overseas

Game	ESRB	PEGI	BBFC
<i>CSI: Fatal Conspiracy</i>	M (17+)	16	NF
<i>Cursed Mountain</i>	M (17+)	16	NF
<i>Dead or Alive Paradise</i>	M (17+)	16	NF
<i>Dead Space Ignition</i>	M (17+)	18	NF
<i>Divinity II - Ego Draconis</i>	M (17+)	12	NF
<i>Duke Nukem Manhattan Project</i>	M (17+)	16	NF
<i>Halo 3: ODST</i>	M (17+)	16	NF
<i>Hero of Sparta</i>	M (17+)	16	NF
<i>Hydrophobia</i>	M (17+)	16	NF
<i>Lord of Arcana</i>	M (17+)	16	NF
<i>Matt Hazard - Blood Bath and Beyond</i>	M (17+)	16	NF
<i>Memento Mori</i>	M (17+)	16	NF
<i>Ninety-Nine Nights II</i>	NF	18	NF
<i>Silent Hill - Shattered Memories</i>	M (17+)	16	15
<i>Stormrise</i>	M (17+)	16	NF
<i>Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War II - Chaos Rising</i>	M (17+)	16	NF

* NF = Not Found

4.4.3 Discussion of 'M' classified games

The comparison of classifications for games from the sample of ACB 'M' games to overseas systems shows that these games are rated between ages 12 and 18 overseas. The ESRB recommended that just over 16% of these games be for 17 years and over, and PEGI recommends that almost 96% be for 16 years of age and over; this would indicate that some games carrying an ACB 'M' classification might belong in the 'MA15+' classification level.

Some specific examples stand out in this comparison. *Dead Space Ignition*, which is a downloadable prequel to *Dead Space 2*, was recommended for at least 17 years of age in the USA and 18 years of age in Europe. As this game was not classified by the BBFC, the PEGI classification means the game is also recommended for over 18 years of age in the UK. The game title *Ninety-Nine Nights II*, rated for 18 years of age by PEGI, does not exist in the ESRB or BBFC systems. As such, there is no gauge of how this game sits on the world stage - therefore, there is no measure of whether the "M" rating it carries in Australia is an accurate reflection of the content within the game.

There were some games in the sample that were not classified by the ESRB, PEGI or BBFC. Mostly, these were a small percentage (ESRB = 7.5%, PEGI = 1.1%). However, the BBFC did not classify 95% of the sample of 'M' games; this reflects their role of mainly classifying games that lose the exemption from classification due to extreme content, which is less likely to occur for games at the ACB 'M' classification level.

4.5 Comparison of consumer advice

As the focus of this research is games classified 'MA15+' by the ACB, the analysis of classifiable elements only looked at these games and not games that are classified 'M' by the ACB. This information is presented in two sections. Section 4.5.1 identifies the classifiable elements for all games under each classification system, regardless of the classification level of the game. This includes games that are not common to all

systems. Section 4.5.2 compares classifiable elements that are common to each system in games that are common to each system.

4.5.1 Identification of classifiable elements for all games

Table 17 below shows the breakdown of classifiable elements as depicted by the consumer advice awarded to all unmodified games classified 'MA15+' by the ACB during the years 2009 - 2010. Violence was the most frequent occurring element, with 97% of games being labelled with this element. This was followed by Language, with 24% of games containing advice for this element. Only 10% of games contained advice for sexual references, and 4% of games advised of at least one sex scene.

Table 17 - Occurrences of classifiable elements in ACB classified games (n = 123)

Content	# of ACB classified games with this content	% of AU games
Violence	119	96.8%
Language	29	23.6%
Online content	23	18.7%
Blood	16	13%
Horror	13	10.6%
Sexual references	12	9.8%
Gore	10	8.1%
Drugs	7	5.7%
Sex scene	5	4.1%
Nudity	4	3.3%
Crude humour	1	0.8%

Table 18 below shows the breakdown of classifiable elements as depicted by the consumer advice awarded to games classified by the ESRB. Violence was the most frequent element, occurring in all games. There were 106 games with advice for blood, and 17 games contained advice for sexual content. These results include games classified as 'M' (17+) and 'T' (13+).

Table 18 - Occurrences of classifiable elements in ESRB classified games (n = 107)

Content	# of ESRB classified games with this content	% of games
Violence	107	100%
Blood	106	99.1%
Language	88	82.2%
Gore	56	52.3%
Drug	24	22.4%
Sexual themes	22	20.6%
Nudity	21	19.6%
Sexual content	16	15%
Suggestive themes	15	14%
Alcohol	7	6.5%
Mature humor	6	5.6%

Table 19 below shows the breakdown of classifiable elements as depicted by the consumer advice awarded to games classified by PEGI. Violence was the most frequent element, occurring in 104 games. Language was the next most frequent element, with 59 games containing this advice. Only two games contained advice for sexual content. These results include games classified as '12', '16 and '18'.

Table 19 - Occurrences of classifiable elements in PEGI classified games (n = 106)

Content	# of PEGI classified games with this content	% of games
Violence	104	98.1
Language	59	55.7
Online game	50	47.2
Drugs	9	8.5
Gambling	5	4.7
Sex	2	1.9

Table 20 below shows the breakdown of classifiable elements as depicted by the Consumer Information provided with games classified by the BBFC. Violence was the most frequent with 63 games containing advice for this element, followed by Blood (40 games) then Language (29 games). These results include games classified as '15' and '18'.

Table 20 - Occurrences of classifiable elements in BBFC classified games (n = 65)

Content	# of BBFC games with this content	% of games
Violence	63	96.9%
Blood	40	61.5%
Language	29	44.6%
Sex	6	9.2%
Gore	4	6.2%
Horror	2	3.1%
Battle	1	1.5%
Torture	1	1.5%

4.5.2 Comparison of common classifiable elements

This section looks at games that are common to each system; therefore, the number of games examined is less than in the previous section. As the BBFC does not classify all games released in the UK, including BBFC data in the comparison of common classifiable elements across all systems reduces the sample to those that have been submitted to the BBFC for classification. This results in a sample that is biased towards games with more extreme content; therefore, BBFC data was omitted from this comparison.

Analysis of the consumer advice and consumer advice showed that there were four common classifiable elements used by the ACB, ESRB and PEGI: violence, language, sex and drugs. Table 21 below shows the frequency of these elements for common games in each of the systems.

Table 21 - Occurrences of common classifiable elements in ACB classified games common to all systems (n = 98)

Content	ACB	ESRB	PEGI
Violence	96 (98%)	98 (82%)	97 (99%)
Language	24 (24.5%)	82 (83.7%)	55 (56.1%)
Sex	14 (14.3%)	36 (36.7%)	1 (1%)
Drugs	3 (3.1%)	22 (22.5%)	8 (8.2%)

For clarity, the data from Table 21 is presented in Figure 7 below in graphical format. This provides a visual representation of the difference in the classifiable elements awarded to games by each of the systems.

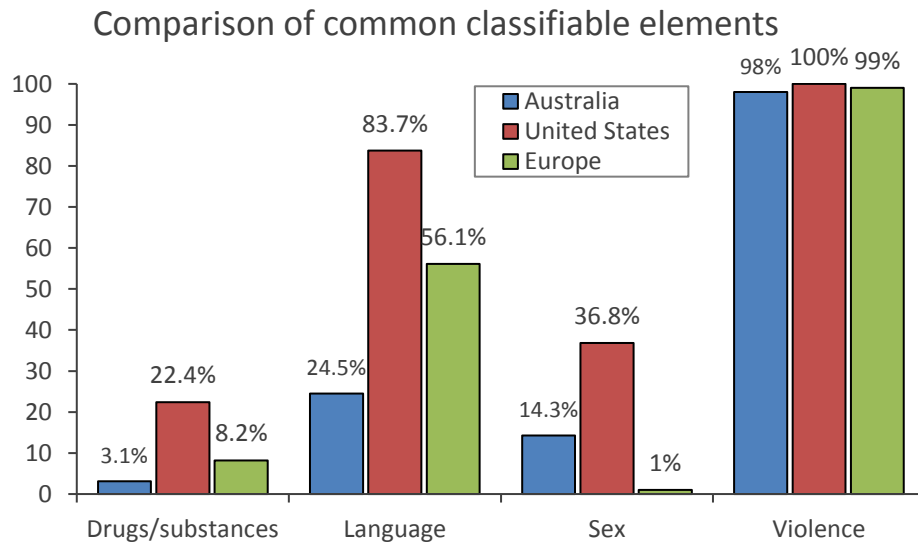


Figure 7 - Comparison of common classifiable elements (n = 98)

In the comparison of common classifiable elements in games common to all systems, violence is the most frequent element with this advice provided on almost all games compared. The ESRB provides the most warnings for classifiable elements, followed by PEGI then ACB except for sexual content, where the ACB provides warnings of sexual content on more games than PEGI.

4.5.3 Discussion of comparison of consumer advice

The ESRB has labelled 100% of the games used in this research as containing violence, with 99% of these games containing blood. By comparison, almost 96% of games classified by the ACB have violence, but only 13% of these games are marked as having blood. This may be attributed to the developer removing blood content from the game to conform to the Australian classification guidelines, or it may reflect different societal standards whereby those in the USA find games with blood content to be more disturbing than those in Australia. The fact that Australia reports less classifiable elements in most cases than other countries may be attributable to this difference, or it may be a result of inconsistent reporting of elements as seen in the research conducted on ESRB classifications by Thompson et al. (2006). If the difference was due to inconsistent reporting, this may impact on parents who make game choices based on the consumer advice included with the game classification.

Comparing the consumer advice assigned to ESRB 'M' (17+) rated games in 2006 with the consumer advice assigned to M-rated games in 2004 (Thompson et al., 2006) showed that there was an increase in the number of warnings about classifiable elements in games. In 2004, 98% of M-rated games carried advice for violence, compared to 100% of M-rated (and some T-rated) games in this study. Other elements that show an increase are blood, from 94% to 99.1%, language from 24% to 82.2%, sexual content from 14% to 38.3% and substances from 4% to 29%. Nudity increased

from 1.4% to 19.6%. This would suggest that the level of classifiable content is also increasing in games classified 'MA15+' in Australia.

Although there are various classifiable elements in games, violence seems to attract the most media attention. All systems agree that most games classified 'MA15+' by the ACB contain violence; however, for other classifiable elements there are notable differences in whether each country reports this content. Even though Thompson et al. (2006) found that 81% of games in the US did not inform about some classifiable elements, the ESRB still informs of the most classifiable elements in games in comparison to the ACB and PEGI. Although societal standards between countries may result in differences in the classification given to games, if elements of the game are deemed classifiable, imparting this information to consumers allows them to make informed decisions about their game choices.

4.6 Summary

This chapter has shown that the classification information given to video games in Australia over the 2009 - 2010 period is not consistent with the information given to their overseas counterparts. The classification process is similar for each system, made up of a board that reviews the games based on content submitted to them. As such, it is not clear whether the differences seen are a result of differing societal norms, or whether it is due to poor application of the classification system. However, as at least half of the games that are available to those aged 15 in Australia are recommended for an older age group overseas, this suggests that these games may indeed have been shoehorned into the 'MA15+' category as suggested by iTWire (2009), possibly due to the fact that there was no 'R18+' category at that time.

The number of games that have been placed within the 'M' category that are considered suitable only for those at least 17 years of age overseas shows that either societal norms in Australia do indeed differ greatly from those overseas, or that the classification given to games in Australia may not be applied rigorously. One could

argue the fact that as there have been some games classified 'RC' in Australia that are available to adults overseas, this may suggest that the societal norms in Australia may not be as permissive as these results indicate.

In light of some of the research into the effects of classifiable elements in media on children (Denniston et al., 2011; Fisher et al., 2009; Parkes, Sweeting, Wight, & Henderson, 2013), if parents are not warned of these elements, they may not realise that their children are being exposed to this content. This could result in situations such as children being exposed to sexual content which could be an influencing factor on their sexual behaviour, or result in more aggressive game play due to the game containing blood depictions of which the parent may not be aware.

One factor that becomes apparent in light of the possible under-reporting of classifiable elements is the forbidden fruit effect. It may be possible that by under-reporting classifiable elements in video games, the game will not be seen as forbidden fruit. On the surface, this may seem to be an ideal situation whereby children may not have as much desire for games with unsuitable content. However, any benefit of using an omission of information as a level of protection may be negated by the fact that children will tend to discuss games with their friends, providing an alternative avenue to learn about classifiable elements within the games while their parents are left uninformed of the game content.

According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, people are more likely to believe the message if they trust the messenger. As the ACB is a statutory agency governed by the Attorney General's office, it is likely to be held in high accord by the public. As such, parents may take the peripheral route whereby they form their game choices, without seeking elaboration, based on the classification information given to the game. If the disparity between the classification given to Australian games and their overseas counterparts is due to inconsistent application of the classification system, parents may struggle when using classification information to make game choices for their children.

This study went some way towards answering RQ 1: *Does video game classification in Australia provide enough information for parents to make informed decisions about what games their children play?* It would appear that on the surface, classification information given to games in Australia is inconsistently applied, and as such may not be a reliable tool that parents can use to make informed game choices. To add some depth to these results, as well as gain some measure of how parents use the classification system to manage their child's game usage, the outcomes of the study detailed in this chapter were used to inform a questionnaire for the second study, *Study 2 - Exploring Parental Use of Game Classification*, which explored parental perception and usage of the classification given to games in Australia. The following chapter describes the processes and methods of this study.

CHAPTER 5: STUDY 2 - EXPLORING PARENTAL USE OF GAME CLASSIFICATION

The data collection stage of this research comprised two steps. The first step, presented in the previous chapter, involved a content analysis that compared the classification information given to some video games in Australia with their overseas counterparts. The second step used the results of this analysis to develop a questionnaire that was distributed to parents. The purpose of this questionnaire was to gather information surrounding the role that video game classification plays when parents make game choices for their children. This chapter details the design, methods and results of this questionnaire.

5.1 Research design

This research examines how parents in Australia use video game classification to moderate game choices for their children, as well as whether the classification given to games provides enough information for parents to make these choices. The previous chapter detailed a content analysis that compared the classification information given to video games in the 'MA15+' classification category in Australia during the years 2009 - 2010 to their overseas counterparts. The results from this analysis show that the classification information given to games in Australia does not tend to correspond with the classification given to the same game title overseas. It is unclear whether this is a result of societal norms, or whether the games classification system in Australia is not applied as rigorously as the systems in use overseas.

If game classification does not provide an accurate representation of classifiable elements within games, this may impair parents' ability to make informed game choices, which may ultimately lead to children playing games with inappropriate content. This chapter explores how, or if, parents use the classification to make game choices, as well as attempting to gain insight into how parents make these choices.

5.2 Research framework

5.2.1 Theory

Theories and models that have been used to explore the effects of video game content on game players have the overarching objective of identifying cause and effect. While they help to illustrate the pathways that explain why this research is needed, they fail to offer a suitable framework on which this research can be defined. When the health and wellbeing theories and models described in section 2.2.1 are taken into account, issues of decision-making and protection begin to emerge. The HBM (Health Belief Model) was designed to bring clarity to why people uptake health services, and provides solutions on how to increase the likelihood of this happening. Using this model, if the pathways of threat and outcome expectations are satisfied, then there should be a greater uptake in carrying out the recommended course of action. Overlaying the HBM on this research shows that the pathways can be satisfied by parents understanding the threat involved with exposing their children to inappropriate content in games, and by perceiving that the benefits of change outweigh any barriers. If these pathways are satisfied, then the expected outcome is that parents are more likely to moderate the games that their children play.

The HBM provides a starting point of the theory for this research, but the problem is more complex than threat coupled with outcome expectations. It appears that the decision-making process to mediate video games does not end when this decision has been made. As can be seen by earlier discussion, parents may find that information that they are presented with may be incomplete, thus requiring further investigation. For example, they may investigate a game that carries an 'MA15+' classification and feel that it is suitable for their child to play, but they might find that the next 'MA15+' game that their child wants to play is not necessarily suitable for them. Thus, the decision to moderate video games, or not moderate as the case may be, is something that needs vigilance. In addition, an enduring issue is the fact that the subject matter (video games)

is a constantly evolving medium, and as such threat appraisals are likely to be an ongoing process.

The PMT model contains constructs that help to define some of the issues that are not addressed by the HBM, shining light onto the decision-making process that occurs. More detail is provided in the threat appraisal pathway than there is with the HBM, and the addition of the coping appraisal pathway shows that there are a range of factors that need to be considered when evaluating how someone will cope with a situation. As well, there is a construct for source information that illustrates how information feeds both the threat appraisal and coping appraisal pathways. Overall, these constructs provide a deeper understanding, offering more guidance for research design.

To provide further clarity to the decision process that parents make during the coping appraisal pathway, the ELM (Elaboration Likelihood Model) was integrated into the model as an interstitial process, linking the threat appraisal and coping appraisal constructs. Unlike the model proposed by Munoz et al. (2010), which included an emotional response as part of the coping appraisal, the proposed modification to the PMT provides a circular route which describes the cognitive process that parents may perform once they have information on which to base decisions. This construct could be considered as the *Vigilance* construct - the area where parents seek more information and revisit decisions based on their learning. The peripheral route in this construct is a one-way process; once taken, it does not allow for revisiting the threat appraisal path as it is premised on the fact that parents will accept what they have been told. The central route is a circular pathway, allowing for parents to learn information then revisit the threat appraisal based on their updated knowledge. Parents that take the central route in their consideration of the games that their children are permitted to play could be considered to be making more informed game choices. Once these pathways have been satisfied, protection motivation flows through to intention which leads to making informed game choices for children.

This modified version of the PMT is effectively a *Vigilant Protection Motivation Theory* (VPMT). This modified model will be used to guide this research, identifying processes and barriers that parents may encounter when making game choices for their children. This theory will help to discover whether parents perceive inappropriate content in video games to be a threat, as well as exploring their perception of their ability to cope with making safe game choices. Figure 8 illustrates how the issues surrounding protecting children from inappropriate content in video games map to the constructs of the *VPMT*. By satisfying each of these constructs, pertinent issues begin to emerge on which to develop the framework for the questionnaire. This model was further modified as a result of theme development in *Study 2 - Exploring Parental Use of Game Classification*. The details of this modified model can be seen in section 6.6.

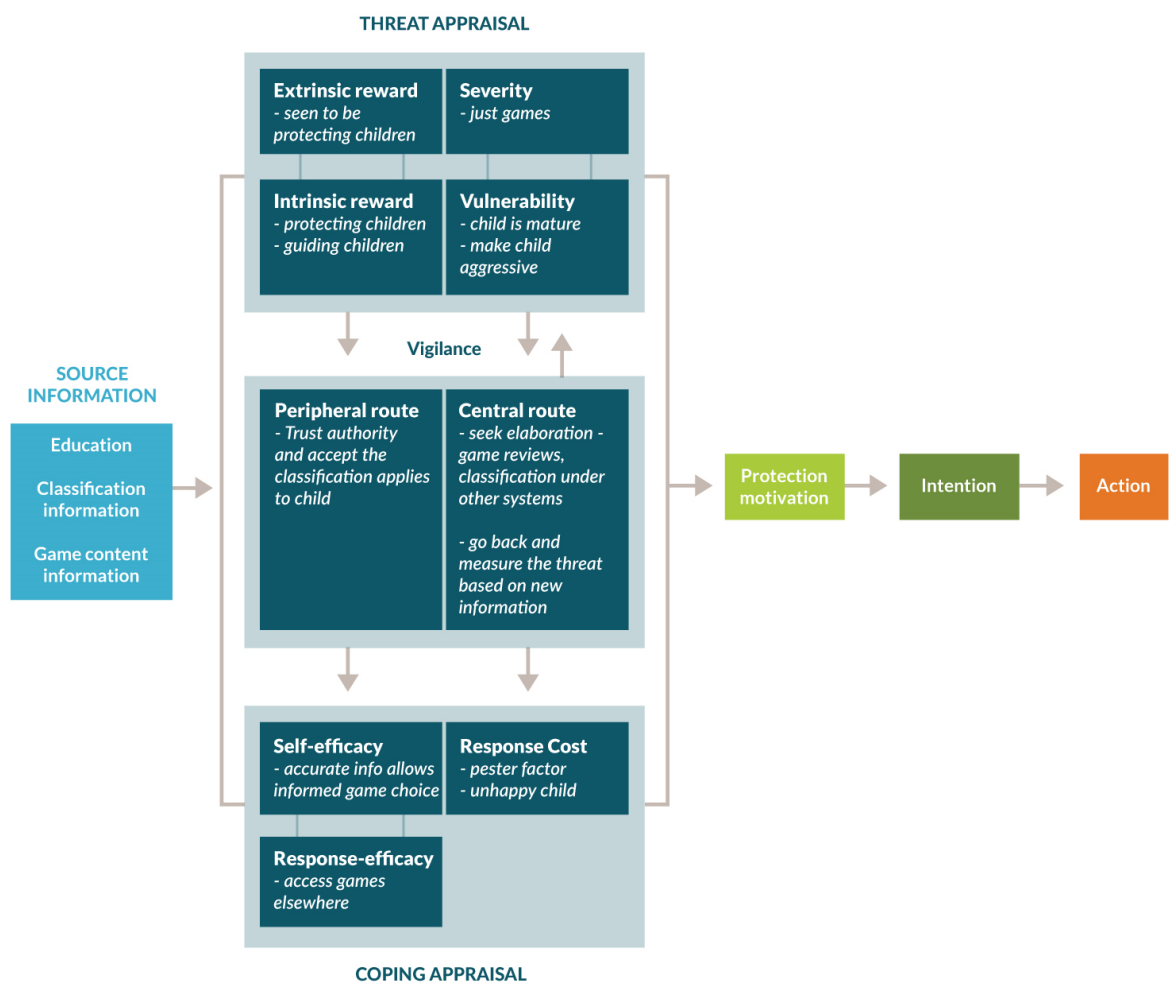


Figure 8 - Proposed Vigilant Protection Motivation Theory (VPMT)

5.2.2 Mapping research issues to VPMT constructs

Mapping the constructs of the VPMT to the issues discussed within this research assisted with categorising the issues, which allowed them to be defined as questions. Table 22 below shows how the constructs of the *VPMT* translated into questions that formed the basis of the data collection stage for this research.

Table 22 - Using VPMT constructs to form the basis of the questionnaire

Construct	Question
Source information	Which of the classification elements do you use to help you make game choices for your children? Which of the following information sources are you aware of, and do you use to research information about whether particular games are suitable for your child to play?
Extrinsic reward	Do you feel that it is important to be seen to be protecting children from inappropriate content in video games?
Intrinsic reward	If your child does not agree with a game choice you make (restricting a game) do you change your mind if they keep asking?
Perceived severity	Do you feel that content in video games can harm children?
Perceived vulnerability	Do you feel that your child is mature enough that content in video games will not cause them harm? Do you feel that exposure to violence in video games can make your child more aggressive? Do you feel that it is important to protect children from inappropriate content in video games?
Self-efficacy	Do you feel that you have enough information to make safe game choices for your child?
Response-efficacy	On which of the following consoles are you aware of parental controls and do you use the parental controls? Do you feel your child is in agreement with you about the type of games they are allowed to play? Do you feel that if you moderate the games your child plays, they will just play them elsewhere? When your child is playing games at someone else's house, do you feel that the supervising adult is aware of which type of games you feel are suitable for your child to play? When another child is playing video games at your house, are you aware of which type of games their parents or guardians feel are suitable for them to play?
Response cost	What are some of the reasons for allowing your child to play a game which the classification level indicates is not suitable for them to play?

5.3 Research approach and methods

This study used a survey design, utilising an online questionnaire for the data collection tool. Participants were self-administering, completing the questionnaire themselves. The questionnaire collected both quantitative and qualitative data, resulting in a mixed-method design. The quantitative data provided a measure of how parents utilise video game classification for their child, as well as providing demographic information which could be collated to provide a quantifiable view of the participant set. To deliver insights into how parents feel about video game classification and the role it plays when making game choices for their child, both quantitative and qualitative information was collected order to deliver insights into the processes that parents use when making game choices. This section will discuss the methods used to implement this questionnaire, including distribution, recruitment, sampling and participation.

5.3.1 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire that was used as the data collection tool in this study comprised the following stages:

Stage 1 - Demographic information

Stage 2 - Information about game and classification utilisation for each child

Stage 3 - Review of video game covers and classification information

Stage 4 - Concluding questions

The questionnaire asked for quantitative as well as qualitative responses (see Appendix B for questionnaire format). Provision of qualitative data was optional, and a limited response in these areas was anticipated. The first stage of the questionnaire asked for demographic information which allowed the data to be analysed by various factors. Participants had the option to decline to answer questions in this section. As well as demographic data, participants were also asked to provide the name, age and gender

of any of their children who play games. This information was used throughout the questionnaire, offering input fields for each child when child-specific information was requested. This information provided insight into how parents use classification information for children of different ages.

The second stage of the questionnaire asked for information relating to how parents make game choices, encompassing topics such as how games classification was used, what tools were used, and how parents feel about game content for each child. Questions were presented with a mixture of input methods that allowed for multiple choice as well as single responses. There were two questions which were asked in this stage, and then again in Stage 4, to provide insight into changes in parental attitudes towards video game classification after being presented with further information on which to base decisions.

The third stage of the questionnaire was a game review section. This explored whether parents would make different classification decisions if they were provided with more information about game content. Parents were asked to review information and answer questions about several different games. The presentation of each game comprised three steps that were viewed across 3 different screens: the first step displayed the ACB classification given to the game, the second step displayed the classification information given to the game by the ESRB and PEGI, and the third step displayed the ratings summary given to the game by the ESRB, which is available as part of classification information and viewable on the ESRB website. At each step, participants were shown imagery of the front and back cover of the game case, which included the graphic and text for the ACB classification information. Presenting the item cover is a method that has been used successfully in past research that explores classification issues (Scharrer & Leone, 2008).

At each step in the game review section, after reading the classification information participants recorded whether they feel the game is suitable for each of their children. At the final step they were also asked to review the Australian classification information

given to the game again, and asked whether, after reviewing the classification information for other systems, they felt the ACB classification provided an accurate representation of game content. Participants were also able to enter qualitative responses at each step. By starting the game review section with classification information provided by the ACB and continuing on to present classification information that is made available to parents overseas, it can be seen whether parents make different game choices when presented with more information.

The fourth stage of the questionnaire asked questions that explored how parents felt about the role of games classification; this included two questions that had been asked in Stage 2. These questions were repeated in an effort to gauge whether parental attitudes change after being provided with more detailed classification information. An open-ended question was also asked, giving participants the opportunity to describe reasons why their child might play games that the classification indicated might be inappropriate for them to play.

5.3.1.1 Rationale for game review section

The game review section presented in Stage 3 of the questionnaire can be linked to the Vigilance construct of the proposed VPMT, whereby the first step which offered the Australian classification for the game represents the peripheral route through the construct, whereby parents accept the voice of authority to assist them with game choices, especially if it corresponds with their own attitudes. The second step, which presented the international classification given to a game, sits somewhere between both the peripheral route and the central route in that whereas the international classification is offered by an authority, it may be construed as an outside source of information, thus moving the parent's cognitive processes towards seeking more information to make their game choice. The third step, where participants viewed the synopsis for the game provided by the ESRB, is situated within the central route of the Vigilance construct. This step mimics a parent seeking elaboration about the game under consideration, showing any effect that this may have on their game choice. Thus,

the game review section of the questionnaire captured the cognitive process of parents as they make game choices, which helped to shed some light on which type of information would be of the most benefit to parents when making these choices.

5.3.1.2 Game review selection

When the questionnaire was initially designed, the game review section in Stage 3 comprised six games. After the R18+ classification level was introduced in Australia in 2013, one game from this category was included. Each of the first six games was selected based on the following criteria:

1. Category 1

Four games were selected using the following criteria:

- The consumer advice for one each of violence, sexual content, drug references and coarse language was missing when compared to the ESRB classification, or it did not reflect the intensity of that given by the ESRB
- No restriction as to which classification level the game was given

2. Category 2

One game was selected from an unrestricted category that was restricted by at least one overseas system. The following criteria were used:

- Classified M by the ACB
- Carry a classification that restricts or recommends the game for either 17 years of age by the ESRB or 18 years of age by PEGI

3. Category 3

One game was selected that parents may consider suitable for younger children. The following criteria were used:

- Classified PG by the ACB
- Large discrepancy between the consumer advice applied to the game by the ACB and that given by the ESRB and PEGI

The ESRB website provides a search function that provides the ability to search for games by rating and consumer advice. This function was used to explore video games that fit the selection criteria. Games that were deemed to match these criteria were located in the PEGI and ACB online databases, reviewed for relevance then shortlisted if the game was deemed to be suitable. The selection process identified seven games, detailed on the following pages along with the selection rationale. Further information about each game is detailed in Appendix C.

5.3.1.3 Games selected for game review section

This section presents the seven games that were selected for the game review section in Stage 3 of the questionnaire.

Game 1: *Sleeping Dogs* - This game was assigned the following classification levels in each of these systems:

- ACB MA15+ (Not suitable for people under 15. Under 15s must be accompanied by a parent or adult guardian)
- ESRB rating M (Recommended for age 17+)
- PEGI rating 18 (Recommended for age 18+)

This game was chosen for Category 1 because the ACB consumer advice did not mention drugs, and warned of strong violence as opposed to Intense Violence (ESRB) and Extreme Violence (PEGI). Also, the cover of this game is cartoon in nature which may be misleading as to the game content. Figure 9 below shows the cover of this game.

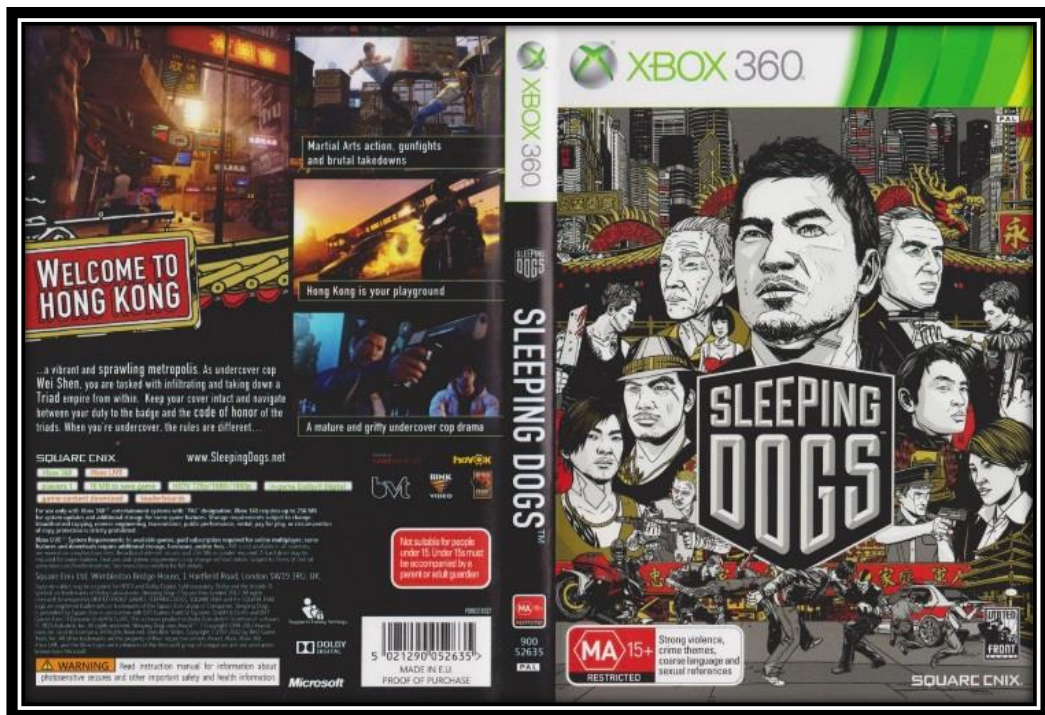


Figure 9 - Questionnaire game review cover: *Sleeping Dogs*

Game 2: *Fable II* - This game was assigned the following classification levels in each of these systems:

- ACB M (Recommended for mature audiences)
- ESRB rating M (Recommended for age 17+)
- PEGI rating 16 (Recommended for age 16+)

This game was chosen for Category 2 because it was unrestricted in Australia and it was recommended for 17+ by the ESRB. As well, the ACB consumer advice did not mention Language or Use of Alcohol. Also, the Sexual References warning may not convey the level of sexual content in the game that is indicated by the ESRB and PEGI. Figure 10 below shows the cover of this game.



Figure 10 - Questionnaire game review cover: *Fable II*

Game 3: *Trinity Universe* - This game was assigned the following classification levels in each of these systems:

- ACB PG (Parental guidance recommended)
- ESRB rating T (Recommended for age 13+)
- PEGI rating 12 (Recommended for age 12+)

This game was chosen for Category 3 because the ACB consumer advice did not mention Language, Alcohol Reference and Suggestive Themes. Also, the cartoon nature of the cover does not appear to convey the fact that these elements are within the game. Figure 11 below shows the cover of this game.



Figure 11 - Questionnaire game review cover: *Trinity Universe*

Game 4: Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War II - This game was assigned the following classification levels in each of these systems:

- ACB M (Recommended for mature audiences)
- ESRB rating M (Recommended for age 17+)
- PEGI rating 16 (Recommended for age 16+)

This game was chosen for Category 1 because the ACB consumer advice did not mention Blood and Gore. Figure 12 below shows the cover of this game.



Figure 12 - Questionnaire game review cover: Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War II

Game 5: *Far Cry 2* - This game was assigned the following classification levels in each of these systems:

- ACB MA15+ (Not suitable for people under 15. Under 15s must be accompanied by a parent or adult guardian)
- ESRB rating M (Recommended for age 17+)
- PEGI rating 16 (Recommended for age 16+)

This game was chosen for Category 1 because the ACB consumer advice did not mention Blood, Drug Reference, Sexual Themes, Strong Language, and warned of Strong Violence as opposed to Intense Violence as described by the ESRB. Figure 13 below shows the cover of this game.

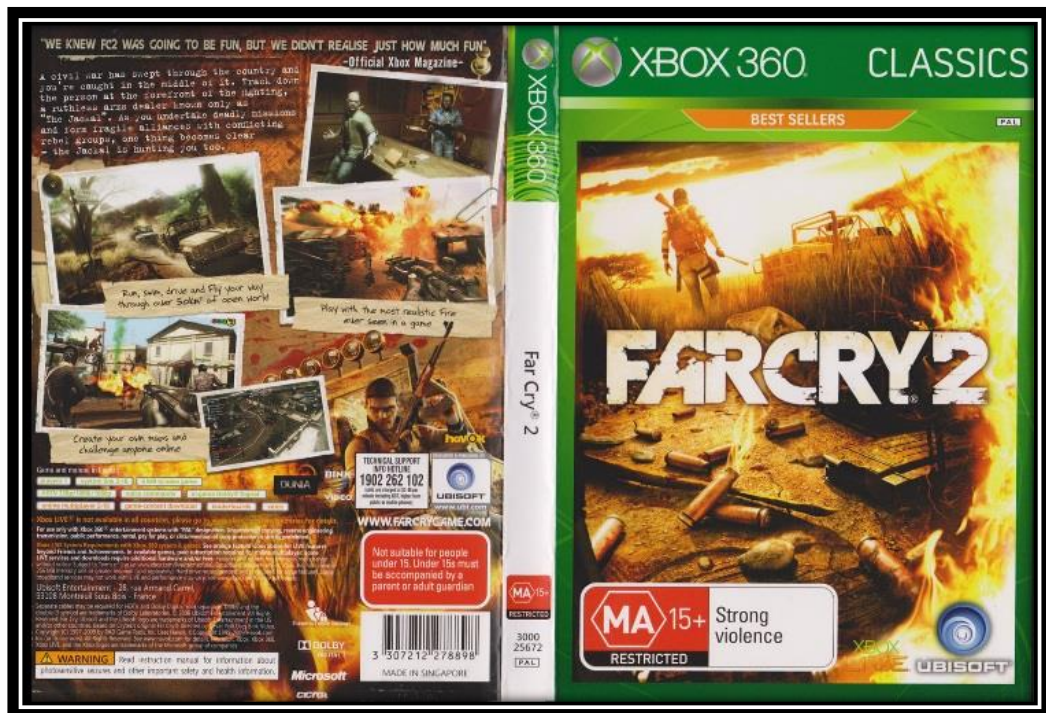


Figure 13 - Questionnaire game review cover: *Far Cry 2*

Game 6: *Dragon Age: Origins* - This game carries the following classification level:

- ACB MA15+ (Not suitable for people under 15. Under 15s must be accompanied by a parent or adult guardian)
- ESRB rating M (Recommended for age 17+)
- PEGI rating 18 (Recommended for age 18+)

This game was chosen for Category 1 because the ACB consumer advice did not mention Blood, Partial Nudity, Sexual Content and Language. Also, the ACB classification warned of Strong Violence as opposed to Intense Violence (ESRB). Figure 14 below shows the cover of this game.



Figure 14 - Questionnaire game review cover: *Dragon Age: Origins*

Game 7: Grand Theft Auto V - The questionnaire was launched before the R18+ classification level was introduced, and as such the review section initially comprised the aforementioned six games; after the introduction of the R18+ classification, one game from this category was added to the questionnaire to gain a measure of how parents perceived this new classification. As this addition occurred after some responses had already been collected, any results that include this game have less responses.

This game was assigned the following classification levels in each of these systems:

- ACB R18+ (Restricted to 18 and over)
- ESRB rating M (Recommended for age 17+)
- PEGI rating 18 (recommended for 18+)

This game was chosen because it carried the R18+ classification, and because the ACB consumer advice did not mention Blood and Gore, Intense Violence, Mature Humor, Nudity, Strong Language, Strong Sexual Content, and Use of Alcohol. At this point it is prudent to mention that the classification for this game was updated since the questionnaire was conducted, details of this can be found in section Appendix D.

Figure 15 below shows the cover of this game.



Figure 15 - Questionnaire game review cover: *Grand Theft Auto V*

To ensure that the covers used in the game review section of the questionnaire were an accurate representation of what parents see when they purchase video games in a shop, the imagery for each of these games were sourced through Australian channels. As a result, all of the games displayed classification markings allocated by the ACB. Five games were sourced through a video game store, which permitted the games to be borrowed so the covers could be scanned. One game was sourced through an acquaintance and the last was purchased through eBay. Each of the covers was scanned at high resolution on a standard flatbed scanner which delivered a satisfactory level of readability. This produced a digital image of the game covers which were displayed in the game review section of the questionnaire.

5.3.2 Distribution methods

There are several methods of distributing a questionnaire, including the postal system and over the internet (Cole, 2005). Sending questionnaires through the mail allows mass distribution of the survey instrument, and all that is needed is the mailing address of the participant. This can be considered a reasonably inexpensive method of data collection, with the only costs being the price of paper, ink, envelopes and postage stamps.

Two methods of distribution over the internet are email and web forms. Emailing questionnaires to participants, a method of distribution that is cheaper than traditional mail, provides speedier delivery. Participants can print the questionnaire, complete it, scan it and email it back or return it through the postal system. An alternative to having participants print the questionnaire and return it is to send them a URL to a web form. Data collected from web forms can be entered directly into a database when the form is submitted, saving the time used to collate data from hard copies of the questionnaire. Participants are self-administering, filling out the questionnaire themselves. This allows them to complete the questionnaire at a time that suits, at their own speed. One

limitation to this method is that it can never be certain who is actually filling out the questionnaire (Witte, 2004).

When choosing between postal delivery and online delivery of the questionnaire it is important to make sure that the responses obtained from each method are consistent. Cole (2005) compared mail and web-based survey distribution methods by sending a questionnaire to 500 selected participants, as well as sending the questionnaire to a second set of 500 participants in paper form via the postal service. Both methods were sent two follow-up invitations at frequencies based on previous research that detailed optimal response rates. The follow-ups for the postal mail questionnaire were sent two and four weeks later, and follow-ups for the web-based questionnaire were sent five and ten days later. Results showed that the response rate between these two methods of distribution is different; 11% of web-based questionnaires were returned, compared to 29% returned via the postal service. As well, web-based surveys were more likely to contain missing fields than paper surveys. The researchers discuss how the five-day follow-up for web questionnaires might be too soon, and how people might have been deterred by receiving multiple messages about the same survey within such a short period of time.

Differences in demographics between web based participants and postal delivery should be considered. Nulty (2008) suggests that participants who are more likely to complete a web-based questionnaire may have a predisposition of attitude that may result in systematic bias in some cases. This is based on the supposition that some people feel more confident with the online medium than others. These results can be seen in the study by Cole (2005), where questions related to technology were more likely to vary between online and offline surveys. However, the classification study conducted by the OFLC (2005b) shows that differences between online and offline survey methods are not necessarily inherent. This research used components of two studies conducted in 2002: an AC Nielson survey to provide benchmark measures of awareness for the different classification symbols in use, and a study by Newspoll to

determine community attitude towards the OFLC. The 2005 research attempted to maintain consistency between the earlier and latter studies by using the same methodology. However, instead of door-to-door surveying (AC Nielson) or telephone surveying (Newspoll), online delivery was used. The results from this survey showed a similarity in demographic profile and media consumption, which would indicate that questionnaires delivered via online methods can produce similar results to face-to-face or telephone delivery methods. These results suggest that it may be prudent to evaluate the survey audience, and choose the delivery method accordingly.

5.3.3 Survey software

Several software packages allow delivery of an online questionnaire such as *Lime Survey* (<http://limesurvey.org>) and *Qualtrics* (<http://qualtrics.com>). Each of these systems allow you to create question items for the questionnaire, which includes simple questions (such as text input) or complex questions (such as matrix or dependence on previous answers) As well, there is functionality within these systems to analyse the resultant data.

The questionnaire for this research displays inputs in both the second and third stages that are dependent on how many children the participant enters into the first stage. This functionality required a more specialised solution than off-the-shelf software such as *Lime Survey* and *Qualtrics* may offer. Consequently, custom software was developed using *PHP* (PHP Hypertext Processor) to cater to the specific needs of this research. The data from the questionnaire was collected in a non-identifying manner that protects the identity of the participant and is stored in a secured *MySQL* database.

5.3.3.1 Controlling response bias

Response bias is a situation where responses to survey-based research are affected by a number of factors that may affect the validity of the data (Furnham, 1986). As there are multiple games in the review process, it is possible that after viewing several games

participants will predict the content on the next screen and adjust their responses accordingly. This may introduce a response bias whereby responses to the games at the end of the review may not be an accurate reflection of how the participant feels about the information for that game. To avoid this situation, each participant was presented with games in the review section in a random order.

5.3.4 Ethical considerations

As this research involved human participants, ethical issues needed to be considered. Part of this required participants to be informed about the nature of the survey, and what would happen with the data they provided. Participants must consent to participating in research, and as such they were presented with a combined consent form and PLIS (Plain Language Information Statement) which explained the purpose of the research (see Appendix E), as well as informing them that the information they provided would be de-identified before being used as an aggregate to deliver results from this research. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time, and any data they had previously submitted would become part of the aggregate data thus no individual results could be removed. Participants gave consent by checking a box and starting the questionnaire.

Some of the information used in the questionnaire was of a nature that some adults may consider offensive, such as rating reviews that may contain offensive language and screenshots portraying the content of the game. Some participants might have found this content disturbing, in both viewing and the realisation that their child might be exposed to this content. A positive debriefing was delivered at the start of the questionnaire as well as at the end questionnaire to help mitigate any negative impact to the participant. This debriefing contained information such as links to the Australian ACB website and support organisations.

An application for ethics approval was made to the *Human Research Ethics Committee* at *Federation University Australia* (previously the *University of Ballarat*). This ensured that the survey was conducted in an ethical manner.

5.3.5 Pilot testing

Pilot tests provide a controlled environment in which to test the questionnaire to identify problems with the process (Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003). Using a small number of selected participants to complete the questionnaire helps to ensure the process runs smoothly when it is sent out to all participants, as well as demonstrating how long the questionnaire takes to fill out so participants can be informed of their time commitment.

Four volunteers were recruited to complete the pilot testing of the questionnaire. Each volunteer had either one or two children. This testing uncovered several minor bugs which were rectified, and showed that the time to complete the questionnaire ranged between 15 and 27 minutes.

5.3.6 Sourcing participants

The participants for this study were sourced through schools, requiring a two-pronged recruitment process: engaging school communities from across Australia, then inviting parents from consenting schools to participate. The response rate of parents through schools was very low, estimated to be around .42% (see section 5.4.2 for details). In order to bolster this rate, several other methods of recruitment were employed. These methods are detailed in section 5.3.10.

5.3.7 Sampling

The method of selecting participants for research needs careful consideration so that the information collected is valid and can be generalised. As this study explores issues with parents, *Purposive Sampling* (also known as Subjective Sampling) (Trochim,

2006), which looks at specific subset of people who share the same characteristics, is a more suitable method than *Simple Random Sampling* of the whole population.

Heterogeneity Sampling, a subcategory of Purposive Sampling, allows the researcher to select from a broad population to obtain a diverse range of ideas rather than ideas from a particular type of person.

As distributing the questionnaire through schools returned poor results, when distribution methods shifted to leaflet distribution and online advertising, the sampling method moved to simple random sampling.

5.3.8 Recruitment through schools

To garner the response of parents of children who play video games, the participants sought for the survey were parents of children aged up to 18 years with at least one child who plays video games. To reach these parents, one centralised subset is schools. This section describes the rationale, process and methods employed when engaging school communities. The following section proceeds to describe how participants were recruited for the questionnaire.

5.3.8.1 Rationale for engaging schools

Sourcing participants through schools provides an all-encompassing method of reaching a diverse range of participants, and can be an effective method of recruitment when researching issues related to children (Alibali & Nathan, 2010; Claudio & Stingone, 2008; Harrison & Christie, 2004; Testa & Coleman, 2006). Once the boundaries of the research are defined, schools can be selected based on the demographic nature of the school community, or by convenience. This method of recruitment has been used extensively in health-based research (Alexander, 1984; Chiri, Awan, Archibald, & Abbott, 2013; Harrington et al., 1997; Raat, Botterweck, Landgraf, Hoogeveen, & Essink-bot, 2005; Tierens, Bal, Crombez, Loeys, Antrop, & Deboutte, 2012).

Previous studies have shown that the participation rate of school communities in research has varied. Harrington et al. (1997) saw a 100% participation rate by enlisting district nutritionists to approach schools with a request to participate in health-based research. However, not all school-based research has achieved such a high participation rate. Chiri, Awan, Archibald and Abbott (2013) found that 60% of schools that were approached were willing to participate in their research regarding parental knowledge about dental issues, and Tierens et al. (2012) and Alexander (1984) saw a 62% and 39% school participation rate respectively.

Just as school participation rates have varied, so too have the rate of participants recruited within these schools. The study by Harrington et al. (1997) resulted in 69% of selected parents agreeing to participate, and 83% of these returned the completed form. In contrast, Chiri et al. (2013) sent a questionnaire home with the school newsletter, which 21% of parents returned. A similar response rate to this was seen with child health-related research in the Netherlands, where 24% of randomly-selected parents from participating schools responded to the questionnaire they had been given (Raaijmakers et al., 2005). All of these studies involved a hard copy of the questionnaire which was distributed offline.

Previous research exploring the difference in responses between online and offline studies suggest that without incentives, studies delivered online may result in lower response rates than those delivered offline (Dommeyer, Baum, Hanna, & Chapman, 2004; Nulty, 2008). This may have been the case with a study into young drivers that was conducted in New South Wales, Australia (Harrison & Christie, 2004). Of the 10,000 invitations distributed through 127 schools, only .3% submitted the completed survey. The authors of this study state that there were some technical difficulties with the delivery of the questionnaire which may have reduced the response rate, but only 3% visited the website which supports the suggestion about low response rates from online studies.

Whereas researchers may feel that schools are a rich source of information, the prime concern of schools is to educate; thus, research requests may not be given the priority that the researcher desires. There may be many factors which a school principal will take into account when considering a request to conduct research within their school community; although these factors are not widely addressed in the literature, one that has been identified is time limitations (Tierens et al., 2012). As such, once a school agrees to participate in research, the researcher needs to be flexible with their timetable, operating within the time constraints of the school (Alibali & Nathan, 2010).

The researcher needs to obtain permission to conduct research through schools. The process for this differs between countries, and may even differ between each state within the country. In the USA, researchers can approach schools directly in some districts, and in others they need to obtain permission from a local authority before they can approach schools with research requests (Alibali & Nathan, 2010).

There are three types of schools in Australia: Government, Catholic and Independent. Both Government and Catholic schools have an overarching regulatory body, while each Independent school maintains their own governance through a School Board. Each State and Territory has a department to manage Government schools. In Victoria, these schools are administered by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). Catholic schools in Victoria are managed by the Catholic Education Office (CEO) in each of the four Dioceses in Victoria: Ballarat, Melbourne, Sale and Sandhurst. The number of primary and secondary schools in Victoria at the time of writing is 1,594 public schools, 218 independent schools and 484 Catholic schools (Primary Schools in Victoria., 2014).

When conducting research through Government and Catholic schools in Victoria, the researcher must seek approval from the DEECD and the relevant CEO respectively before they can approach schools in each of these jurisdictions with a research request. As Independent schools are not governed by any regulatory body, these schools may be approached directly.

Notwithstanding the Independent school sector which does not require approval from a regulatory body, the process of seeking approval to conduct research through schools in Victoria results in two levels of consent:

1. Approval from the regulatory body to approach schools within their jurisdiction
2. Approval from selected schools to participate in the study

5.3.8.2 Obtaining permission from each regulatory body

To obtain permission to approach schools with a research request, applications were submitted to the DEECD and to the Catholic Education Office of each Diocese in Victoria. These applications contained information about the proposed research as well as proof of approval from the relevant Ethics board. The application form for each regulatory body was downloaded from their website.

5.3.8.3 Sourcing school information

Once approval had been obtained by the relevant regulatory bodies, contact information for each school was sourced. Several companies offer databases of school information for sale through the internet, which contain detailed information about schools such as school name, email address, postal address, telephone number, school size, affiliation etc. One such database was quoted as having email addresses for 95% of schools, with an accuracy rate of 95%. To avoid purchasing a broad set of information when this study only required the name and email address for each school, a *scraper* was developed. This is a program which scans the text on a webpage and extracts particular information. This scraper was run on several publicly available websites that contained a catalogue of schools in Victoria, extracting just the school name, street address and email address for each school. This returned 2,273 results, and the information for each school was stored in a database along with a unique identifying code.

5.3.8.4 Inviting schools to participate in research

An invitation was sent to each school within each sector inviting them to allow their school community to participate in this research. This email provided an overview of the research, explaining the time commitment to both schools and parents, as well as a link to a webpage where a school representative could indicate whether or not they wanted their school community to participate in the study. This link included the unique identifying code stored in the database for the school. When school representatives responded by clicking this link, the identifying code could match the response with the relevant school.

As well as the initial invitation to participate, after a period of time schools who did not respond were sent a follow-up email with a reminder about the invitation to participate in the study. In all, schools who did not respond were sent the initial invitation plus two follow-up emails inviting them to participate. Those who responded to the invitation, either positive or negative, were automatically removed from the mailing list and were not sent further emails.

5.3.8.5 Distributing questionnaires through schools

The school newsletter has proven to be an effective method of communicating with parents (Wolfendon, Kypri, Freund, & Hodder, 2009), and as such is the method that this study used to announce this research to parents. Schools that chose to participate in this research were sent a notice to be placed in their newsletter which contained a brief description of the research, as well as a link to the online questionnaire. In deference to the fact that school priorities may not allow a rigid start date for placing the invitation in their newsletter, they were asked to run this notice over a period of four weeks during a stipulated time-frame of about two months. Several weeks prior to the closing of the research, schools were sent an email thanking them for their involvement, and reminding them to place the notice in their newsletter if they had not already done so.

5.3.9 Results of school engagement

5.3.9.1 Application to regulatory bodies

Approval outcomes from the regulatory bodies for Government and Catholic schools took between one day and nine weeks. Each sector granted approval with the exception of one Catholic Diocese, which rejected the application with the explanation that they did not feel this research was suitable for schools within their Diocese due to the questionnaire being focused on inappropriate content in video games. The regulatory bodies that approved the application had their own stipulations regarding conducting research in schools within their jurisdiction. For example, each sector required a report of results to be sent at the conclusion of the research, and some sectors wanted to be informed of which schools participated.

In total, there were 2,273 schools emailed. Of these, 35 emails returned as undeliverable and as such not counted in the number of invitations delivered. This resulted in 1594 Government schools, 444 Catholic schools and 199 Independent schools successfully receiving an email inviting their school community to participate in this research. Table 23 on the following page shows that the response rate from all schools was 10% and that 3% of schools agreed to participate. Eight percent of Government schools responded, compared to 15% and 12% of Catholic and Independent schools respectively. Each sector shows a participation rate of between 2.5% and 3.5%. There were 35 bounced emails, with Government schools having the highest bounce rate at 2% compared to 1% or less for Independent and Catholic schools.

Table 23 - Response rate for all schools from all emails

School type	Invitations sent	Undeliverable	Responded	Participating
Government	1594	32 (1.97%)	129 (8.09%)	53 (3.32%) (41.08% of responses)
Catholic	444	1 (.22%)	67 (15.09%)	11 (2.48%) (16.41% of responses)
Independent	199	2 (1%)	24 (12.06%)	5 (2.51%) (20.83% of responses)
Total	2237	35 (1.54%)	220 (9.83%)	69 (3.08%) (31.36% of responses)

Forty-eight school representatives declined through email instead of using the web form, sometimes offering a reason why their school community did not choose to participate in this research. Table 24 below shows that 55% of these replies did not provide a reason for not wanting to participate. 25% said that they are, or had been, committed to other research and did not wish to participate in more, and 6% said that they were either not interested or that the research did not suit the nature of their school community.

Table 24 - Reasons given for not participating

Reason for not participating	Count
No reason given	24 (55.8%)
Committed to other research	11 (25.6%)
Not interested	2 (4.7%)
Does not suit the nature of our school community	3 (7%)
Too busy	1 (2.3%)
Parents have surveys for school review and do not want to overload	1 (2.3%)
No extra-curricular activities due to industrial dispute	1 (2.3%)
Total	43

5.3.9.2 Rate of distribution in school newsletters

Some schools publish their newsletter online, and as such, a cursory check showed whether participating schools had indeed placed the notice in the newsletter as agreed. Some schools do not publish their newsletters online, and some only allow you to view the newsletters if you have a login to a secured area of the website.

Table 25 below shows that 20 schools whose newsletter was viewable online placed the notice in their newsletter. Five schools do not provide their newsletters online and five schools store their newsletters within a secured area of their website. Also, five schools provide access to their newsletters online, but do not keep the list updated. Almost half of the participating schools did not place the notice in their newsletter, which suggests an actual participation rate of 2%. However, this figure cannot be confirmed as some schools may have distributed the notice by means other than being placed in the newsletter, such as a handout with the newsletter or a notice on their website or some schools may have placed the notice in their newsletter but do not have their newsletters online for verification.

Table 25 - Rate of placement of the invitation into the school newsletter

Invitation placement type	# of schools
Schools that placed the notice in the newsletter	20 (29%)
Schools that did not place the notice in the newsletter	34 (49.3%)
Schools that do not publish their newsletter online	5 (7.3%)
Schools that display newsletter within a secured area of the website	5 (7.3%)
Schools with outdated newsletter list	5 (7.3%)
Total	69

5.3.9.3 Discussion

The results show that the response rate of the email to schools inviting their school community to participate in the study was 8%, with those agreeing to participate at just over 3%. The actual participation rate of schools that distributed the invitation to parents may be as low as .9% as this is the number of schools that were verified to have placed the notice in their newsletter.

Even though Catholic and Independent schools had a much higher response rate than Government schools, the participation rate was fairly constant across all sectors. This made the participatory rate of responses from Government schools at 41%, which is almost double that of the Independent and Catholic schools at 21% and 16% respectively. This would indicate that representatives of Government schools are more likely to respond to a research request if they are participating.

Almost all of the schools responded within three weeks of receiving the email invitation. One school took 31 days to respond - this was considerably longer than other responses, and could perhaps be a result of consultation between school administrators, or it could be that the receiver was simply too busy to respond at an earlier time. This particular school was an Independent school, and as such may have been waiting on approval from the School Board.

The reasons given in the personal responses from school representatives for declining to participate provides some insight into why schools may choose not to participate in research. The most common reason is that the school has already committed to other research, thus the researcher would benefit by timing their request to ensure it is in early enough that the school has not already committed elsewhere. The timing of the study needs to take into account not only the time restraints of the school, but also those of the parents if the research involves parent participation. The reasons that relate to religious or cultural beliefs demonstrate that the demographics of the school community may have some impact on whether they will participate in the study.

Several school representatives responded stating that the topic of the research did not suit the nature of their school. One reply from a specialist school stated, "We do not encourage our children to play video games. Although the choice is entirely their families, we could not ask them to partake in a survey in an area that we hope they are not involved in". Similarly, a secular school responded, "Our School community do not use the internet nor would they play video games due to their cultural beliefs". Perhaps these schools feel that they may be endorsing video game playing if they acknowledge that the children may be playing them, or they may feel that due their beliefs, parents are able to ensure that their child does not play video games.

Although by examining online versions of school newsletter it appeared that not all schools placed the notice in their newsletter, this does not take into account that some schools may have printed a separate hand-out for the invitation that accompanied the newsletter which cannot be tracked by checking the school's online newsletter. This makes the potential number of families reached a much harder figure to quantify, and for researchers who require these figures it may be helpful to consider processes that help to verify that the notice was placed.

Due to the automated nature of retrieving email addresses for schools from publicly available online sources, it was impossible to confirm the validity of each school community without manually reviewing the information and evaluating whether the type of school fit the needs of this research. This resulted in some schools being sent an invitation to participate where their student base was not suitable. For example, several schools replied that their students were disabled, and did not play video games.

The list of email addresses that was collected resulted in a 98.5% successful delivery rate. For the purposes of this study, which only required the school name and email address, this method may have proven to be more reliable than a commercially purchased database, which based on the supplier's claims would only have successfully delivered emails to 90% of schools.

5.3.10 Parent engagement

The aim of this research was to determine whether games classification provides enough information for parents to make informed game choices. To accomplish this, this research explored issues that parents and guardians face when making game choices for their children.

This research explored the following overarching issues:

- Does video game classification in Australia provide enough information for parents to make informed decisions about what games their children play?
- What are the factors that may prevent parents from protecting children from inappropriate content in video games?

To gather this information, a questionnaire was used to survey parents of children that played video games to determine how they manage their child's video game usage in respect to the Australian Classification system. As can be seen in the following results section, as seen in previous research conducted through schools, the response rate for this study was very poor². It isn't clear whether the topic of the survey or the delivery method was the cause of the low response rate. Due to this poor response rate, recruitment methods were broadened to include a wider sampling of the population.

In an attempt to bolster the response rate, several supplementary methods were employed. These effectively widened the base on which to source participants. There was also an offer of an iPad Mini during the supplementary advertising stage as an incentive to encourage participation.

² The participation rate could be aligned with those seen in Harrison and Christie's online study (2004), and confirms the statement from Nulty (2008) that online studies may result in lower response rates.

The details of the supplementary methods of recruitment are as follows:

Leaflet drop - leaflets were designed which included an invitation to participate in the research, as well as announcing that participants would go into the draw to win an iPad Mini (see Appendix F). These leaflets were distributed through business based on convenience; this included businesses operating in selected localities within the Central Victoria area, as well as through businesses located in selected towns located on the route from Victoria through to Queensland. In all, 3000 leaflets were distributed with 50 leaflets placed at each business. Four questionnaires were started, and one was completed.

Magazine advertising - a one-off advertisement was placed into the classifieds section of *Melbourne's Child*. This publication focuses on information and services for children within the Melbourne area. As well as an invitation to participate, the advertisement also contained information about participants being placed into the draw to win the iPad Mini. This advertisement did not garner any results.

Online advertising - advertisements were placed in online outlets to reach a wider audience than could be reached through offline methods. This included paid advertising through the social media website *Facebook* (www.facebook.com) and classifieds website *Gumtree* (www.gumtree.com.au). The advertisements placed through Facebook were targeted to parents of children 4 - 18 years of age who live in Australia. These ads reached 220,659 people, of which 352 clicked through to the questionnaire. Of these, nine people started the questionnaire, and six people completed. The advertisements that were placed through Gumtree did not offer functionality to target the ad to a specific audience. There were 41 surveys started through Gumtree, and 31 were completed.

As well as paid online advertisements, invitations to participate were placed into selected forums that did not attract an advertising fee. These forums were primarily child-centric, with a member base being parents of school-aged children. One forum, *Australian Competitions Club* (www.compingclub.com), was not child-focused but competition based. This forum advertises incentivised competitions that are targeted to Australians, and was the only forum to return results: there were 11 questionnaires started, and of these, nine were completed.

5.4 Results

5.4.1 Participation

Overall, there were 85 questionnaires started and of these, 61 were completed (see Appendix G for the data). Nine participants did not proceed beyond Stage 1 of the questionnaire, which asked for demographic information as well as information about each child of the participant that played video games. Figure 16 below illustrates the sources of participants, showing that almost half of participants originated from the online classifieds website Gumtree (www.gumtree.com.au); the next largest source was schools, which delivered nearly a quarter of participants. The recruitment method that delivered the least number of participants was leaflet distribution.

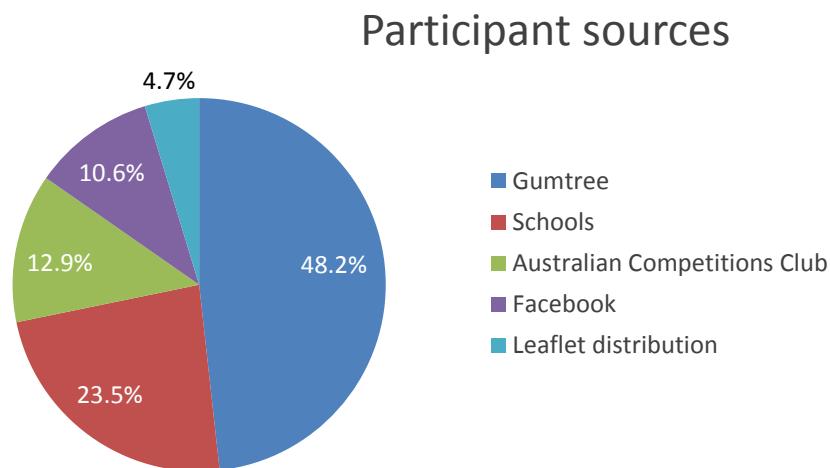


Figure 16 - Study 2 participant sources (n = 85)

Not all participants that started the questionnaire went through to completion, and some recruitment sources delivered a higher rate of completion than others did. Table 26 on the following page shows that 72% percent of participants completed the questionnaire, and the Australian Competitions Club forum (www.compingclub.com) yielded the highest completion rate at 82%, followed by Gumtree at almost 76%. The recruitment

source that returned the poorest completion rate was leaflet distribution, returning a rate of just 25%.

Table 26 - Completion rate of all participant sources - Study 2 (n = 85)

Distribution method	Started	Completed	Completion rate
Gumtree	41	31	75.6%
Schools	20	14	70%
Australian Competitions Club	11	9	81.9%
Facebook	9	6	66.7%
Leaflet distribution	4	1	25%
Total	85	61	71.8%

Figure 17 below shows the completion rate of each stage of the questionnaire. A higher rate of females completed than males. The majority of participants who abandoned the questionnaire did so during the game review section, and these were mainly males. All those who completed this section proceeded to complete the concluding questions.

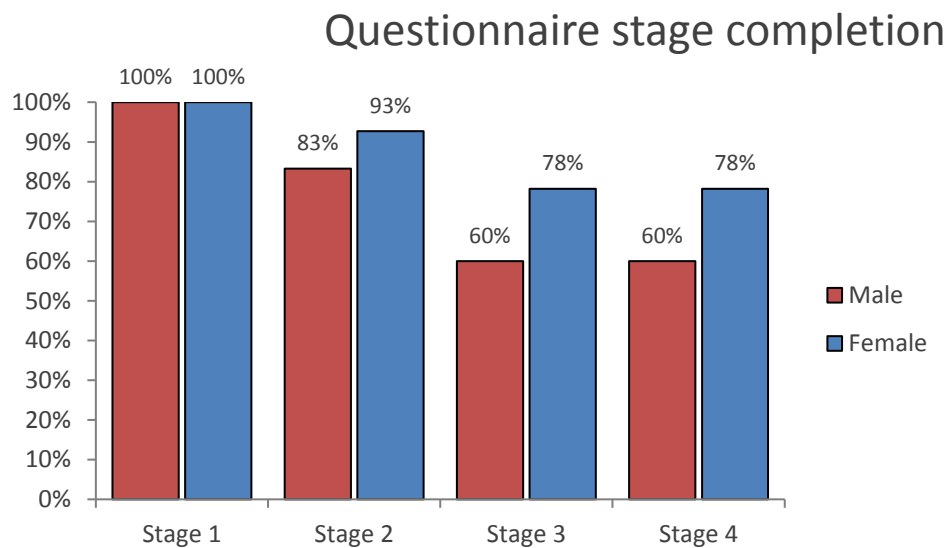


Figure 17 - Completion rate of each stage by gender (n = 85)

5.4.2 Response rate

Due to the widespread nature of sourcing participants, it is difficult to calculate an accurate response rate for the questionnaire. The initial recruitment conducted through school channels gives a basis on which to calculate the population and response rate, and although this does not provide an accurate reflection of the overall response rate for the study, it does provide a controlled definition of one avenue of recruitment. The figures used to calculate the population for recruitment through school channels were gleaned from several sources of information. The number of students attending participating schools was retrieved from the *My School* website (www.myschool.edu.au), and the average number of children per family was sourced from census data for Victoria, Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011) ³.

Table 27 on the following page shows the calculated response rate from all participating schools, as well as the response rate for only those schools that were confirmed to have placed the notice in their newsletter. This shows that there was a .42% response rate from these schools, and .3% of the population completed the surveys. Although indicative, the results from the verified notice column may not be accurate due to some schools possibly distributing the notice by means other than the online newsletter, which places the actual response rate somewhere between the two columns.

³ There were 1,414,563 families in Victoria in 2011 and 756,483 school-aged children. This calculates to 1.87 children per family.

Table 27 - Start and completion rate of participants sourced through schools

Description	Participating schools	Schools with verified notice in newsletter
Student population	29,288	8,893
Average # children per family	1.87	1.87
Potential # families reached	15,662	4755
Surveys started	20 (.13%)	20 (.42%)
Surveys completed	14 (.09%)	14 (.30%)
# surveys recommenced	2 (10% of surveys started)	2 (10% of surveys started)

5.4.3 Summary of demographic data

The first stage of the questionnaire asked for demographic information about the participant. The sample was primarily made up of females (65%), with ages ranging from under 25 (18%) to over 55 (4%). The majority of participants are married (55%), 27% are single and 7% are separated, widowed or divorced. The highest level of education is a Master's degree (9%), the lowest less than year 10 (11%), with a TAFE/Diploma qualification being the most common level of education (39%). Most participants are employed, with 27% employed full time, 22% employed part time and 6% self-employed. Some participants are also students, with 11% of participants studying full-time or part-time. The household income of 24% of participants falls between \$25,000 and \$50,000 per year, 2% of household incomes are over \$150,000 and 18% of household incomes are under \$25,000. The majority of participants are Christians (42%) with other religions being Buddhism (5%), Islam (5%), Hinduism (4%), and 19% stating that they are agnostic/atheist. Finally, participants were located across various states of Australia, but most were from Victoria as can be seen in Figure 18. The larger number of participants from this state is probably because the questionnaire

was initially released to all schools across Victoria, and leaflet distribution was throughout the Central Victorian region.

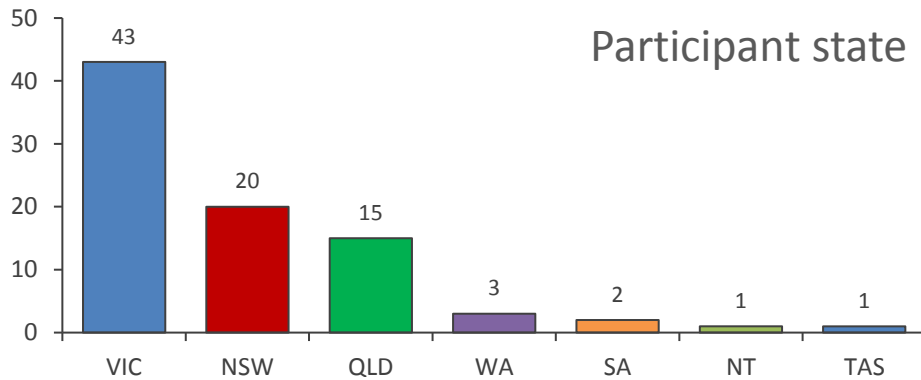


Figure 18 - Participants by state (n = 85)

Figure 19 below shows the gender and age group of participants, comprising 65% females and 35% males. Most participants were 26 - 35 years of age, followed by those aged 36 - 45. Two participants did not choose an age group.

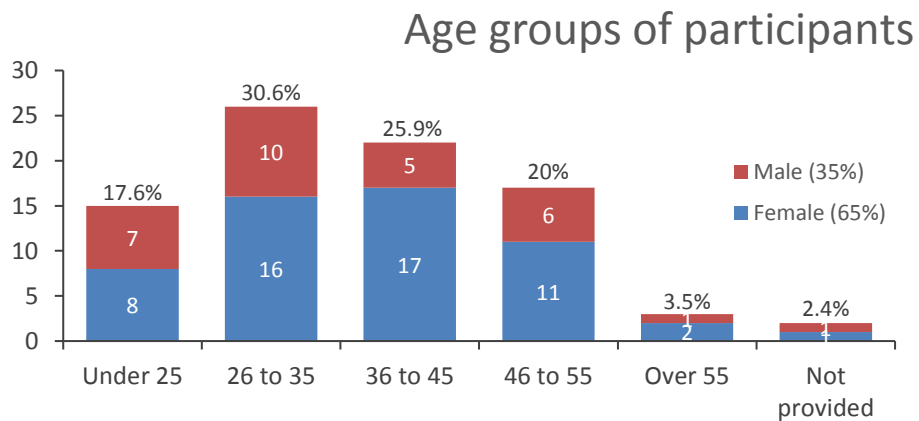


Figure 19 - Age group of participants (n = 85)

Each of the participants in this questionnaire are parents. For clarity, from herein when results are presented by gender, participants will be referred to as fathers and mothers. Also, some questions referred to the partner of the participant, and although there are many different definitions of what constitutes a couple, due to lack of granularity and for

simplicity the analysis and discussion in this section will assume that the partner of a mother is a father, and vice versa.

As well as demographic information, the first stage also asked participants to enter details about each of their children who play video games. Overall, there were 117 children entered by participants. Due to the small number of children, results from questions that asked for information related to each child are presented in age groups in order to impart meaningful information. In an effort to identify these groups, a comprehensive search of the literature was conducted to explore methods of grouping cognitive stages of childhood development by age, but this search failed to return results. However, a set of guidelines released by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (US Consumer Product Safety Commission [CPSC] & Therell, 2002) describes the suitability of toy characteristics for age groups from birth to 12 years of age. These guidelines also encompass video games, describing the level of complexity suitable to each age group. Due to a lack of a definitive childhood cognitive age group model, this study grouped age-related results based on the age groups set out in the guidelines provided by the CPSC. As these guidelines only comprise children up to 12 years of age, those aged 12 - 18 years were separated into 12-14, 15-17, and 18 years of age, as these reflect the restrictive boundaries of both the 'MA15+' and R18+ classifications.

Figure 20 on the following page shows the age groups within which these children fall, with the 9 - 12 age group having the most children. There were more boys than girls entered, and this was reflected in each age group except for the 5 - 8 age group where numbers are even.

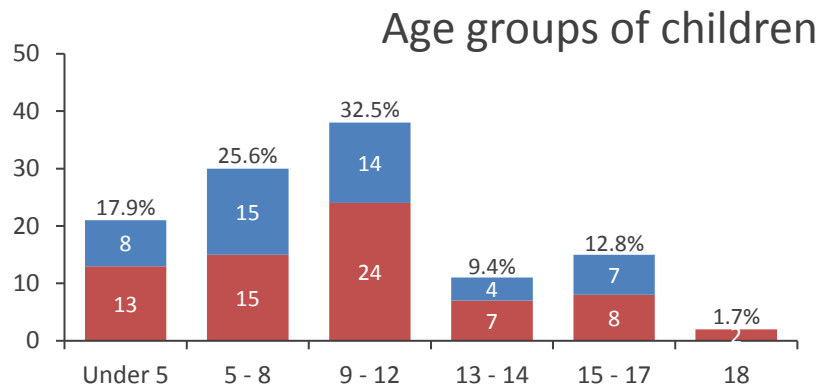


Figure 20 - Age groups of children reported (n = 117)

5.4.4 Parents that play video games

As reports in recent years have shown, games are no longer a pastime that only interest children, with adults also participating in this activity (Brand et al., 2013; Brand & Todhunter, 2015). Table 28 below shows the number of parents that play video games. Fathers are the more prolific players, both in number and frequency, with almost half of fathers playing a lot compared to 13% of mothers who play a lot. A higher proportion of mothers than fathers don't play video games at all.

Table 28 - Frequency of video game play for all parents (n = 85)

Amount of play	Fathers	Mothers	Total
I play a lot	14 (46.7%)	7 (12.7%)	21 (24.7%)
I play occasionally	11 (36.7%)	36 (65.5%)	47 (55.3%)
I never play	5 (16.7%)	12 (21.8%)	17 (20%)

To offer more insight into parents who play video games, Table 29 on the following page shows the frequency of video game play of parents by age. Those in the under 25 age group play the most, with 93% playing at least occasionally. Parents in the 46 - 55 age group play video games the least, with 35% of parents in this group that never play. Closely following this are parents aged over 55, with 33% of these parents never playing. Overall, 19% of parents across all age groups never play video games at all.

Table 29 - Frequency of video game play of all parents by age (n = 83)

Frequency	Under 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 55	Over 55	Total
I play a lot	5 (33.3%)	7 (26.9%)	4 (18.2%)	3 (17.7%)	1 (33.3%)	20 (24.1%)
I play occasionally	9 (60%)	16 (61.5%)	13 (59.1%)	8 (47.1%)	1 (33.3%)	47 (56.6%)
I never play	1 (6.7%)	3 (11.5%)	5 (22.7%)	6 (35.3%)	1 (33.3%)	16 (19.3%)

To achieve a clearer view of which parents play video games, the preceding table was processed further to present the information in the following two tables by gender as well as age. Table 30 below shows the frequency of fathers who play video games by age. Most fathers aged up to 45 play video games at least occasionally, with about 45% of fathers playing a lot. Overall, 17% of fathers never play video games at all, with 80% of these being over the age of 45.

Table 30 - Frequency of video game play of all fathers by age (n = 29)

Frequency	Under 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 55	Over 55	Total
I play a lot	5 (71.4%)	4 (40%)	2 (40%)	2 (33.3%)	0	13 (44.8%)
I play occasionally	2 (28.6%)	5 (50%)	3 (60%)	1 (16.7%)	0	11 (37.9%)
I never play	0	1 (10%)	0	3 (50%)	1 (100%)	5 (17.2%)

Table 31 on the following page shows how frequently mothers play video games. There are 67% of mothers who play occasionally, and 13% of mothers play a lot. Overall, 20% of mothers never play video games at all. The most notable difference between mothers and fathers is in the under 25 years of age group, where most fathers play a lot, with no mothers in this age group stating that they play a lot. There are mothers in most age groups that do not play, as opposed to fathers where non-players tend to be older.

Table 31 - Frequency of video game play of all mothers by age (n = 54)

Frequency	Under 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 55	Over 55	Total
I play a lot	0	3 (18.8%)	2 (11.8%)	1 (9.1%)	1 (50%)	7 (13%)
I play occasionally	7 (87.5%)	11 (68.8%)	10 (58.8%)	7 (63.6%)	1 (50%)	36 (66.7%)
I never play	1 (12.5%)	2 (12.5%)	5 (29.4%)	3 (27.3%)	0	11 (20.4%)

Co-playing allows the parent to participate in active mediation, which may help to mitigate any negative impact of video game content. The following two tables illustrate the frequency of which parents play video games with their children, presented by gender and age. Table 32 below summarises how often fathers play video games with their children. Other than those aged over 55, at least some fathers across all age groups play video games with their children frequently. Thirty-one percent of fathers never play video games with their children.

Table 32 - Frequency of fathers playing video games with their children (n = 29)

Frequency	Under 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 55	Over 55	Total
Frequently	1 (14.3%)	2 (28.6%)	2 (28.6%)	2 (28.6%)	0	7 (24.1%)
Sometimes	2 (25%)	4 (50%)	2 (25%)	0	0	8 (27.6%)
Rarely	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	0	5 (17.2%)
Never	3 (33.3%)	2 (22.2%)	0	3 (33.3%)	1 (11.1%)	9 (31%)

Table 33 on the following page summarises the frequency that mothers play video games with their children. This data shows that the 26 - 35 age group are the only ones that play video games with their children frequently. Almost half of mothers will play video games with their children sometimes, and 19% of mothers never play with their children. These two tables show that mothers are more likely to play games with their children than fathers, although those fathers that do play are likely to play more frequently.

Table 33 - Frequency of mothers playing video games with their children (n = 54)

Frequency	Under 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 55	Over 55	Total freq.
Frequently	0	4 (100%)	0	0	0	4 (7.4%)
Sometimes	2 (8%)	6 (24%)	10 (40%)	5 (20%)	2 (8%)	25 (46.3%)
Rarely	3 (20%)	2 (13.3%)	7 (46.7%)	3 (20%)	0	15 (27.8%)
Never	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	0	3 (30%)	0	10 (18.5%)

5.4.5 Video game classification

Classification can only be beneficial if the target audience is aware that it exists. Table 34 below shows how many parents are aware that video games carry a classification. Around 93% are aware of games classification, and 7% are not. More fathers than mothers are aware of this classification.

Table 34 - Number of parents aware that video games carry a classification (n = 85)

Response	Fathers	Mothers	Total
Yes	29 (96.7%)	50 (90.9%)	79 (92.9%)
No	1 (3.3%)	5 (9.1%)	6 (7.1%)

Some of the participants in this research speak English as a second language (ESL). By dissecting the results in Table 34 using this factor, some insight can be gained into how ESL speakers perceive the Australian classification system. Table 35 on the following page describes how many parents are aware of video game classification, grouped by English as a first or second language. All ESL fathers are aware that video games have classification, compared to almost three quarters of ESL mothers. Even though these numbers are very small, they suggest that ESL mothers may have some difficulty understanding the classification system. When looking at the raw data, of the mothers that are not aware of video game classification, 50% (although only one person) are solely responsible for their child's game choices.

Table 35 - Awareness of video game classification by EFL/ESL (n = 85)

Response	EFL			ESL		
	Fathers	Mothers	Total	Fathers	Mothers	Total
Yes	27 (96.4%)	45 (93.8%)	72 (94.7%)	2 (100%)	5 (71.4%)	7 (77.8%)
No	1 (3.6%)	3 (6.2%)	4 (5.3%)	0	2 (28.6%)	2 (22.2%)
Total	28 (36.8%)	48 (63.2%)	76 (89.4%)	2 (22.2%)	7 (77.8%)	9 (10.6%)

* EFL = English as a First Language. ESL = English as a Second Language

To provide some insight into how parents utilise the Australian classification system, Table 36 on the following page shows which classification levels parents allow each of their children to play. Parents of some younger children allow their children to play games with an R18+ classification, including those from the under-5 age group. As the age of the child increases, generally the classification level also does. Some parents selected every level their child was permitted to play, while others appear to have selected only the highest level. It should be noted that the results for the 'R18+' category may not be an accurate representation due to this category being added mid-way through the questionnaire.

Table 36 - Which classification levels children are permitted to play - results by child (n = 112)

Age of child	G	PG	M	MA15+	R18+	Not sure
Under 5 (n = 21)	20 (95.2%)	7 (33.3%)	2 (9.5%)	2 (9.5%)	2 (9.5%)	1 (4.8%)
5 - 8 (n = 29)	26 (89.7%)	20 (69%)	3 (10.3%)	0	0	1 (3.4%)
9 - 12 (n = 35)	29 (82.9%)	31 (88.6%)	10 (28.6%)	4 (11.4%)	0	1 (2.9%)
13 - 14 (n = 11)	8 (72.7%)	9 (81.8%)	8 (72.7%)	3 (27.3%)	1 (9.1%)	0
15 - 17 (n = 14)	11 (78.6%)	11 (78.6%)	11 (78.6%)	11 (78.6%)	0	0
18 (n = 2)	0	0	0	0	2 (100%)	0
Total	94 (83.9%)	78 (69.6%)	34 (30.4%)	20 (17.9%)	4 (3.6%)	3 (2.7%)

To provide clarity to the classification levels that children are permitted to play, the results from the previous table were manipulated so that each classification level up to the highest selected is taken into account. Table 37 on the following page shows the classification level each child is permitted to play when permission for each previous level is assumed. This table presents a clear picture of how the classification level the child is permitted to play increases as the child's age increases. In order to illustrate the increasing permissions as they correlate to age, cells have been shaded to denote groupings for 60% - 69%, 70% - 79%, 80% - 89%, and 90% - 99% and 100%. These results show that almost all children are permitted to play 'G' classified games, dropping down to around 77% for 'PG' classified games. Some children of all age groups play games from within the 'G', 'PG' and 'M' categories. There are at least 11% of children from 9 years of age that play games in the 'MA15+' restricted category, with 27% of children aged 13 - 14 years playing games with this classification. Even though the 'MA15+' classification permits children 15 years of age and older to play these games, there are some children aged 15 and over who are not permitted to play games from this level. Parents permit children that are 18 years of age to play games from all of the classification levels.

Table 37 - Which classification levels children are permitted to play by assuming that the highest level selected denotes all lower levels are permitted - results by child (n = 112)

Age of child	G	PG	M	MA15+	R18+	Not sure
Under 5 (n = 21)	20 (95.2%)	7 (33.3%)	2 (9.5%)	2 (9.5%)	2 (9.5%)	1 (4.8%)
5 - 8 (n = 29)	28 (96.6%)	20 (69%)	3 (10.3%)	0	0	1 (3.5%)
9 - 12 (n = 35)	34 (97.1%)	32 (91.4%)	10 (28.6%)	4 (11.4%)	0	1 (2.9%)
13 - 14 (n = 11)	11 (100%)	11 (100%)	8 (72.8%)	3 (27.3%)	1 (9.1%)	0
15 - 17 (n = 14)	14 (100%)	14 (100%)	14 (100%)	11 (78.6%)	0	0
18 (n = 2)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	0
Total	109 (97.3%)	86 (76.8%)	39 (34.8%)	22 (19.6%)	5 (4.5%)	3 (2.7%)

The following six tables each examine a subset of the manipulated data from Table 37. As the data set was not large to start with, these subsets work with some very small numbers. Therefore, although these results can be looked at with interest, caution must be exercised when attempting to generalise. Further research into these areas is recommended in order to deliver a greater level of confidence.

To gauge whether parents are just as stringent with game mediation for subsequent children, the results from Table 37 were processed further to display which classification levels children with older siblings are allowed to play. These results are presented in two tables, displayed together on the following page. Table 38 presents results for these oldest or only children, and Table 39 shows the results when responses for the oldest or only child in a family are removed. As mentioned earlier, each of these age groups resulted in low numbers, so these results can only be considered indicative. Firstly, parents appear to be more sure about classification for younger siblings, with no selection from the 'Not sure' group. It appears that parents of younger siblings aged 9 - 12 years are less likely to allow their child to play games that are classified 'M' or 'MA15+'. Also, younger siblings that are 13 - 14 years of age are more likely to be permitted to play 'M' classified games, but not those classified 'MA15+'. Finally, no

parents allow younger siblings to play 'R18+' classified games. When comparing the results from the following two tables, this suggest that parents of the oldest child, or an only child, are more likely to allow their child to play games with a higher classification than younger siblings are allowed to play.

Table 38 - Which classification levels eldest or only children are permitted to play - results by child (n = 79)

Age of child	G	PG	M	MA15+	R18+	Not sure
Under 5 (n = 17)	16 (94.1%)	7 (41.2%)	2 (11.8%)	2 (11.8%)	2 (11.8%)	1 (5.9%)
5 - 8 (n = 15)	14 (93.3%)	11 (73.3%)	2 (13.3%)	0	0	1 (6.7%)
9 - 12 (n = 23)	22 (95.7%)	21 (91.3%)	8 (34.8%)	3 (13%)	0	1 (4.4%)
13 - 14 (n = 9)	9 (100%)	9 (100%)	6 (66.7%)	3 (33.3%)	1 (11.1%)	0
15 - 17 (n = 13)	13 (100%)	13 (100%)	13 (100%)	10 (76.9%)	0	0
18 (n = 2)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	0
Total	76 (96.2%)	63 (79.8%)	33 (41.8%)	20 (25.3%)	5 (6.3%)	3 (3.8%)

Table 39 - Which classification levels children with older siblings are permitted to play - results by child (n = 33)

Age of child	G	PG	M	MA15+	R18+	Not sure
Under 5 (n = 4)	4 (100%)	0	0	0	0	0
5 - 8 (n = 14)	14 (100%)	9 (64.3%)	1 (7.1%)		0	0
9 - 12 (n = 12)	12 (100%)	11 (91.7%)	2 (16.7%)	1 (8.3%)	0	0
13 - 14 (n = 2)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	0	0	0
15 - 17 (n = 1)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	0	0
18 (n = 0)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	33 (100%)	23 (69.7%)	6 (18.2%)	2 (6.1%)	0	0

Previous research has shown that some parents feel that boys are more likely than girls to want to play with a higher classification (Lenhard et al., 2008; Olson et al., 2007). The following two tables present which classification level parents permit their children to play when factored by gender. Table 40 below shows that parents will allow most girls to play games with a 'G' classification, and the majority of girls are permitted to play games classified 'PG', with the age of the child correlating with the number of girls allowed to play. There is no strong result for the 'M' level until girls reach the 15 - 17-year-old group, and 71% of girls in this age group are permitted to play games classified 'MA15+'.

Table 40 - Which classification levels girls are permitted to play - results by child (n = 46)

Age of child	G	PG	M	MA15+	R18+	Not sure
Under 5 (n = 8)	8 (100%)	2 (25%)	0	0	0	0
5 - 8 (n = 15)	15 (100%)	11 (73.3%)	1 (6.7%)	0	0	0
9 - 12 (n = 12)	11 (91.7%)	10 (83.3%)	0	0	0	1 (%)
13 - 14 (n = 4)	4 (100%)	4 (100%)	1 (25%)	0	0	0
15 - 17 (n = 7)	7 (100%)	7 (100%)	7 (100%)	5 (71.4%)	0	0
18 (n = 0)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	45 (97.8%)	34 (73.9%)	9 (19.6%)	5 (10.9%)	0	1 (2.2%)

Table 41 below shows that parents will allow most boys to play games with a ‘G’ classification, and the majority of boys are permitted to play games with a ‘PG’ classification. At least some boys in all age groups are permitted to play ‘M’ classified games, with all boys over the age of 13 - 14 allowed to play these games. This is similar to games that carry a ‘MA15+’ classification, with boys in all age groups permitted to play, starting at 15% of boys under 5 to 86% of children aged 15 - 17 then all boys aged 18 years of age. There are a small number of children in the under-5 age group and the 13 - 14 years of age group permitted to play games with an ‘R18+’ classification. When compared to the classification level that girls are allowed to play, boys are permitted to play higher classifications at a younger age.

Table 41 - Which classification levels boys are permitted to play - results by child (n = 66)

Age of child	G	PG	M	MA15+	R18+	Not sure
Under 5 (n = 13)	12 (92.3%)	5 (38.5%)	2 (15.4%)	2 (15.4%)	2 (15.4%)	1 (7.7%)
5 - 8 (n = 14)	13 (92.9%)	9 (64.3%)	2 (14.3%)	4 (28.6%)	0	1 (7.1%)
9 - 12 (n = 23)	23 (100%)	22 (95.7%)	10 (43.5%)	4 (17.4%)	0	0
13 - 14 (n = 7)	7 (100%)	7 (100%)	7 (100%)	3 (42.9%)	1 (14.3%)	0
15 - 17 (n = 7)	7 (100%)	7 (100%)	7 (100%)	6 (85.7%)	0	0
18 (n = 2)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	0
Total	64 (97%)	52 (78.8%)	30 (45.5%)	21 (31.8%)	5 (7.6%)	2 (3%)

To gain some insight into whether mothers and fathers grant permission to play classification levels differently, the following two tables present which classification level children are permitted to play when the results are examined by parent type. Table 42 below shows that fathers will allow most children to play 'G' classified games, dropping to 79% who are permitted to play 'PG' classified games, with all children over the age of 13 - 14 permitted to play games classified 'M' or 'MA15+'. They also allow all children over the age of 15 to play games that carry the restricted 'MA15+' classification. Fathers permit 16% of children under the age of five to play games that carry the restricted 'R18+' classification (although this does represent only one child).

Table 42 - Which classification levels fathers permit their children to play - results by child (n = 29)

Age of child	G	PG	M	MA15+	R18+	Not sure
Under 5 (n = 6)	6 (100%)	5 (83.3%)	1 (16.7%)	1 (16.7%)	1 (16.7%)	0
5 - 8 (n = 8)	8 (100%)	4 (50%)	1 (12.5%)	0	0	0
9 - 12 (n = 9)	8 (88.9%)	8 (88.9%)	4 (44.4%)	2 (22.2%)	0	1 (11.1%)
13 - 14 (n = 2)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	0
15 - 17 (n = 3)	3 (100%)	3 (100%)	3 (100%)	3 (100%)	0	0
18 (n = 1)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	0
Total	28 (96.6%)	23 (79.3%)	12 (41.4%)	8 (27.6%)	3 (10.3%)	1 (3.5%)

Table 43 below presents the results of which classification levels mothers allow their children to play. Almost all are allowed to play 'G' classified games, with most children over the age of five permitted to play games classified 'PG'. Mothers do not permit many children under the age of 15 to play games that carry the 'M' or 'MA15+' classification. The mothers of 73% of children over the age of 15 allow them to play games from the restricted 'MA15+' classification. Only 7% of mothers allow children under the age of 18 to play games that carry the restricted 'R18+' classification. When compared to the classification level that fathers permit their children to play, fathers are more permissive with younger children for classification levels 'M', 'MA15+' and 'R18+'.

Table 43 - Which classification levels mothers permit their children to play - results by child (n = 83)

Age of child	G	PG	M	MA15+	R18+	Not sure
Under 5 (n = 15)	14 (93.3%)	2 (13.3%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)
5 - 8 (n = 21)	20 (95.2%)	16 (76.2%)	2 (9.5%)	0	0	1 (4.8%)
9 - 12 (n = 26)	26 (100%)	24 (92.3%)	6 (23.1%)	2 (7.7%)	0	0
13 - 14 (n = 9)	9 (100%)	9 (100%)	6 (66.7%)	2 (22.2%)	0	0
15 - 17 (n = 11)	11 (100%)	11 (100%)	11 (100%)	8 (72.7%)	0	0
18 (n = 1)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	0
Total	81 (97.6%)	63 (75.9%)	27 (32.5%)	14 (16.9%)	2 (2.4%)	2 (2.4%)

5.4.6 Parental attitudes about the effect of video game content on their children

The following question was asked at Stage 4, after the game review section: “Do you feel that exposure to violence in video games can make children aggressive?”. Table 44 below shows that the majority of parents feel that exposure can make children aggressive, with more fathers feeling this way than mothers. This may be a result of fathers playing video games more than mothers, which may offer a heightened awareness of game content. Or, it may be that as males seek out games with more extreme content, fathers may play a different genre of games to mothers, so may have more knowledge than mothers about the type and level of violence that exists within some games.

Table 44 - Whether parents feel that exposure to violence in video games can make children aggressive (n = 61)

Response	Fathers (n = 18)	Mothers (n = 43)	Total
Yes	14 (77.8%)	30 (69.8%)	44 (72.1%)
No	4 (22.2%)	13 (30.2%)	17 (27.9%)

The third person effect may mean that some parents feel that even though some content can be harmful to children, inappropriate content in video games will not hurt their children. The following two tables show results for whether parents feel that their child is mature enough that content in video games will not cause them harm. Table 45 on the following page shows that, overall, the parents of most children feel that their child is not mature enough. This is particularly so for children under the age of 13; over this age, there is a shift towards parents feeling that their child has enough maturity that the content in video games will not cause them harm. The parents of around one third of children feel that their child is mature enough - these children range from under-5 to 18 years of age. Table 46 shows that mothers are more likely than fathers to feel that their child is mature enough that this content will not hurt them.

Table 45 - Whether parents feel their child is mature enough that content in games will not harm them - results by child (n = 112)

Age of child	Yes	No	Not sure
Under 5 (n = 21)	3 (14.3%)	18 (85.7%)	0
5 - 8 (n = 29)	10 (34.5%)	18 (62.1%)	1 (3.4%)
9 - 12 (n = 35)	12 (34.3%)	18 (51.4%)	5 (14.3%)
13 - 14 (n = 11)	5 (45.5%)	5 (45.5%)	1 (9.1%)
15 - 17 (n = 14)	7 (50%)	3 (21.4%)	4 (28.6%)
18 (n = 2)	2 (100%)	0	0
Total	39 (34.8%)	62 (55.4%)	11 (9.8%)

Table 46 - Whether parents feel their child is mature enough that content in games will not harm them, by parent type - results by child (n = 112)

Parent type	Yes	No	Not sure
Fathers	8 (27.6%)	17 (58.6%)	4 (13.8%)
Mothers	31 (37.4%)	45 (54.2%)	7 (8.4%)
Total	39 (34.8%)	62 (55.4%)	11 (9.8%)

Table 47 below shows that most parents feel that it is important to protect children from inappropriate content in video games. A higher percentage of mothers feel this way than fathers. In order to explore the link between the extrinsic rewards construct in the VPMT and how parents use video game classification, parents were also asked whether they felt it was important that they are seen to be protecting children from inappropriate content in video games. This resulted in fathers feeling that it was slightly more important to be seen to be protecting children from inappropriate content than actually protecting them, and that mothers feel it is more important to actually be protecting than to just be seen to be doing so.

Table 47 - Importance of protecting children from inappropriate content in games (n = 61)

Response	Important to protect			Important to be seen to protect		
	Fathers	Mothers	Total	Fathers	Mothers	Total
Yes	16 (88.9%)	42 (97.7%)	58 (95.1%)	17 (94.4%)	37 (86%)	54 (88.5%)
No	2 (11.1%)	1 (2.3%)	3 (4.9%)	1 (5.6%)	6 (14%)	7 (11.5%)

It appears that parents do have concerns about inappropriate content in video games, in particular violence. Table 48 on the following page shows the summary of data by age group for how much violence parents feel is acceptable in the games that their children play. The parents of almost half of the children do not want any violence in their child's games. Slightly more than this are happy for there to be some violence in their child's game play, and the parents of 8% of children do not care how much violence is in the games they play, including some from the under-5 years of age group. When looked at by parent type, mothers are more opposed to violence in their children's games than are fathers, with 48% of mothers saying they do not want any violence in the game their child plays, as opposed to 35% of fathers. This difference is most obvious in the 13 - 14 years of age group, with the mothers of 44% of these children

opposed to violence in their child's games, whereas no fathers of these children feel this way.

Table 48 - Amount of violence parents find acceptable in the games their child play - results for each child (n = 112)

Age of child	None			Some			Don't care		
	Father	Mother	Total	Father	Mother	Total	Father	Mother	Total
Under 5 (n = 21)	4 66.7%	13 86.7%	17 81%	1 16.7%	1 6.7%	2 9.5%	1 16.7%	1 6.7%	2 9.5%
5 - 8 (n = 29)	3 37.5%	10 47.6%	13 44.8%	5 62.5%	10 47.6%	15 51.7%	0	1 4.8%	1 3.5%
9 - 12 (n = 35)	3 33.3%	12 46.2%	15 42.9%	5 55.6%	14 53.8%	19 54.3%	1 11.1%	0	1 2.9%
13 - 14 (n = 11)	0	4 44.4%	4 36.4%	1 50%	5 55.6%	6 54.5%	1 50%	0	1 9.1%
15 - 17 (n = 14)	0	1 33.3%	1 7.1%	2 66.7%	8 20.5%	10 71.4%	1 33.3%	2 66.7%	3 21.4%
18 (n = 2)	0	0	0	0	1 100%	1 50%	1 100%	0	1 50%
Total	10 34.5%	40 48.2%	50 44.6%	14 48.3%	39 47%	53 47.3%	5 17.2%	4 4.8%	9 8%

Table 49 on the following page shows the summary of data for how much coarse language parents feel is acceptable in the games that their children play. These results show that parents of most children under the age of 13 do not want any coarse language in the games their child plays, but as their child gets older, they do not mind if there is some coarse language. Mothers are more accepting than fathers of language in games for their children aged 15 - 17, and a small number of parents of both types do not care how much language is in games that their child under the age of five plays.

Table 49 - Amount of coarse language acceptable in the games that children play - results by child (n = 112)

Age of child	None			Some			Don't care		
	Father	Mother	Total	Father	Mother	Total	Father	Mother	Total
Under 5 (n = 21)	5 83.3%	14 93.3%	19 90.5%	0	0	0	1 16.7%	1 6.7%	2 9.5%
5 - 8 (n = 29)	7 87.5%	17 80.9%	24 82.8%	1 12.5%	3 14.3%	4 12.5%	0	1 4.8%	1 3.5%
9 - 12 (n = 35)	5 55.6%	15 57.7%	20 57.1%	4 44.4%	11 42.3%	15 46.9%	0	0	0
13 - 14 (n = 11)	0	5 55.6%	5 45.5%	1 50%	4 44.4%	5 45.5%	1 50%	0	1 9.1%
15 - 17 (n = 14)	2 66.7%	2 18.2%	4 28.6%	0	8 72.7%	8 57.1%	1 33.3%	1 9.1%	2 14.3%
18 (n = 2)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 100%	1 100%	2 100%
Total	19 65.5%	53 63.9%	72 64.3%	6 20.7%	26 31.3%	32 28.6%	4 13.8%	4 4.8%	8 7.1%

Table 50 below shows the summary of data by age group for how much sexual content parents feel is acceptable in the games that their children play. The parents of most children want no sexual content at all, with the parents of just 11% of children saying that some sexual content is acceptable. The parents of 5% of children do not care how much sexual content is in games that they play. Mothers feel more strongly than fathers that there should be no sexual content in their child's games.

Table 50 - Amount of sexual content acceptable in the games that children play - results by child, displayed by parental gender (n = 112)

Age of child	None			Some			Don't care		
	Father	Mother	Total	Father	Mother	Total	Father	Mother	Total
Under 5 (n = 21)	4 66.7%	14 93.3%	18 85.7%	1 16.7%	0	1 4.8%	1 16.7%	1 6.7%	2 9.5%
5 - 8 (n = 29)	8 100%	20 95.2%	28 96.6%	0	0	0	0	1 4.8%	1 3.5%
9 - 12 (n = 35)	7 77.8%	26 100%	33 94.3%	2 22.2%	0	2 5.7%	0	0	0
13 - 14 (n = 11)	0	7 77.8%	7 63.6%	1 50%	2 22.2%	3 27.3%	1 50%	0	1 9.1%
15 - 17 (n = 14)	1 33.3%	8 72.7%	9 64.3%	2 66.7%	3 27.3%	5 35.7%	0	0	0
18 (n = 2)	0	0	0	0	1 100%	1 50%	1 100%	0	1 50%
Total	20 69%	75 90.4%	95 84.8%	6 20.7%	6 7.2%	12 10.7%	3 10.3%	2 3.6%	5 4.5%

To lend clarity to the results from the previous three tables, Table 51 below delineates parental acceptance of game content. Violence is the most accepted type of content, with the parents of 11% more children allowing at least some violence in their child's games. Both language and sexual content have a negative difference, with the parents of 29% more children wanting no language in their child's games. The largest difference is seen with sexual content, where the parents of 70% more children want no sexual content at all in the games their child plays.

Table 51 - Difference in parental acceptance of game elements - positive number shows more acceptance (n = 112)

Element	None	At least some	Difference
Violence	44.6%	55.3%	+10.7%
Language	64.3%	35.7%	-28.6%
Sexual content	84.8%	15.2%	-69.6%

5.4.7 Video game mediation

Some parents may restrict their child from playing video games that they consider unsuitable for them to play. Table 52 on the following page shows whether parents feel that their child is in agreement with them about the type of games that they deem to be suitable. Most parents feel that their child is in agreement, especially children under the age of five. Parents feel that children in the 9 - 12 years of age group are the most dissatisfied with their parent's decision about which games they can play. Parents feel that those 18 years of age are always in agreement with the type of games they allow them to play, most likely because there are no classification restrictions at this age, and no parental restrictions as seen in Table 37.

Table 52 - Whether adults feel that child agrees with the type of games they are allowed to play (showing results for each child) (n = 112)

Age of child	Yes	Most times	Sometimes	No
Under 5 (n = 21)	18 (85.7%)	3 (14.3%)	0	0
5 - 8 (n = 29)	16 (55.2%)	11 (37.9%)	1 (3.5%)	1 (3.5%)
9 - 12 (n = 35)	12 (34.3%)	12 (34.3%)	5 (14.3%)	6 (17.1%)
13 - 14 (n = 11)	4 (36.4%)	3 (27.3%)	3 (27.3%)	1 (9.1%)
15 - 17 (n = 14)	8 (57.1%)	2 (14.3%)	4 (28.6%)	0
18 (n = 2)	2 (100%)	0	0	0
Total	60 (53.6%)	31 (27.7%)	13 (11.6%)	8 (7.1%)

When children are not in agreement with a game decision their parent makes, thus restricting them from playing, they may resort to ‘pester power’. Table 53 on the following page shows whether parents change their mind about a game if their child keeps asking them. Those 18 years of age are not included in this table as they are legally allowed to play all classification levels. In all, 71% of parents say they do not change their mind if their child keeps asking, and around 30% of parents say that they change their mind at least sometimes. Nine percent of parents will always change their mind if their child keeps asking. Whereas all parents of those aged 18 state they will not change their mind if their child keeps asking, this age group is not legally restricted and previous tables show that parents allow this age group to play games from all classification categories. As such, this result may not reflect the fact that the underlying situation may be different for those aged over 18 for which this question did not allow.

Table 53 - If your child does not agree with a game choice you make (restricting them from playing the game) do you change your mind if they keep asking - results by child (n = 110)

Age of child	Yes	Most times	Sometimes	No
Under 5 (n = 21)	0	0	3 (14.3%)	18 (85.7%)
5 - 8 (n = 29)	3 (10.3%)	1 (3.4%)	3 (10.3%)	22 (75.9%)
9 - 12 (n = 35)	3 (8.6%)	0	9 (25.7%)	23 (65.7%)
13 - 14 (n = 11)	1 (9.1%)	1 (9.1%)	2 (18.2%)	7 (63.6%)
15 - 17 (n = 14)	3 (21.4%)	1 (7.1%)	2 (14.3%)	8 (57.1%)
18 (n = 2)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	10 (9.1%)	3 (2.7%)	19 (17.3%)	78 (70.9%)

Examining the data in Table 53 by parent type shows which parent is more likely to change their mind if a child keeps asking to play a game that they have been forbidden to play. Table 54 below shows that most times parents of both types will not change their mind when a child keeps asking, but out of those who do change their mind, 3% of fathers will always or sometimes change their mind, as opposed to 14% of mothers.

Table 54 - If your child does not agree with a game choice you make (restricting them from playing the game) do you change your mind if they keep asking, presented by parent type - results by child (n = 112)

Gender	Yes	Most times	Sometimes	No
Fathers	1 (3.4%)	0	8 (27.6%)	20 (69%)
Mothers	9 (10.8%)	3 (3.6%)	11 (13.3%)	60 (72.3%)
Total	10 (8.9%)	3 (2.7%)	19 (17%)	80 (71.4%)

Analysing the data in Table 53 by marital status of the participant can show whether single or partnered parents are more likely to change their mind if a child keeps asking to play a game that their parents have disallowed. Nine participants chose not to enter

their marital status so these results are not shown. Table 55 below shows that single parents of around 19% of children will change their mind at least sometimes, but there are no single parents that change their mind all of the time. Partnered parents of 31% of children will change their mind at least sometimes, and 11% will always change their mind if their child keeps asking.

Table 55 - If your child does not agree with a game choice you make (restricting them from playing the game) do you change your mind if they keep asking, presented by marital status - results by child (n = 103)

Marital status	Yes	Most times	Sometimes	No
Single	0	1 (3.2%)	5 (16.1%)	25 (80.7%)
Partnered	8 (11.1%)	2 (2.8%)	12 (16.7%)	50 (69.4%)
Total	8 (7.8%)	3 (2.9%)	17 (16.5%)	75 (72.8%)

When viewing this information by child gender, Table 56 below shows that parents will change their mind most often for girls that keep asking for a game for which they have been restricted. Parents change their mind sometimes for around the same amount of children of both genders, but more changes are made most of the time for girls, and more girls than boys can get their parents to change their mind all of the time.

Table 56 - If your child does not agree with a game choice you make (restricting them from playing the game) do you change your mind if they keep asking, presented by child gender - results by child (n = 112)

Gender	Yes	Most times	Sometimes	No
Boys (n = 66)	3 (4.6%)	1 (1.5%)	11 (16.7%)	51 (77.3%)
Girls (n = 46)	7 (15.2%)	2 (4.4%)	8 (17.4%)	29 (63%)
Total	10 (8.9%)	3 (2.7%)	19 (17%)	80 (71.4%)

Figure 21 below shows that almost half of children have one parent alone that makes game choices for them, with fathers being more likely to take on the role of sole decision maker than mothers (see Table 57 where fathers chose 'Myself' and mothers chose 'My partner'). The mothers of 17% of children leave game choices to the child's father, and also allow others to be involved in game choices for 7% of children. Fathers do not leave game choices for their partner to manage alone, but the mothers of 17% of children left the task of making these choices to their partners. All up, mothers are involved with choosing games for around 65% of children, compared to fathers who are involved with game choices for around 82% of children.

Fathers of 18% of children will allow them to make their own game choices, compared to mothers, who allow 13% of children to make their own choices. In total, this makes 15% of children who are allowed to choose their own games. A further 4% of children do not have parental input into game choices, with this choice being left up to siblings or relatives.

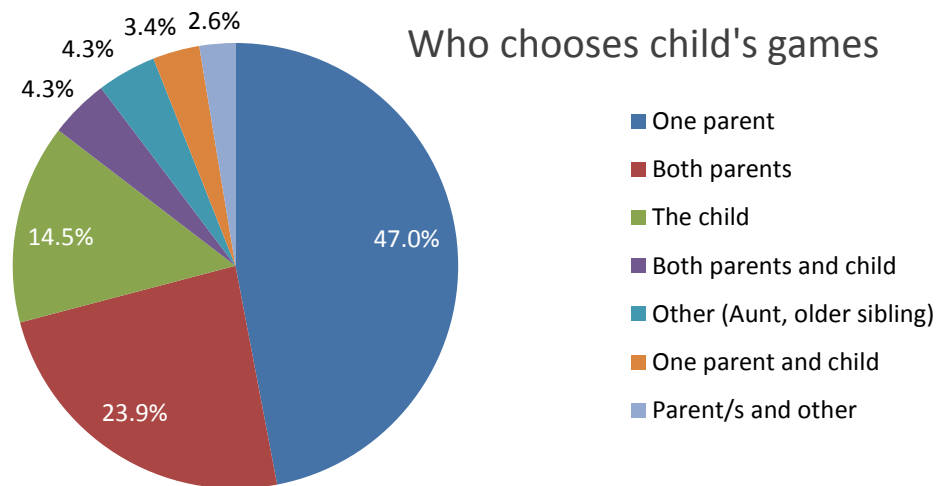


Figure 21 - Who makes game choices for each child - results by child (n = 117)

Table 57 – Detailed breakdown showing who makes game choices for each child - results by child (n = 117)

Response	Fathers	Mothers	Total
Myself only	13 (39.4%)	28 (33.3%)	41 (35%)
Both myself and partner	11 (33.3%)	17 (20.2%)	28 (23.9%)
This child only	6 (18.2%)	11 (13.1%)	17 (14.5%)
My partner only	0	14 (16.7%)	14 (12%)
Myself, partner and child	3 (9.1%)	2 (2.4%)	5 (4.3%)
Other (Aunt, older sibling)	0	5 (6%)	5 (4.3%)
One parent and child	0	4 (4.8%)	4 (3.4%)
Parent/s and other	0	3 (3.6%)	3 (2.6%)
Total	33 (28.2%)	84 (71.8%)	117

5.4.8 Mediation outside of the home

When a parent restricts a child from playing a game, it is possible that the child might play the game elsewhere. Table 58 below shows that parents of around half of the children feel that their child will not play a game elsewhere that they are restricted from playing, but 21% of parents are not sure if they will, and 20% are sure that their child will play elsewhere.

Table 58 - Do parents feel that child will play a game elsewhere if restricted from playing - results by child (n = 112)

Age of child	Yes	No	Not sure
Under 5 (n = 21)	1 (4.8%)	13 (61.9%)	7 (33.3%)
5 - 8 (n = 29)	4 (13.8%)	22 (75.9%)	3 (10.3%)
9 - 12 (n = 35)	8 (22.9%)	15 (42.9%)	12 (34.3%)
13 - 14 (n = 11)	2 (18.2%)	5 (45.5%)	4 (36.4%)
15 - 17 (n = 14)	5 (35.7%)	6 (42.9%)	3 (21.4%)
18 (n = 2)	2 (100%)	0	0
Total	22 (19.6%)	61 (54.5%)	29 (25.9%)

When children play at someone else's house the supervising adult may need to make decisions about what type of games the child is allowed to play. Table 59 on the following page shows the summary of data by age group of the child as to whether parents feel that when their child is playing video games at someone else's house, the supervising adult knows which type of games are suitable for their child to play. Just under half of the children's parents that feel that other people are not aware of what games are suitable for their child to play, remaining reasonably constant across all age groups. When this result is examined by gender, it can be seen that fathers of children 9 years of age and over tend to feel that supervising adults do not know what type of games are suitable for their child to play, and especially so for children 15 years of age

and older. In contrast, mothers of more than half of children across all age groups except for the 5 - 8 age group feel that supervising adults know what type of games are suitable for their child to play. Fathers of the majority of children in the 5 - 8-year-old age group predominantly feel that supervising adults know the type of games that are suitable for their child to play, as opposed to mothers who have the least confidence in supervising adults for children from this age group.

Table 59 - Child plays games elsewhere: does the parent feel that supervising adult is aware of type of games that are suitable for the child to play - results by child (n = 112)

Age of child	Yes			No		
	Fathers	Mothers	Total	Fathers	Mothers	Total
Under 5 (n = 21)	3 (50%)	8 (53.3%)	11 (52.4%)	3 (50%)	7 (46.7%)	10 (47.6%)
5 - 8 (n = 29)	7 (87.5%)	10 (47.6%)	17 (58.6%)	1(12.5%)	11 (52.4%)	12 (41.4%)
9 - 12 (n = 35)	4 (44.4%)	15 (57.7%)	19 (54.3%)	5 (55.6%)	11(42.3%)	16 (45.7%)
13 - 14 (n = 11)	1(50%)	5 (55.6%)	6 (54.5%)	1 (50%)	4(44.4%)	5 (45.5%)
15 - 17 (n = 14)	0	6 (54.5%)	6 (42.9%)	3 (100%)	5 (45.5%)	8 (57.1%)
18 (n = 22)	0	1 (100%)	1 (50%)	1 (100%)	0	1 (50%)
Total	15 (51.7%)	45 (54.2%)	60 (53.6%)	14 (48.3%)	38 (45.8%)	52 (46.4%)

When parents supervise someone else’s child they may need to make game choices for the child. Table 60 on the following page shows whether parents feel that they know what types of games the child’s parents feel are suitable for a child that they are supervising. As opposed to the presentation of data in Table 61, which presents the results pertaining to each child, this table presents the results pertaining to each participant as the question does not relate to the participant’s children. These results show that 66% of parents feel that they know what type of games children they are supervising should be playing, and 34% feel they don’t know. Fathers and mothers are approximately equal in their responses.

Table 60 - Supervising other children: are parents aware of the type of games that are suitable for that child - results per participant (n = 76)

Response	Fathers	Mothers	Total
Yes	16 (64%)	34 (66.7%)	50 (65.8%)
No	9 (36%)	17 (33.3%)	26 (34.2%)

5.4.9 Mediation tools and game covers

Parents were asked what games machines they have in their household, and whether they use parental controls on these machines. Table 61 on the following page shows that the most owned item on which to play video games is the PC, followed by the Wii. More than half of PC owners are aware of parental controls on the PC, and 20% of the children in these households have the controls applied. Just over half of Wii owners are aware of parental controls, and about 19% of the children in these households have the controls applied. The item that parents are most likely to use parental controls for their child is the Xbox, followed by the DSI. Parental awareness of controls is amongst the lowest for the PlayStation 2, but the number of children whose parents utilise these controls approximates that of other large consoles such as the Xbox. This is due to the fact that one family that utilises these controls has five children, which lends weight to this result.

Table 61 - Awareness and usage of parental controls on games machines - results by child

Console	# households with this device	# parents aware of parental controls on this device	# children in these households	# children that have parental controls used on this device
PC	42 (49.4%)	26 (61.9%)	65	13 (20%)
Wii	39 (45.9%)	22 (56.4%)	59	11 (18.6%)
Xbox 360	28 (32.9%)	19 (67.5%)	45	13 (28.9%)
PlayStation 3	24 (28.2%)	15 (62.5%)	37	10 (27%)
PlayStation 2	17 (20%)	5 (29.4%)	29	7 (24.1%)
DS	16 (18.8%)	[no parental controls]	28	0
XBox	10 (11.8%)	7 (70%)	19	10 (52.6%)
PSP	9 (10.6%)	1 (11.1%)	8	1 (12.5%)
DSI	8 (9.4%)	3 (37.5%)	18	8 (44.4%)
DS Lite	5 (5.9%)	[no parental controls]	11	0
Other	19 (22%)	10 (53%)	27	5 (18.5%)
Total	-	-	346	87 (25.1%)

Table 62 below shows the game elements that parents use to help them make game choices for their children. Parents of most children use classification information to help them choose games, followed by the description on the back cover, then the graphic design on the cover. Parents of around 12% of children do not use any of these items to help them make game choices. The classification system is well utilised across all age groups except for those aged 18 years.

Table 62 - Game elements used by parents to help them make game choices - results by child (n = 112)

Age of child	Graphic design on cover	Cover desc.	Class. info	None of these
Under 5 (n = 21)	9 (42.9%)	11 (52.4%)	15 (71.4%)	2 (9.5%)
5 - 8 (n = 29)	18 (62.1%)	24 (82.8%)	24 (82.8%)	2 (6.9%)
9 - 12 (n = 35)	16 (45.7%)	25 (71.4%)	29 (82.9%)	2 (5.7%)
13 - 14 (n = 11)	2 (18.2%)	7 (63.6%)	9 (81.8%)	2 (18.2%)
15 - 17 (n = 14)	5 (35.7%)	8 (57.1%)	10 (71.4%)	4 (28.6%)
18 (n = 2)	0	0	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
Total	50 (44.6%)	75 (67%)	88 (78.6%)	13 (11.6%)

* Cover desc = description on back cover. Class. info = classification information

The classification given to video games comprises two parts: the classification level, and consumer advice. Table 63 below shows which elements of the classification parents use to help them make game choices for those that stated they used classification elements in Table 62. The classification level (i.e.: G, PG) is used for 84% of children, and consumer advice is used for 62% of children. This makes it clear that some parents use both parts of the classification, whereas others will use either the classification level or consumer advice alone. Parents of all children in the 9 - 12-year age group use both classification elements, and parents use the classification level more as the child gets older.

Table 63 - For parents who use classification, which elements are used to help them make game choices for each child - results by child (n = 99)

Age of child	Classification level	Consumer advice
Under 5 (n = 19)	14 (73.7%)	5 (26.3%)
5 - 8 (n = 27)	23 (85.2%)	19 (70.4%)
9 - 12 (n = 33)	28 (84.8%)	23 (69.7%)
13 - 14 (n = 9)	9 (100%)	9 (100%)
15 - 17 (n = 10)	8 (80%)	6 (60%)
18 (n = 1)	1 (100%)	0
Total	83 (83.8%)	62 (62.6%)

As well as graphic, textual and classification information found on the game cover, there are other sources of information that can assist parents when they make game choices. Table 64 on the following page shows which sources parents use to make choices for each child. The most used sources of information are friends and gaming websites, followed by media review sites. The ACB website is used most by parents of children under the age of five, as well as those aged 18. A small number of parents use international classification websites to help them make game choices, and parents of

children in the 5 - 8 years of age group are more likely than any other group to use at least one source of information to inform their choices. As a child gets older, parents are more likely to look to international classification websites rather than the Australian ACB website. Parents of 28% of children do not use any source of information to assist them with game choices.

Table 64 - Sources of information used to help make game choices - results by child (n = 112)

Age of child	ACB website	Media review sites	Friends	Gaming w/sites	Intl class. sites	Other	None
Under 5 (n = 21)	8 (38.1%)	6 (28.6%)	5 (23.8%)	2 (9.5%)	1 (4.8%)	1 (4.8%)	7 (33.3%)
5 - 8 (n = 29)	6 (20.7%)	14 (48.3%)	14 (48.3%)	18 (62.1%)	5 (17.2%)	2 (6.9%)	6 (20.7%)
9 - 12 (n = 35)	6 (17.1%)	10 (28.6%)	20 (57.1%)	16 (45.7%)	3 (8.6%)	5 (17.1%)	9 (25.7%)
13 - 14 (n = 11)	0	3 (27.3%)	5 (45.5%)	5 (45.5%)	2 (18.2%)	2 (18.2%)	4 (36.4%)
15 - 17 (n = 14)	2 (14.3%)	8 (57.1%)	7 (50%)	10 (71.4%)	3 (21.4%)	0	4 (28.6%)
18 (n = 2)	1(50%)	0	0	0	0	0	1 (50%)
Total	23 (20.5%)	41 (36.6%)	5 (45.5%)	51 (45.5%)	14 (12.5%)	10 (8.9%)	31 (27.7%)

Internet-enabled devices may be used at the point of purchase to research information about games such as reviews or game content. Figure 22 below shows that most participants own an internet-enabled device, with almost half of participants owning both a Smartphone and Tablet. Around 20% do not own either of these items.

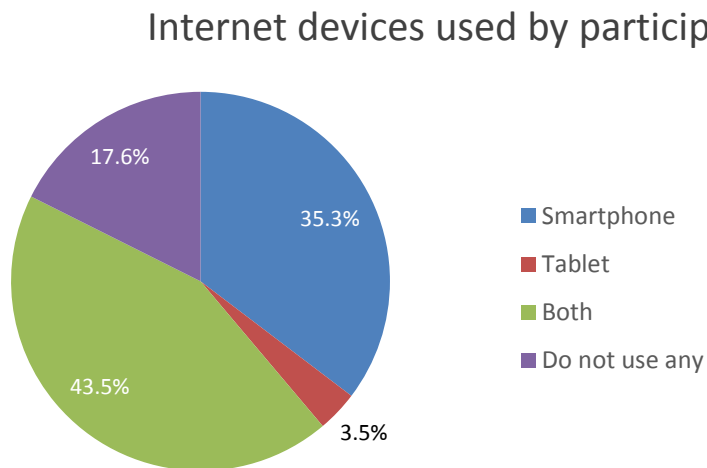


Figure 22 - Internet devices used by participants (n = 85)

Figure 23 shows how often parents with internet-enabled devices use these devices to source information about games when they are purchasing the game from a shop. Most people will use them to source information at some time, with 20% of parents stating that they always use their device to source information about the game they are buying. Even though there are 18% of parents that do not use an internet device, with 29% of parents stating they do not use their device to source information at the point of purchase, this means that the opportunity may be there for these parents to source further information, but they choose not to take it.

Frequency of device use to research game information at point of sale

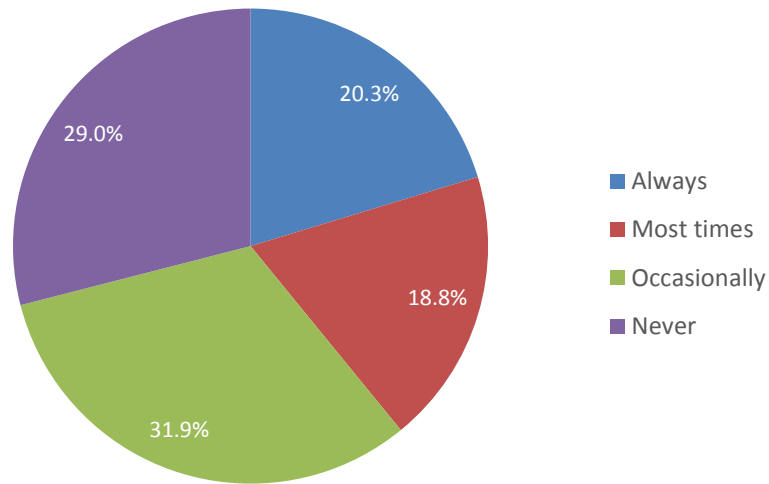


Figure 23 - Internet devices used to source game information at point of sale (n = 69)

5.4.10 Game review

Stage 3 of the questionnaire was a review section which presented information about seven games to parents in order to observe how they make game choices. This information was presented across three steps. The first step displayed an image of the front and back cover of the video game, which offered participants the same information that they would have at the point of sale. This included graphical and textual elements on the cover as well as the classification information. A zoom facility was enabled on the image to allow the participant to read the information on the cover clearly. The second step showed the classification information given to the game by both the ESRB and PEGI. The third step showed the ratings synopsis that the ESRB displays on their website as a supplement to the classification. At the start of the data collection stage, there were six games in the game review section; after the introduction of the 'R18+' classification level in Australia, one game was added from this classification level.

5.4.10.1 *Sleeping Dogs*

Table 65 below shows the responses for each step of the ACB 'MA15+' classified game *Sleeping Dogs*. At the first step, after viewing the game cover and Australian classification information, parents consider the game suitable for 8% of children. After viewing the classification information given to the game by the ESRB and PEGI at the second step, this dropped to 4%. There was no change after viewing the third step. Each step helped most people who were not sure to make a game choice, with those in doubt starting at 3% at the first step, decreasing to 1% at the third step. The change that occurred at the first step may have been because both the ESRB and PEGI recommended this game for 17 and 18 years of age respectively; it could also have been the slight difference in the consumer advice between the different systems (i.e.: strong violence vs intense violence).

Table 65 - Game review section: *Sleeping Dogs*, ACB classification 'MA15+'

Step	Would allow to play	Would not allow to play	Not sure
Step 1 (n = 96)	8 (8.3%)	85 (88.6%)	3 (3.1%)
Step 2 (n = 96)	4 (4.2%)	90 (93.8%)	2 (2.1%)
Step 3 (n = 95)	4 (4.2%)	90 (94.7%)	1 (1.1%)

* Chi-square statistic is 3.2331, p-value is .519604. Result is not significant at $p < .05$

5.4.10.2 *Fable II*

Table 66 on the following page shows the responses collected at each step of the ACB 'M' classified game *Fable II*. At the first step, after viewing the ACB classification, parents considered the game suitable for 22% of children. This figure reduced at the second and third steps, to 18% and 15% respectively. The number of people who are unsure about the suitability of this game for their child remains fairly constant throughout each step, which may indicate that they did not have enough information to make their choice, or perhaps they did not understand the type of content within the game.

Table 66 - Game review section: *Table II*, ACB classification 'M'

Step	Would allow to play	Would not allow to play	Not sure
Step 1 (<i>n</i> = 96)	21 (21.9%)	68 (70.1%)	7 (7.3%)
Step 2 (<i>n</i> = 96)	17 (17.7%)	73 (76%)	6 (6.3%)
Step 3 (<i>n</i> = 96)	14 (14.6%)	76 (79.2%)	6 (6.3%)

* Chi-square statistic is 1.98, p-value is .739446. Result is not significant at $p < .05$.

5.4.10.3 Trinity Universe

Table 67 on the following page shows the responses for each step of the ACB 'PG' classified game *Trinity Universe*. At the first step, parents considered the game to be suitable for 62% of children. This dropped at the second step to about 45%, then even further to 25% at the third step. This game is recommended for 13 and 12 years of age in the ESRB and PEGI systems respectively, which appears to be similar in nature to the ACB 'PG' classification awarded to this game. As such, it would appear that the classification level applied by overseas systems does not account for the large change observed at step 2. One explanation could be that there are, more items of consumer advice applied by the ESRB system, and to a lesser extent the PEGI system, which are not present in the ACB classification (see Appendix C.3 for classification details). This would suggest that a significant number of parents changed their mind about this game based on more detailed consumer advice. The synopsis that the ESRB offer on their website and presented at step 3 provided enough detail for another substantial change towards restricting this game for children. Some were unsure throughout each step, and the fluctuating numbers of those that were not sure as they moved through the steps demonstrates that information presented at each step assisted parents with their game choice.

Table 67 - Game review section: *Trinity Universe*, ACB classification ‘PG’

Step	Would allow to play	Would not allow to play	Not sure
Step 1 (n = 98)	61 (62.2%)	28 (28.6%)	9 (9.2%)
Step 2 (n = 97)	44 (45.4%)	40 (41.2%)	13 (13.4%)
Step 3 (n = 96)	24 (25%)	62 (64.6%)	10 (10.4%)

* Chi-square statistic is 70.7655, p-value is < 0.00001. Result is significant at p < .05.

5.4.10.4 *Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War II*

Table 68 below shows the responses for each step of the ACB ‘M’ classified game *Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War II*. At the first step, parents considered the game suitable for 23% of children. After viewing the second step, this dropped to about 14%. Just like *Trinity Universe*, this game also experienced a substantial change at step 2. As this game is recommended for children aged 17 and 16 in the ESRB and PEGI systems, respectively, the stronger classification for the game in overseas systems may be the reason for this change.

Table 68 - Game review section: *Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War II*, ACB classification ‘M’

Step	Would allow to play	Would not allow to play	Not sure
Step 1 (n = 96)	22 (22.9%)	67 (69.8%)	7 (7.3%)
Step 2 (n = 96)	13 (13.5%)	76 (79.2%)	7 (7.3%)
Step 3 (n = 96)	13 (13.5%)	75 (78.1%)	8 (8.3%)

* Chi -square statistic is 4.1356, p-value is .387961. Result is not significant at p < .05.

5.4.10.5 *Far Cry 2*

Table 69 on the following page shows the responses collected at each step of the ACB ‘MA15+’ classified game *Far Cry 2*. At the first step, after viewing the ACB classification, parents considered the game suitable for 9% of children. This figure reduced at the second and third steps, to 6% and 5% respectively. The parents of most children appear to have decided at the first step that this game was not suitable for their child,

with a small number changing their mind. The parents that were not sure about this game remained constant throughout each step. The low level of variance in game choices suggests that the game cover or the classification level imparted enough information for most parents to make a suitable game choice.

Table 69 - Game review section: *Far Cry 2*, ACB classification 'MA15+'

Step	Would allow to play	Would not allow to play	Not sure
Step 1 (<i>n</i> = 98)	9 (9.2%)	86 (87.8%)	3 (3.1%)
Step 2 (<i>n</i> = 98)	6 (6.1%)	89 (90.8%)	3 (3.1%)
Step 3 (<i>n</i> = 98)	5 (5.1%)	90 (91.8%)	3 (3.1%)

* Chi-square statistic is 1.3981, p-value is .844523. Result is not significant at $p < .05$.

5.4.10.6 *Dragon Age: Origins*

Table 70 below shows the responses for each step of the ACB 'MA15+' classified game *Dragon Age: Origins*. At the first step, after viewing the ACB classification, parents considered the game suitable for around 15% of children. After viewing the second and third step, this figure reduced to around 11% and 10% respectively. The second step helped some who were not sure to make a decision.

Table 70 - Game review section: *Dragon Age: Origins*, ACB classification 'MA15+'

Step	Would allow to play	Would not allow to play	Not sure
Step 1 (<i>n</i> = 96)	14 (14.6%)	77 (80.2%)	5 (5.2%)
Step 2 (<i>n</i> = 95)	10 (10.5%)	82 (86.3%)	3 (3.2%)
Step 3 (<i>n</i> = 95)	9 (9.5%)	83 (87.4%)	3 (3.2%)

* Chi-square statistic is 2.3525, p-value is .671235. The result is not significant at $p < .05$.

5.4.10.7 Grand Theft Auto V

Table 71 below shows the responses collected at each step of the ACB 'R18+' classified game *Grand Theft Auto V*. As this game was added to the review section after the introduction of the R18+ classification level in Australia, it has fewer responses than other games. At the first step, parents considered the game suitable for 10% of children. At the second step this figure dropped to around 9%, remaining about the same for the third step. Most parents maintained their game choice once made. Both the second and third steps provided information that may have helped some who were not sure to make a decision.

Table 71 - Game review section: *Grand Theft Auto V*, ACB classification 'R18+'

Step	Would allow to play	Would not allow to play	Not sure
Step 1 (<i>n</i> = 59)	6 (10.2%)	49 (83.1%)	4 (6.8%)
Step 2 (<i>n</i> = 57)	5 (8.8%)	51 (89.5%)	1 (1.8%)
Step 3 (<i>n</i> = 55)	5 (9.1%)	48 (87.3%)	2 (3.6%)

* Chi -square statistic is 2.2587, p-value is .688295. The result is not significant at $p < .05$.

5.4.11 Perception of accuracy of classification information for reviewed games

At the conclusion of the third step for each game in the review section, participants were asked whether they felt that the ACB classification given to games was an accurate representation of game content. Table 72 on the following page shows that parents are in agreement with the classification given to games between 49% and 73% of the time. The game that parents most agree with is the ACB 'M' classified game *Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War II*, and the game they least agree with the classification is the ACB 'PG' classified game *Trinity Universe*.

Table 72 - Game review section: do parents feel the classification given to the games is accurate, presented in order of agreement

Game	Yes	No
<i>Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War II</i>	47 (73.4%)	17 (26.6%)
<i>Sleeping Dogs</i>	42 (65.6%)	22 (34.4%)
<i>Grand Theft Auto V</i>	28 (63.6%)	16 (36.4%)
<i>Fable II</i>	37 (56.9%)	28 (43.1%)
<i>Far Cry 2</i>	37 (56.9%)	28 (43.1%)
<i>Dragon Age: Origins</i>	35 (54.7%)	29 (45.3%)
<i>Trinity Universe</i>	32 (49.2%)	33 (50.8%)

5.4.12 Experimental questions

There were several experimental questions included before the game review section, and again after the game review section to help gauge whether parents have a different attitude about particular issues related to mediating video games after receiving more classification information. Table 73 on the following page shows the results of asking whether parents feel that they have enough information to make appropriate game choices. Before the game review section, 66% of parents felt that they have enough information. This comprised 84% of mothers, and 92% of fathers. When the same question was asked after the game review section, this number reduced to 65%. This was a change of around 21%. Looking at the change by parent type, around 31% of fathers changed their mind to the negative, compared to 17% of mothers. There were 23% of participants who changed their answer from 'Yes' to say that 'No', they don't feel that they have enough information to make appropriate game choices.

Table 73 - Whether parents feel they have enough information to make appropriate game choices

Response	Before game review section (n = 76)			After game review section (n = 61)			Change
	Father	Mother	Total (%)	Father	Mother	Total (%)	Switched to this
Yes	23 (92%)	43 (84.3%)	66 (86.8%)	11 (61.1%)	29 (67.4%)	40 (65.6%)	3 (4.9%)
No	2 (8%)	8 (15.7%)	10 (13.2%)	7 (38.9%)	14 (32.6%)	21 (34.4%)	14 (23%)

Table 74 on the following page presents the participants who changed their mind when examined by marital status in order to explore which subset of people show a higher propensity for being unaware of game content. Married or de-facto fathers are the primary group of parents who felt they had enough information to make game choices before the game review section, and after the game review section stated that they did not feel that they had enough information. As seen in the 'Sample %' column, married fathers make up 53% of the male population, yet 80% of fathers who changed their mind are in this group. This is in contrast to single fathers of any kind, where none changed their answer. This suggests that married fathers tend to feel they have enough information, but after being presented with further information they admit that they don't.

These results also show that a significant number of single mothers (not including those who have been previously married) changed their mind after completing the game review section of the questionnaire, with 44% of mothers who changed their mind being in this group, which is more than the 26% single mothers represented in the sample. Results with greater than 10% increase over the sample percentage are shaded for clarity.

Table 74 - Whether parents feel they have enough information to make appropriate game choices - parents who changed their mind to 'No' at Stage 4 of the questionnaire. Results by marital status.

Marital status	Fathers		Mothers	
	Changed	Sample %	Changed	Sample %
Single	0	30%	4 (44.4%)	25.5%
Married/De facto	4 (80%)	53.3%	4 (44.4%)	56.4%
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	0	3.3%	1 (11.1%)	9.1%
Prefer not to answer	1 (20%)	13.3%	0	9.1%

Table 75 below shows that when parents who changed their mind are examined by age, fathers in the 26 - 35 years of age group changed their mind the most, with an increase of 27%. This is opposed to mothers in the same age group, which saw a reduction of 18%.

Table 75 - Whether parents feel they have enough information to make appropriate game choices - parents who changed their mind to 'No' at Stage 4 of the questionnaire. Results by age.

Age of participant	Fathers		Mothers	
	Changed	Sample %	Changed	Sample %
Under 25	0	23.3%	1 (11.1%)	14.6%
26 to 35	3 (60%)	33.3%	1 (11.1%)	29.1%
36 to 45	1 (20%)	16.7%	3 (33.3%)	30.9%
46 to 55	1 (20%)	20%	3 (33.3%)	20%
Over 55	0	3.3%	1 (11.1%)	3.6%
Prefer not to answer	0	3.3%	0	1.8%

Table 76 below shows whether parents feel that some content in video games can harm children. Before the game review section, 79% of parents felt that some content could cause harm. This comprised 84% of mothers, and 68% of fathers. When the same question was asked after the game review section, there was a 10% increase of parents who felt that some content in video games can harm children. Looking at the change by parent type, around 20% of fathers changed their mind to the affirmative, compared to 4% of mothers.

Table 76 - Whether parents feel that some content in video games harm children

Response	Before game review section (n = 76)			After game review section (n = 61)			Change
	Father	Mother	Total (%)	Father	Mother	Total (%)	Switched to this
Yes	17 (68%)	43 (84.3%)	60 (78.9%)	16 (88.9%)	38 (88.4%)	5 (88.5%)	4 (6.6%)
No	8 (32%)	8 (15.7%)	16 (21.1%)	2 (11.1%)	5 (11.6%)	7 (11.5%)	1 (1.6%)

5.5 Discussion

Overall, the questionnaire that formed the data collection tool for this study gathered responses from 85 participants, which covered a total of 117 children. Of these children, there were more boys than girls (59% and 41% respectively). Even though females make up 47% of the gamer population (Brand & Todhunter, 2015), the number of girls in this study falls short of this. This may confirm the results from Lenhard et al. (2008), who found that parents of boys are more concerned about issues surrounding video games than parents of girls, as boys are more likely to play games with a higher level of mature content. This suggests that parents of boys were more likely to participate in this research as it may be a topic of more concern to them than it is for parents of girls.

5.5.1 Parental acceptance of game content

There has been a plethora of research into the effects of violence in video games on aggressive outcomes for game players, as well as research exploring how parents feel about the content that is within these games. The majority of parents in this study feel that exposure to game violence can make children aggressive (see Table 44). Coupled with the number of studies into the effects of violence, and violence being the most reported element in video games within the ACB 'MA15+' classification level, this would suggest that parents are concerned about this element the most. However, this study has shown that parents worry about sexual content in video games more-so than violence and language. The fact that the majority of parents across all age groups do not want any sexual content at all in games their child plays is a strong indicator that this is the element of greatest concern to Australian parents. Language is the next element of concern, particularly for children younger than 9 years of age. After this age, parents seem to relax their attitudes, mostly agreeing to some coarse language in a game. Attitudes towards these two elements are unlike that for violence, which parents are happy to allow more often than not after the age of five.

The fact that parents seem more relaxed with their child playing games containing violence, rather than sexual content and language, could be because violence has become ubiquitous in games, and parents may just accept that it is part of playing games. When looking at this in relation to the VPMT, parental attitudes towards game content are linked to the severity component in the threat appraisal construct of this model. If parents see that there is a danger for their child from being exposed to the content within the game, they may deem the severity of the threat to be higher. These results contributed to RQ 2.2: "Do parents feel that inappropriate content in video games can harm their child?" showing that yes, in general parents do feel that inappropriate content in video games can harm their child as they recognise the need to protect children from some types of content, particularly sexual content.

5.5.2 Parents and classification

The results presented in Table 34 show that although most parents are aware of video game classification, there are 7% of parents who clearly do not know that games are classified. This result is similar to the 8% of parents not aware of classification in Brand et al. (2013, p. 24). Fathers are slightly more aware of video game classification, which may be a result of there being more fathers than mothers that play video games.

As parents provided demographic information about whether they spoke English as a first language, this allowed these figures to be examined from the perspective of ESL (English as a second language) status. When examined by this factor, a slightly different picture emerges. There is a greater proportion of ESL parents who are not aware of video game classification, and these are all women (29% of ESL mothers vs. 6% of EFL mothers). Choi (2005) discussed how the attrition rate for ESL nursing students may be linked to a lack of understanding of textual information that is presented in English, and how delivering this information in a pictorial manner may improve their understanding. This may also be the case with video game classification; as this information is displayed in English, ESL parents may struggle to gain meaning from it. Then again, it could be that the classification does not hold any relevance for them; it may be that it is just a piece of information that blends in with the rest of the textual elements on the cover. It could be pondered that for the purpose of clarity in our multi-cultural population, that consumer advice be presented as graphics. The consumer advice under the PEGI ratings system are presented as a pictorial, which may in fact reflect the diversity of languages spoken across Europe. Classification information forms part of the knowledge provided to parents through the source information construct of the VPMT, forming a core piece of information upon which parents can base their game choices.

5.5.3 Classification usage for different children

It would seem that most parents are using the classification given to video games to guide them in restricting games they feel are not suitable for their child to play (see Table 36). In general, the younger the child, the more rigorously parents apply classification. However, there are outliers which give cause for concern, with 10% of children under the age of five being permitted to play games from any classification level, including those restricted to adults. As well, 9% of children aged 13 - 14 are permitted to play games that carry a 'R18+' classification. One of the arguments posited when this classification level was introduced was that it would send a clear message to parents that the game was not suitable for children. As such, it would appear that this message is not reaching some parents.

Table 39 shows that parents are more restrictive about the classification level younger siblings are allowed to play, which may indicate that parents are making more informed game choices for subsequent children. Perhaps, as Kutner et al. (2008) found, older siblings recognised that the content within games could harm those younger than them, and may have transmitted these concerns to their parents. It could also be speculated that parents are more vigilant with younger children based on their knowledge learned from experience with their older child.

Parents may also be more lenient with classification for boys than they are with girls, with boys permitted to play games with a higher classification level at a younger age than girls. This can be seen across all age groups over the age of nine (see Table 40 and Table 41), and could be because boys tend to seek out games with more extreme content, which naturally hold a higher classification level. An assumption as to how this comes about could be that as boys have a desire to play more extreme games, they will pester their parents more, who in turn give in to their demands. But, Table 56 shows that parents are more likely to change their mind for girls than boys, so on the surface it would appear there is no correlation between the higher level that boys play and parents giving in to their demands. However, as parents were only asked how often

they changed their mind about game choices when asked, and not the number of times their child makes a request, it may be that there is a lack of detail on which to form a conclusion. For example, maybe boys make a lot more requests than girls, and even though parents aren't giving in to all of these requests, it still may result in a higher number of decision changes than are made for girls who do not ask as often.

Issues surrounding how parents apply classification with different children is linked with both the severity and vulnerability components of the threat appraisal construct, in that parents will apply classification if they feel that their child is vulnerable to the content, according to how severe they perceive the threat to be. There is also a connection with the coping appraisal, in that some parents may apply classification according to their ability to manage the response cost. For example, some parents may apply classification more leniently if they feel that upholding restrictive decisions may negatively affect their relationship with the child.

This information contributed towards answering RQ 2.4: "What role does video game classification play for parents when making game choices?" by showing how parents use classification for different children.

5.5.4 Sliding scale of classification

Looking at the increased classification level that children are permitted to play as they get older, it is possible that parents may see the classification level as a sliding scale, treating it more like an age-based system than maturity-based. Indeed, recent research has shown that Australian parents may prefer classifications to be age based (AGD, 2015). Of each of the classification labels, only the restricted categories 'MA15+' and 'R18+' contain information about age; however, parents may feel that each of the other categories relates to an age younger than these, without realising that all classification levels with the exception of the 'G' classification are predicated on the age of 15. As such, they may consider that their 8-year-old child is very mature for their age, thus permit them to play games with an 'M' classification. As discussed in 2.1.4.4, the 'PG'

and 'M' classification levels are based on the maturity level of a 15-year-old. This means that any classification information applied to the game needs to be considered within the context of a child of this age. When the classification level indicates that parental guidance is recommended, the parent needs to consider the maturity of their child in relation to a 15-year-old. This presents problems in itself, whereas some parents may not be aware of the complexities of the mind of a child aged 15 if their children are younger. As well, this could introduce issues related to the third person effect. If the effect is strong, then this could see parents allowing their young children to play games that may not be considered appropriate for their age group because their parent feels that they are more mature than other children their age, enough that mature content within the game will not hurt them.

How parents perceive classification directly affects their ability to process the information offered through the source information construct of the VPMT. If the nature of this information is misconstrued, this can have implications on both the threat and coping appraisal constructs as outcomes of these are predicated on information that parents have about the issue.

5.5.5 Tools for mediation

With the prevalence of devices that are used nowadays, parents can be connected to the internet wherever they go. A large number of participants stated that they use their device to research information about video games at the point of purchase at least sometimes; around 20% say that they always do this. By accessing the internet to research this information, these parents may be able to utilize tools such as the app provided by the ESRB which allows you to scan the bar code of the game, then presents the classification information, as well as rating summary that accompanies the classification in the ESRB system. By researching games at the point of purchase, parents are showing that they are taking the peripheral route through the vigilance construct that was proposed for the VPMT.

Interestingly, as can be seen in Table 64, parents of children over the age of 13 tend to look to international classification websites rather than the Australian ACB website for classification information to assist them with game choices. This would suggest that parents of older children may feel that the ACB website does not offer them the information they need. There may be several reasons for this. Firstly, it may be due to the nature of the games the child plays becoming more extreme as the child gets older, and perhaps parents find that they trust the rating information applied to the game by international systems. Secondly, it may be that over time, parents become more knowledgeable about resources that can assist them with their game choices. Then, it may be the synopsis on the ESRB website which helps to assist them with game choices. Lastly, it might simply be that international systems offer an app where the ACB doesn't, and parents find this easier to use than navigating a website.

That parents use international classification websites rather than the Australian ACB website supports RQ 1: "Does video game classification in Australia provide enough information for parents to make informed decisions about what games their children play?", indicating that some parents of children aged 13 years and older feel that video game classification in Australia does not provide enough information for them to make informed game choices. As well, information about the tools parents use for mediation contribute to answering RQ 2.5: "Are parents aware of tools available to help keep children safe when playing games, and do they use these tools?".

5.5.6 Parents, video games and mediation

Results from this study show that some parents play video games with their children, but around one fifth of parents do not. Those who do play, but not with their child, might not only play different games, but a whole different genre altogether. As some parents are unaware of the type of content that can be found in some games (Kutner et al., 2008), and video game classification in Australia may not warn of all classifiable elements (as shown in *Study 1 - Comparison of Video Game Classification*), this may

result in parents being incognizant of the nature of some of the games their child plays. This may also have repercussions on mediation. Active mediation, where parents discuss the game in an evaluative manner (see section 2.2.4.2 for discussion), is seen as an effective form of mediation that engages children in a dialogue which presents any negative content in a game in a negative light. As discussed in section 2.2.4, attempts at active mediation need to be approached carefully in order to deliver the intended message. Parents need to be aware of the content within the game in order to discuss complexities and nuances of both game elements and game play, and unless the parent has played the particular game, or watched it being played, any attempt at active mediation may be disjointed, or the message delivery may not be as effective as it does not stem from knowledge of game content.

It could be argued that parents who co-play with their child allows them to learn the game along with their child, putting them in a better position to discuss nuances of the game. Tables 30 - 31 show that whereas more fathers play video games, and more often, than mothers do, more mothers will co-play with their child. This gives these mothers the opportunity for active mediation while co-playing. However, although not as many fathers play games with their child, the ones that do play do so more frequently, perhaps giving them a deeper understanding of their child's game play as well as presenting them with more opportunity for performing active mediation while playing.

Another effective method of mediation that parents use is restrictive mediation. For this type of mediation, the classification that is given to the game provides guidance for the parent. However, if the classification information does not provide an accurate representation of the classifiable elements within the game, for effective restrictive mediation the parent would benefit by being aware of the game content so they can make an informed decision.

Although some parents may be using restrictive mediation, they may not be adhering to their decision. As shown in Table 53, some parents will change their mind about restricted game choices if their child keeps asking. Turner et al. (2006) found that

parents are more likely to give in to pestering if they are trying to buy the favour of their child, and it could perhaps be speculated that single parents have less time to spend with their children. As such, an assumption could be made that single parents are more likely to respond to pestering in order to make their child happy, as they may not have time or patience to deal with any contention. However, when looked at by marital status, Table 55 shows that it is partnered parents that are more likely to change their minds about game choices if their child keeps asking. When viewing the results by gender, the number of mothers who will change their mind is around the same as fathers, with the difference between them being the frequency; mothers will change their mind for more children all of the time than fathers do, and fathers of more children will change their minds only sometimes. This means that partnered mothers are the subset most likely to change their mind about restrictive game choices if their child pesters them enough.

Children who agree with the type of games they are allowed to play reduces the response cost that is part of the coping appraisal pathway, which in turn strengthens the response-efficacy by having a child that is not disagreeing with mediation decisions. As a result, parents of younger children may find it easier to mediate the games they play. Some parents will take the peripheral route through the VPMT, trusting the voice of authority. The parents of almost 80% of children use classification information to inform their game choices, whereas parents of 28% of children do not use any other source of information to assist their choice. This means that the parents of around 8% of children are relying solely on the game classification (and perhaps information on the game cover) to make their choice.

Mediation is intertwined through several constructs of the VPMT. Firstly, it is a primary function of the vigilance construct, in that each of the components within this construct represent a method of mediation. As well, it is strongly coupled with the coping appraisal construct, where the self-efficacy component reflects whether the parent feels they are able to mediate games for their child. As well, the response-efficacy component can be linked to whether parents believe the tools and information available

to them will allow them to mediate games effectively. Mediation can also be linked to the threat appraisal construct, which offers parents intrinsic rewards by the satisfaction of protecting their child from inappropriate content, as well as extrinsic rewards by being seen to be protecting children. Finally, mediation is also a successful outcome of the VPMT.

5.5.7 Mediation outside of the home

The parents of almost half of children feel that if they restrict a game, then their child will play it elsewhere. This may be a result of the forbidden fruit effect, making the restricted game more desirable, or it might be simply a case of wanting to play the game and not abiding by their parent's wishes. Parents feel that children in both the 9 - 12 and the 15 - 17 age groups are more likely to play a restricted game elsewhere, with those in the second age group being most likely to do so, possibly as a result of the child having more freedom at that age. One reason why these children are able to play these games elsewhere is because the supervising adult where they are playing may not be aware of the type of games that the child's parents feel is suitable for them to play. Table 59 shows that the parents of just under half of the children feel that this is the case. Interestingly, no fathers of children aged 15 - 17 feel that supervising adults know which types of games are suitable for their child to play, but mothers appear to be more confident across most age groups. Conversely, around a third of parents feel that they don't know what type of games are suitable for other peoples' children to play. This highlights the fact that each parent makes different game choices according to what they feel is suitable for their child, and suggests that there may need to be more conversation between caregivers so that supervising adults are in agreement about the type of games suitable for particular children to play. This issue is linked to the VPMT by the self-efficacy component of the coping appraisal construct, in that it is implicated in the parent's perception of their ability to mediate video games when their child is outside of their care.

5.5.8 Discrete stages of mediation

Some parents use a range of tools to assist them with their mediation efforts at each stage of the mediation process. The parents of almost half of children seek information at the first stage, which is the time leading up to game purchase, by gleaning information from online sources as well as friends. They may also research classification information at this stage. The second opportunity for mediation is at the point of purchase. At this time, parents use classification information to assist with their game choices. Whereas some parents will use the classification level for guidance, others will use only the consumer advice, and some parents will use both. Parents are also using elements displayed on the game cover to assist them with making their choices. With the prevalence of devices that are used nowadays, parents can be connected to the internet wherever they go. A large number of participants stated that they use their device to research information about video games at the point of purchase at least sometimes; around 20% say that they always do this. By accessing the internet to research this information, these parents may be able to utilize tools such as the app provided by the ESRB which allows you to scan the bar code of the game, then presents the classification information, as well as rating summary that accompanies the classification in the ESRB system.

The third opportunity for mediation occurs after the game has been purchased. This is the stage when parents can perform active mediation with their child, either as they co-play or at other times. They can also utilise parental controls at this stage; more than half of parents are aware that these exist, and some parents are using these controls across all applicable gaming machines.

5.5.9 Motivation for mediation

The motivation to mediate may spring from different sources for both mothers and fathers. Only 89% of fathers feel it is more important to protect their children from inappropriate content in video games, compared to 98% of mothers. Fathers, however,

feel that it is slightly more important to be *seen* to be protecting children from this content, whereas mothers feel that it is less important to be seen than to be doing this. This desire to be seen protecting children may offer insight into how education surrounding mediation towards fathers may benefit; by calling on their desire to be seen to be doing the right thing, and underpinning education about mediation with methods that target this desire, the extrinsic rewards pathway in the threat appraisal construct of the VPMT may be strengthened.

5.5.10 Third person effect

Generally, as the child gets older, their parent feels that they are mature enough that inappropriate content in video games will not cause them harm. Whereas it is reasonable that the content may not cause any harm to those 18 years of age, parents of 34% of children aged 5 through to 12 feel that they are mature enough not to be harmed by video game content, and the parents of almost half of children aged 13 - 14 state that their children are also mature enough. This is an alarming number considering the literature cannot agree on the effects of violence on game players, and research into the effect on game players of other classifiable elements is in its infancy. As most parents feel that it is important to protect children from inappropriate content, this raises the question as to whether these permissive parents are aware of the type of content in some video games, and are happy letting their children play them, or whether there is a disconnect between their knowledge of game content and what is really in the game. Given the change in decision for a number of parents in the game review section, it appears safe to conclude that parents are not aware of the content that is in some games.

Table 52 shows that parents feel that mostly, their child is in agreement with the games that they are allowed to play. Children under the age of five are the most compliant, which is to be expected as their interests probably tend to coincide with their parents' idea of suitable games. Children in this age group are not affected by the forbidden fruit

effect as much as older children (Bushman & Cantor, 2003), thus younger children are less likely to pester their parents to play a game that is unsuitable.

The third person effect appears to be slightly stronger in mothers than it is fathers.

Although just over half of all parents feel that some content in games could hurt their child, more mothers than fathers feel that it won't, and more fathers are unsure. This effect is strongly associated with the vulnerability component within the threat appraisal construct of the VPMT, with the vulnerability component affected by the threat they feel some content in games has towards their child.

5.5.11 Observation of parental game choices

The game review section at Stage 3 offered insight into the role of classification in game choices. This was performed in an almost quasi-longitudinal design, which in effect mimics the vigilance construct in the VPMT by providing parents with further information, then allowing them to re-evaluate their decision. In general, this section showed that when presented with more classification information, a number of parents will make different game choices. This decision always moved in the direction of more restriction; this suggests that at the first step, when parents are presented with the information they have available at the point of purchase, there might not be enough information on which make informed game choices. When changes are examined at each step, it can be seen that for most games, more parents change their mind on viewing the second step than when they view the third step. The second step presents international classification information, however, it is not clear as to which part of the classification information prompted the change. It may have been the age rating, or it could have been the more detailed consumer advice that accompanied the rating.

The synopsis contained in Step 3 clearly and concisely describes the classifiable elements within the game, and some parents changed their mind after viewing this information: some restricting, and some allowing. The change that occurred at this step was not as large in number as that which occurred after viewing the information

presented at the second step. This suggests that while providing a synopsis that describes classifiable elements provides parents with information that can assist some parents with their game choice, most parents will make their decision when given more detail about the classification level and/or consumer advice.

As discussed in section 5.3.1.1, the game review stage is linked with the vigilance construct of the proposed VPMT, where parents may either make game choices based on the classification applied to the game, or they may seek further information on which to make their game choice. The results from this section help to answer RQ 2.1: “Are parents aware that there may be inappropriate content in the video games their children are playing?”, as well as RQ 2.3: “Once parents are aware of inappropriate content within the game, do they feel the classification given to video games provides them with enough information to make informed game choices?” by showing that some parents are not aware of this content, as evidenced by the change in game choice once presented with more detailed classification information, and also demonstrates that a significant number of parents will change their mind once they become aware of this information.

5.5.12 The impact of further information on game choices

The game review section of this study provided insights into how additional information affects the game choices that parents make. Effectively mimicking the vigilance construct of the proposed VPMT, this section presented participants with further information at each step and recorded their game choice at each step. Table 77 on the following page shows the number of parents who chose to restrict a game at each step, after reading the presented information. Overall, further information helped all participants make more informed game choices, as every game resulted in participants being more restrictive after being presented with more information.

Table 77 - Observing the change in game choices parents make when presented with more information

Game	After viewing Aust. classification	After viewing intl. classification		After seeking elaboration		Difference in change
		Restrict	Change	Restrict	Change	
<i>Sleeping Dogs</i>	88.6%	93.8%	5.2%	94.7%	6.1%	+0.9
<i>Fable II</i>	70.1%	76%	5.9%	79.2%	9.1%	+3.2
<i>Trinity Universe</i>	28.6%	41.2%	12.6%	64.6%	36%	+23.4
<i>Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War II</i>	69.8%	79.2%	9.4%	78.1%	8.3%	-1.1
<i>Far Cry 2</i>	87.8%	90.8%	3%	91.8%	4%	+1
<i>Dragon Age: Origins</i>	80.2%	86.3%	6.1%	87.4%	7.2%	+1.1
<i>Grand Theft Auto V</i>	83.1%	89.5%	6.4%	87.3%	4.2%	-2.2

Whereas in most cases the greatest change was seen after participants viewed the international classification, in one case (*Trinity Universe*) the greater change was seen after the synopsis was presented. This is interesting in that even though the international classification provided enough information for a substantial number of participants to change their game choice, it took the synopsis to convince most people. As this game has a cartoony, cute-looking cover, it may be that parents were swayed by this, maybe being unable to reconcile the classification information with the nature of the game as reflected on the game cover.

There were two cases where the synopsis provided information that caused parents to change their game choice to being less restrictive than they were after viewing the international classification. This supports the fact that more information will help parents to make more informed game choices. It also demonstrates that to make informed

game choices, parents need to not only accept the classification information that is given to the game, but to appraise the game as a whole, including the cover, classification, as well as third-party descriptions of classifiable elements within the game.

5.5.13 Changes in parental attitudes

The two experimental questions that were asked both before the game review section as well as after showed that some parents changed their attitude after being presented with more classification information about the games they reviewed. When parents were asked “Do you feel that you are given enough information to make appropriate game choices for your child?”, 87% said they did, and after the games review section, this number dropped to 66%. There was a greater change in fathers’ attitudes compared to the change in attitudes of mothers (31% and 17% respectively) which suggests that a substantial number of fathers are currently not receiving messages about classification, or perhaps they are not interpreting other sources of information about the suitability of video games for their child appropriately. The change in attitude experienced by parents in relation to this question predicts a shift from the peripheral route of the VPMT to the central route, where parents may not accept the voice of authority about classification and seek elaboration.

A change in attitude was also seen when parents were asked “Do you feel that some content in video games can harm children?”. Before the game review section, 79% said yes, and after reviewing the games, this number increased to 89%. This change was greater for fathers than it was for mothers (21% and 4% respectively). This suggests that maybe fathers do not perceive much of a threat to the child because of a lack of information they may have about inappropriate content that might be in video games, but once fathers were presented with more detailed classification information, their attitude corresponded with that of mothers. The change in attitude seen in parents in

relation to this question has implications on the threat appraisal construct of the VPMT by strengthening the severity component - but only if the third person effect is weak.

As these questions were asked in the sections before and after the game review, their change in attitude could be attributed to being provided with more information about both the classification and the game synopsis, which briefly described classifiable elements within the game. The remarked change in attitudes of fathers compared to mothers suggests that whereas both parent types had a change in attitude, messages about video game classification and awareness of video game content and the effect it may have on children may not currently be getting through to fathers as much as it is mothers. These results indicate that targeted information which details all classifiable elements within the game, as well as providing a classification level that is clear to understand in relation to the child's age or maturity level, will help all parents to appraise the suitability of the game for their child.

5.5.14 Protecting vs being seen to be protecting

As part of the maladaptive pathway of the proposed VPMT, parents may glean rewards from their actions which help them feel good. To examine the importance of the extrinsic reward construct in this model, parents were not only asked if they felt it was important to protect children from inappropriate content in video games, they were also asked whether they felt it was important to be seen to be protecting children from this content. Interestingly, although a large number of females agreed with this statement, not as many felt that it is as important as the actual act of protection. However, slightly more males felt that it was important to be seen to be protecting children, than actually protecting them. With almost 90% of parents feeling that it is important to be seen to be protecting, this appears to have satisfied the extrinsic reward construct for both males and females, which gives credence to the fact that this construct may be an essential part of the pathway of the proposed VPMT.

5.6 Summary

In all, it appears that parents are particular about the type of content that is in the games their child is playing. In general, they don't want their child to play games that contain sexual content, they are happy if the game has some language, and they are more tolerant towards violence than either of these two. Parents utilise the classification system to guide them with their game choices, as well as making use of other sources of information such as game review websites and discussion with friends. Generally, parents appear to be reasonably satisfied that they have the information they need to make appropriate game choices for their children. However, once presented with detailed classification information, parental attitudes about their ability to make appropriate choices appear to change. After being provided with further information, some parents made more restrictive game choices, and some no longer felt that they had enough information on which to base their decision.

It would seem that fathers are not as aware as mothers about issues surrounding classification and mediation in respect of their children. Fathers are less likely to feel that content could harm children, they feel they have enough information to make game choices, and they allow their children to play higher classification levels. They are also involved in more game choices than are mothers, so this lack of awareness may impact on a substantial number of children. It is important to note that when provided with further information, fathers appeared to assimilate this information at a rate that brought their knowledge and attitudes closer to that of mothers. This suggests that although classification information may not currently be getting through to fathers as much as it is mothers, detailed, targeted information may be all that is needed to get the message across to all parents equally. This may also be the case with ESL parents; if the message is delivered in such a way that it could be clearly understood by these parents, the rate of assimilation may be similar to that seen with fathers.

This study went some way towards answering RQ1: *Does video game classification in Australia provide enough information for parents to make informed decisions about*

what games their children play? The results from the game review section show that parents will make different game choices if they are provided with more information, sometimes overwhelmingly so (see Table 66 for results related to the game *Trinity Universe*). To lend some depth to the results presented and discussed in this chapter, the following chapter explores the qualitative data that was collected during this study.

CHAPTER 6: QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF STUDY 2

One of the aims of this research is to explore factors that may prevent parents from protecting children from inappropriate content in video games. The qualitative data collected at various stages of the questionnaire for *Study 2 - Exploring Parental Use of Game Classification* delivered a rich and diverse set of information that allowed a deeper analysis to supplement the quantitative results of the previous chapter. Two sections of the questionnaire presented open-ended questions that allowed participants to enter qualitative information. The first of these sections, Stage 3, asked parents to review the game cover and classification information given to a selected collection of video games. Parents were invited to enter comments they may have about each step of the review, for each game, and around 60% of participants offered at least one comment throughout Stage 3. The next section that asked open-ended questions was Stage 4. Here, parents were asked what may cause their child to play games that the classification level indicated was not suitable for them to play. There were 60% of participants who responded to this question. A second question in Stage 4 asked for final comments that the participant might like to add, and 15% of participants provided a response for this question.

6.1 Approach, methods and strategy

To extract meaningful information from qualitative data requires a systematic approach in order to first identify themes that occur within the data, then interpret the context and intent of texts so they can be categorised into these themes. There are several approaches to content analysis, as discussed in section 3.2, each allowing the researcher to tailor their technique for theme identification based on the nature of the data.

The proposed VPMT has proven to be an invaluable tool that has helped guide the design of this study by providing constructs with which to map issues identified in the

literature that surround video game classification, mediation and protecting children from content that may be deemed inappropriate for their age or level of maturity (see section 5.2.2). These issues formed the basis of themes for the analysis, which were further developed at that review stage in order to identify sub-themes. This resulted in a hybrid approach to theme identification, whereby the initial themes were derived from the literature, guided by theory as stipulated for directed content analysis, which were then used to underpin a subsequent iterative summative analysis that identified further themes within the data.

6.2 Identifying themes

The directed content analysis identified several overarching themes within the literature: game content, classification and mediation. Once these themes were defined, the data was reviewed in order to deliver sub-themes related to each. As suggested by Flick (2006), this review was iterative; with each iteration, there was a deeper understanding of the concepts which resulted in more complex, nuanced sub-themes. This developed a framework of themes that represent issues that are central to this research, enmeshed with the theory on which this research is based.

In an effort to situate the themes within the context of this research, each theme was linked back to the VPMT.

Table 78 on the following page presents the result of this linking, showing both the VPMT construct as well as the component of the construct the theme represents. As well, the source of the theme is shown, demonstrating the hybrid nature of the approach towards theme identification. Each of the constructs of the VPMT are represented, supporting the validity of each of the themes.

Table 78 - Themes identified through thematic analysis of qualitative questionnaire data

Theme ID	Theme	VPMT component	VPMT construct	Source
1	Video game content			Theory
1a	In-game elements	Severity	Threat appraisal	Theory
1b	Game cover	Central route	Vigilance	Review
2	Video game classification			Theory
2a	Classification level	Information	Source information	Review
2b	R18+ classification level	Information	Source information	Review
2c	Consumer advice	Information	Source information	Review
3	Mediation of video games			Theory
3a	Mediation types	Self-efficacy	Coping appraisal	Review
3b	Tools that help with mediation	Self-efficacy	Coping appraisal	Review
3c	Mediation outside of the home	Self-efficacy	Coping appraisal	Theory
3d	Peer group pressure	-	External barriers [*]	Review
3e	Forbidden fruit effect	-	External barriers [*]	Theory
3f	Parents and mediation	Self-efficacy	Coping appraisal	Review
3g	Third person effect	Vulnerability	Threat appraisal	Theory
3h	Difficulties parents face when mediating video games	-	External barriers [*]	Review

** The external barriers construct was identified at the review stage and subsequently added to the proposed VPMT (see Appendix K for the modified model)*

During the linking stage, it became apparent that one of the identified themes, *Difficulties parents face when mediating video games*, did not fit comfortably within the framework of the VPMT model. Although this theme may be considered to be associated with the response efficacy component as a confounding factor, in reviewing the data it became clear that this theme might in fact be a barrier rather than a confounder. This prompted a re-examination of other themes that were linked with the response efficacy component of the proposed VPMT as shown in Figure 8, which identified two other sub-themes which could be considered barriers over which parents have no direct control: *Forbidden fruit* and *Peer pressure*. Therefore, in order to accommodate these themes, it is proposed that the VPMT would benefit by the inclusion of an *external barriers* construct with which these themes can be associated. This modified VPMT is presented in section 6.6.

One construct that is not represented in the identified themes is *vigilance*. Whereas there was some evidence in the data that parents used vigilance when making game choices for their child, this was not strong. Therefore, comments related to vigilance were merged into the *Parents and mediation* theme.

As well as the content analysis, a phrasal analysis extracted pertinent phrases that supported the relevance of the data in regards to the research topic. This analysis was conducted by entering the qualitative data as a whole into a software tool that extracts meaningful phrases from data. Developed by the researcher, the primary purpose of this tool is to identify phrases for search engine optimisation (SEO). These are known as long-tail, or multi-word, search phrases and are extracted from within textual content. As the process of identifying long-tail phrases for SEO is essentially a thematic analysis, this tool proved to be useful in drawing out phrases within the qualitative data collected in this study. This analysis uncovered several phrases that had been overlooked in the manual review, so the use of this tool provided context and depth to some of the themes. A pictorial representation of the results from the phrasal analysis are presented in Figure 24 on the following page.

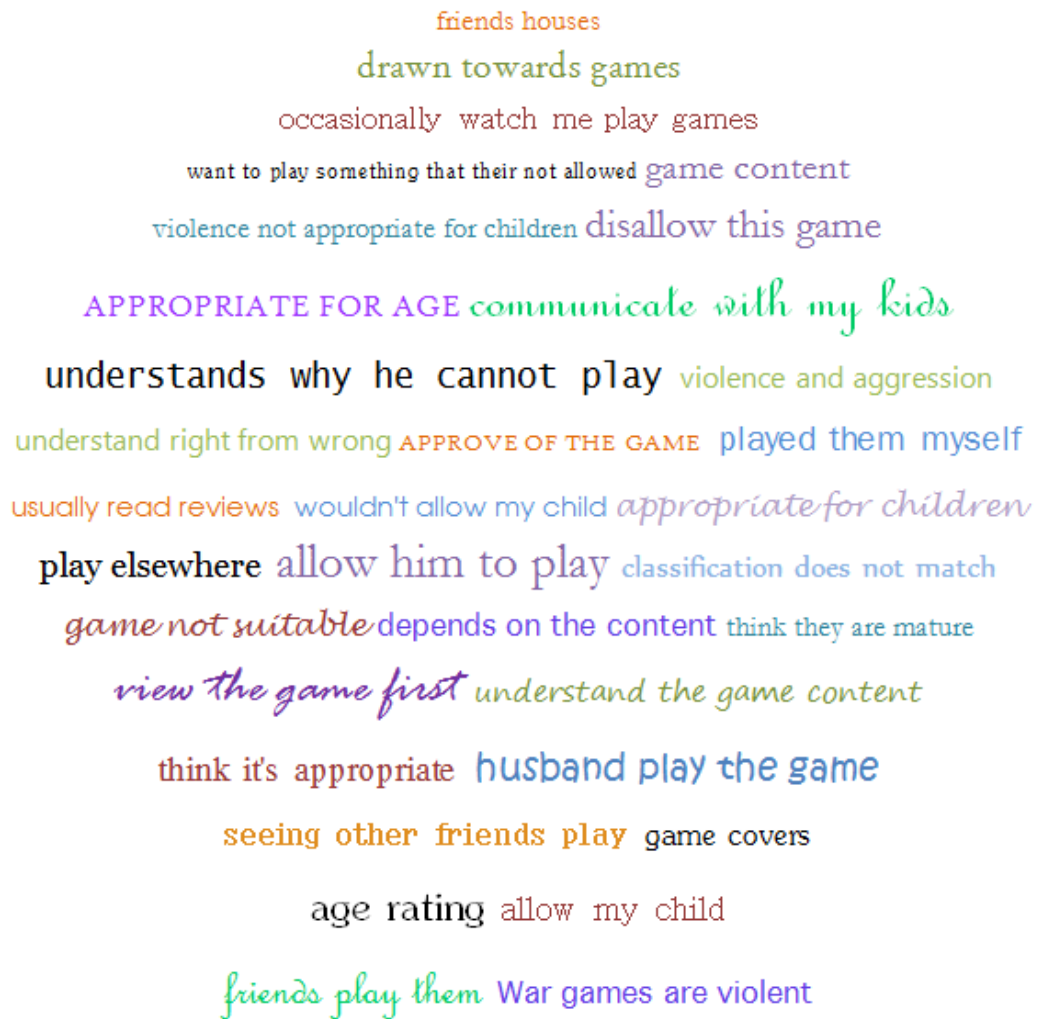


Figure 24 - Phrasal cloud derived from the body of qualitative data

6.3 Identifying meaningful data

The coding stage of the qualitative analysis utilised the qualitative analysis software discussed in section 3.4. This stage involved a manual review where each comment was read in order to identify both explicit and euphemistic terms, as well as to explore the intent of the text. Each of the identified terms and ideas was highlighted, or coded; as discussed in Liamputtong (2009), some comments were associated with multiple themes and were coded according to each of the themes they represented. The questions to consider when conducting a content analysis, detailed in Table 7, assisted with this process as it encouraged a systematic, multi-faceted review of the data.

As well as identifying obvious themes, each comment was examined to determine whether the mood of the comment was of a positive, negative or neutral nature. Determination of this mood was the task of the coder, where interpretation of specific words or phrases helped expose the feel of the comment. Comments were deemed negative if they imparted a feeling that was unfavourable, censoring, or fatalistic, such as 'too much violence' or 'I don't let my child play violent games'. Comments such as 'classification is missing a description about language' are considered to be neutral as they are more informative in nature, not based on feeling. Comments were deemed to be positive if they imparted a more upbeat, affirmative feel. For example, if someone acknowledged the violence in a video game and stated that they played the game to gauge the violence before letting his or her child play, then this comment was deemed to impart a positive, in-control feel as the intent of the participant was to provide positive information. This analysis resulted in a framework of terms and ideas which embodied the relationship between parents and video game classification, exemplifying their attitudes and perspective towards classification and its role in game choices.

6.4 Validity of analysis

As discussed in section 3.5, Creswell and Miller (2000) identified several methods of examining the validity of qualitative data: triangulation, disconfirming evidence, and researcher reflexivity. The initial stages of this analysis identified both overarching themes as well as sub-themes within the data. Triangulation of these themes shows that themes related to the game elements, namely violence, language, and sexual content, correspond with the classifiable elements identified in *Study 1 - Comparison of Video Game Classification* as being common to each of the ratings systems that have been examined in this research. As well, the literature review presented prior research surrounding these elements, or in some cases, discussion about a lack of research into these elements. The existence of this discussion in the literature confirms the importance of these topics as they relate to video games. Some themes that are related to classification and mediation were identified through the VPMT, and reflected in the

literature review. Lastly, each of these themes recurred throughout the data, confirming their relevance in regards to participants. This triangulates these themes between the VPMT, literature review and the data collected through *Study 2 - Exploring Parental Use of Game Classification*, supporting the validity of these themes.

The second method of validity that Creswell and Miller (2000) discussed is that of disconfirming evidence. In an effort to disconfirm the identified themes, each one was examined in order to judge whether it was a discrete theme, a sub-theme, or whether it was analogous with another theme. Themes that were considered too close in nature to another theme were merged. As well, some themes that did not appear to carry importance in the literature, and did not engender much conversation in the comments, were either merged or removed.

Lastly, researcher reflexivity offers transparency to the position of the researcher. Armed with knowledge of the stance the researcher took in analysing the data, the reader is able to appraise any analysis and discussion in light of the researcher's perspective. As a parent of a teenage boy, this researcher has first-hand experience of using the Australian classification system to assist with game choices. As prior research has shown, boys are more likely to want to play games with extreme content than are girls (Lenhard et al., 2008; Olson et al., 2007). This, combined with the fact that the researcher does not play modern video games, resulted in an even greater reliance on the classification system to provide accurate information with which to make appropriate game choices.

6.5 Analysis

This section presents the analysis of the qualitative data collected in this study; each of the identifying themes are discussed, along with an indication of what proportion of the comments mentioned or alluded to the theme. Where a theme is divided into sub-themes, where relevant the proportion of the comments is reported in reference to the parent theme. In total, there were 392 comments made (see Appendix H and Appendix J). Of these, 32% related to the game content, 29% to classification, and 25% to mediation.

6.5.1 Video game content

Comments that surrounded game content covered the topics of elements within the game, the game cover, and children playing the game online. Some of these comments were coded to fall within several of these topics as video game content is a pivotal element of video games that enmeshes with peripheral topics.

6.5.1.1 *In-game elements*

6.5.1.1.1 *Violence*

About 50% of comments about content mentioned violence and of these, 45% had a negative connotation compared to 7% that were positive. In general, the negative comments tended to state that some games contained too much violence, or that they do not allow their child to play games with too much violence. These figures are supported by the quantitative results presented in Table 51, showing that 47% of parents don't want any violence at all in the games that their child plays.

There were mixed attitudes towards the violence reported in some of the games that were presented in the game review in Stage 3. Some parents were decisive in their reactions to violence, with comments such as "we don't tolerate violence in our home on tv or games and find it too much for children" (Participant #49), "look to [sic] violent even for me" (Participant #68), and "I don't believe the use of the word Strong Violence

adequately depicts what has been written in the summary. It contains people being murdered and evil spirits. It needs a much stronger classification!" (Participant #1). A small number of parents stated that they do not want to see any violence at all in the games their children play, and one parent commented that "The fact that there is blood and gore would not be appropriate for my children" (Participant #84), and another said that "Even mild violence is not allowed for a 10 yr old" (Participant #64).

Krcmar et al. (2011) discussed how playing a game with a higher level of realism may have higher impact on aggression, and some parents agree that the type of violence makes a difference to the games they allow their children play. This is evidenced by one participant who differentiated between realistic and fantasy violence: "The violence might be realistic but if it's robots or space creatures sadly I don't get as bothered, whereas I really don't like anything where he would shoot / harm a person or animal." (Participant #17). Some genres of games are more obviously violent, and some parents may find that this helps with their game choices: "He knows that war is not a game, and in real wars people die....War games are violent by nature...." (Participant #63). Finally, the level of violence that parents deem to be acceptable may be influenced by the child's exposure to other forms of media violence outside of game play: "If it is only low level violence then it may be ok, as they see this sort of thing in movies and on the news." (Participant #5) and "Both my kids see more Violence and Aggression on T.V and in the News than they do in Gaming" (Participant #60). This last statement may explain why parents are more tolerant of violence in the games they allow their child to play than any other element.

6.5.1.1.2 Sexual content

As shown in Table 51, parents feel very strongly about there being no sexual content in the games their child plays. About 33% of comments about game content were in reference to sexual content, and around a third of these had a negative connotation. Most of the negative comments stated that the classification for particular games should warn of sexual content that existed within the game, as well as stating that this type of

content is unsuitable for children. This is exemplified by one participant, who said, “As soon as the sexual themes references etc. rears its' head I would not allow him to play it but I am being hypocritical allowing violence rather than sex I think” (Participant #17). One participant was also concerned about how the sexual content was presented in the game, stating that they were “Worrying about the build up of points to be able to have sex with various characters” (Participant #17) in the ACB ‘M’ classified game *Fable II*.

There also appears to be some surprise at the appearance of sexual acts within games. The game *Fable II* contains warnings for *sexual references* and *sexual themes*, but even so, one participant, after reading the game synopsis provided by the ESRB, asked “How can you choose to have unprotected sex in this game - I thought there was only nudity?” (Participant #17). This would suggest that there might be a disconnect between the warnings that form part of game classification and parents’ perception of what these warnings actually mean.

The sexual content in some games may not be obvious to parents as it may not be as constant during game play as violence and coarse language, instead occurring at particular times throughout the game or as a result of certain actions during game play. Some participants who stated they had played the game in question remarked that they did not recall there being any sexual content in games that contained warnings for this element (*Dragon Age: Origins, Fable II*), but when prompted by the ESRB summary, they went on to say that they did recall this content. This highlights the multi-faceted, open-world nature of game play that occurs in some games. Progress through these games is not lineal, whereby the player starts at the beginning of the game and progresses along a set story line until the end of the game is reached (Wolf, 2001). Rather, in open-world games, the player is free to choose their own direction; thus, they may not come across the same content each time they play, and may never encounter some aspects of the game at all. This may present problems if a parent plays the game in order to ascertain the suitability of the game for their child if this content is not revealed during their review.

6.5.1.1.3 Language

There are 26% of comments within the data that mention coarse language, and 59% of these had a negative connotation. As discussed in section 2.2.2.4, research into the effects of coarse language in video games on children is scarce. However, early studies are indicating that whereas exposure to coarse language in video games has no direct impact on aggression, it can increase hostile expectations (Coyne et al., 2011; Ivory & Kaestle, 2013). This is a situation that parents may have observed: “The violence is also an issue but I do notice in game play that the characters’ comments often reinforce the casual nature of the violence so in this example I would not allow him to play it” (Participant #17).

Some parents do not seem happy about the type of coarse language in video games. Comments about the ‘MA15+’ classified game *Far Cry 2* were that “I don't believe there is any reason for the type of foul language being used in games such as this. I don't want my children listening to that sort of thing” (Participant #63), and “Australia needs to classify more of what the game content contains such as coarse language not just the violence” (Participant #72). Conversely, after reading the ESRB synopsis, one participant felt that the language within this game was acceptable, stating that “the swearing isn't really severe enough to warrant a warning, and a mild reference to drug use is fine.” (Participant #40). This game contains coarse language such as “f**k, 'c*nt, 'sh*t” (censored in the synopsis by the ESRB).

Even though the content in ‘PG’ classified games is considered to be of a mild nature, the game *Trinity Universe* engendered comments about the language. During the game review section in Stage 3 of the questionnaire, one parent quoted the synopsis of the game (included here for context with censoring applied by the ESRB), with emphasis added to the participant’s response for clarity:

Characters sometimes engage in suggestive dialogue, including several references to breast size; 'Don't be so arrogant just 'cuz you've got big, bouncy t*ts!' The dialogue contains references to liquor or being drunk; for example, 'I just want

some liquor,' 'he's a total alcoholic' and 'Peace is the best for enjoying gratuitous amounts of hard liquor, dood.' The words 'sh*t,' 'b*tch,' and 'a*s' can also be heard in dialogue. *I don't think our 13 year old daughter needs to play games which contains such influential language.* (Participant #8).

As well as the above comment, also, one participant stated that they felt “the language really annoys me as even though players think it's a minor part of the game and sometimes don't even seem aware of it this just makes it insidious so that it creeps into everyday vocab” (Participant #17).

Some parents mentioned how the language in some games is degrading to women. A comment about the game *Trinity Universe* said that “Reading some of the dialogue I feel it is degrading to females...” (Participant #13) and about the 'MA15+' classified game *Far Cry 2* “the strong language aspect is not covered anywhere in this classification. It is degrading to woman!” (Participant #1). As there is a dearth of research into the effect of language in video games on game players, exposing young children to sexually degrading language may carry some risks, the extent of which are not yet defined.

6.5.1.1.4 Alcohol and Illicit Substances

There is very little mention of substances in the data, with 12% of comments referring to this element. Of these, 40% carried a negative connotation, and 20% were deemed to be positive. The negative comments stated that the content was not suitable for children, with some saying that they would not allow their child to play games with this content. Some comments that were deemed to have a positive connotation suggests that some parents may not be concerned about the existence of substances within games. One participant said that about the game *Fable II* “The alcohol etc doesn't worry me too much he's seen every James Bond film” (Participant #17). In contrast, when talking about the same game, another parent asks “Encouragement of the use of alcohol/tobacco....Is this what we want for teenagers in Australia?” (Participant #8).

Once again, this reinforces the fact that different parents find different types and levels of content acceptable for their child.

It may be that some parents feel that their child is too young to understand the type of content within some video games, or how the element is presented, thus feeling that their child will not be affected. For example, during the game review section at Stage 3, one parent of two children under the age of five justified his game choice of the 'R18+' classified game *Grand Theft Auto V*, stating that he would permit these children to play the game "Given the only warning is drugs, I am ok because my kids would be too young to understand. I am mostly concerned about violence and language" (Participant #61) (see Appendix D for details about changes in consumer advice for this game). This may explain why some parents allow young children to play games that the classification suggests is not suitable for them to play.

6.5.1.1.5 Game themes

Themes within games, not to be confused with the themes that were identified in the thematic analysis, represent topics within video games that could be deemed to be social issues such as gambling themes, sexual themes and adult themes. There is even less mention of warnings for themes in the data than there is of substances, which could be a result of this item of consumer advice not being a well-defined item that parents can understand. In all, 9% of comments mentioned themes; of these, almost a third of comments were negative and there are no positive comments. Negative comments took the line of participants not allowing the child to play games with sexual or suggestive themes. As discussed in 2.2.2.5, some parents may not have an understanding of what the term themes represent which could be reflected in the lack of comments that discussed this topic. Nonetheless, some parents do appear to have an understanding that themes may have an impact, with several participants mentioning these as a factor in their game choice: "I would not allow my child to play something with suggestive themes..." (Participant #1), and "As soon as the sexual themes references etc rears its' head I would not allow him to play..." (Participant #17). As

discussed in section 2.1.2.1.7, the inclusion of a warning for sexual themes does not always mean there is sexual content within the game. These participants may feel that either the theme is too socially advanced for their child, or they may simply misunderstand the warning, thinking that it refers to sexual content.

6.5.1.1.6 Playing the game online

There were three games in the review section that overseas systems warned of having online content. Eight percent of comments mentioned the online theme, and of these, 60% held a negative connotation, and only one was positive.

Some parents are concerned about the type of content their child is exposed to when playing online. One participant stated, “while I know my 'child 1' [Male, 13] is mature enough to handle this game, my worry is that it is online. Child 1 could end up playing against any aged person using all kinds of language etc”. However, as one parent points out about the same game: “Online play can expose children to abuse etc however there is an online filter to help reduce this.”. This demonstrates how tools that are available within the game may not only protect children from certain types of content, they can also give parents confidence in their game choice. Olson et al. (2007) suggested that gaming consoles be kept out of bedrooms so that parents could be more aware of the time playing games, as well as being more aware of the types of games the child plays. This could also be cautioned for online playing. If a child's gaming console is connected to the Internet in the bedroom, parents will have little knowledge of what the child is doing while online.

Some parents do not allow their children to play their console game online: “...Online playing with other player- not something I wish to introduce my children to.” (Participant #84) and “He doesn't play online and I will not allow him to do so I think it becomes an excuse for longer play...”, and “The online thing I still object to so that's out but someone nude doesn't worry me too much although it's probably gratuitous” (Participant #17). Conversely, one participant feels that their 10-year-old child “...plays with kids his

own age & 1-3 years older than him - sometimes not so good as he hears a lot of stuff on Xbox Live. He has fun chatting to other kids & his friends online.” (Participant #28).

There may be other issues related to online play that concerns parents. One participant said that “Online games such as Xbox Live are a parent’s nightmare. You cannot monitor what they are doing and if linked to a credit card it can wipe you out. I think these games are prepping kids for online gambling in their adulthood” (Participant #47). The feelings this participant has about online play goes beyond issues of the child being exposed to inappropriate content in either the online game or from the gamers they are associating with, and moves into the area of children being groomed for other undesirable activities.

6.5.1.2 Game cover

The game cover presents a graphical representation of the game content, as well as textual elements which includes a description of game content and classification information. In all, 19% of comments mentioned elements of the game cover. Of these comments, 35% carried a negative connotation, such as the graphics not being representative of game content, and 22% were positive, such as the graphics on the cover accurately representing the type of content within the game.

Some parents make judgements about game content based on the cover design, identifying a strong relationship between the imagery on the cover and the classification that the game carried. One participant said of the ‘MA15+’ classified game *Sleeping Dogs*, which displayed consumer advice for *strong violence, crime themes, coarse language and sexual references*, that “The game cover and description clearly shows that it contains violence as well as the M15+ Rating at the bottom” (Participant #3). In all, 9% of comments about game covers mentioned how the graphic nature of some game covers informed of the violence or sexual content within the game.

Brand and Knight (2003) acknowledged that whereas the game cover may convey an accurate level of excitement within the game, it may not necessarily depict more

extreme elements which are subject to classification. It appears that some parents agree with this observation; about 10% of comments about the game cover indicated that the graphic elements and textual information on some game covers did not reflect the classification that the game carried. As one participant stated about the game *Fable II*, which displayed consumer advice for *sexual references*, *sexual themes* and *violence*, “No information is given about the 'sexual' nature of the game, so from the cover it is hard to judge” (Participant #26). Also, one participant said about the ACB ‘PG’ classified game *Trinity Universe*, “Cover looks kids friendly but information is not matching” (Participant #81). Another participant felt that the ACB ‘R18+’ classified game *Grand Theft Auto V* had an “appropriate cover image but classification would make me reconsider - would need more research of description of content” (Participant #39).

It appears that cartoon-style covers may encourage a feeling of safety for parents. Comments that were made about the ‘PG’ classified game *Trinity Universe*, which displayed consumer advice for *mild violence*, were that “Girly cartoons depicted on the cover seems to give me a sense of security” (Participant #1), “Cartoon characters make it appear appropriate PG rating” (Participant #9), and “The cover looks harmless enough & girly? So you would not think that's a violent game at all.” (Participant #28). Also, “...The Japanese Kawaii (Cute) style cartoon graphic contradicts the actual content” (Participant #47). Another said about the ‘M’ classified game *Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War II*: “I believe the cover is deceptive, considering it has an M rating” (Participant #1). This shows that some parents look to the game cover to provide information about the type of content within the game, possibly to assist them with their game choice.

Perhaps the most insightful comment about how the cover of video games may influence parents’ game choices is as follows:

I know a lot of parents make judgements on video games based on their own experience and are sometimes completely deluding themselves. (Games = Space Invaders and Pacman) and the cartoon style graphics on the cover equates to

(bugs bunny and tom and Jerry style slapstick violence which is ok) They have no idea how psychotic some of the content actually is. (Participant #47).

There are 20% of parents who do not play video games; almost half of this subset are over the age of 45, so there is a possibility that their knowledge of video game content is drawn from their own game playing in their childhood at a time when games were still in their infancy. As game covers may not always portray classifiable content within the game (Brand & Knight, 2003), this may present difficulties for non-game-playing parents when they make game choices.

6.5.1.3 Summary of video game content

In general, parents appear to have some concern about the type of content that may be in the video games that their children play. Some justify permitting their child to play certain types of content by stating that their child has exposure to this content elsewhere, drawing parallels between video games and other forms of media. However, this approach may be ignoring the still inconclusive nature of research into any extra impact on game players that the interactive nature of video games provides (see section 2.1.3.13 for discussion). Violence elicited more comments than other types of game content, most likely due to the fact that it is the element most reported so parents may be more conversant with this element.

It appears that some game covers may be leading parents into a false sense of security, with cartoon graphics downplaying or masking the impact of elements within the game. For parents who do not play video games, it may be that they perceive them to be the harmless fun they enjoyed when they were children, unaware of the pervasiveness of mature content that exists in some modern video games.

6.5.2 Video game classification

Video game classification is the theme that was mentioned the most in the data, with 29% of comments mentioning this theme. Of these, 66% had a negative connotation and 27% were positive. Negative comments include those that stated the classification given to a particular game could be higher, that items of consumer advice were missing, or calls for simpler classification information. Positive comments generally stated that the classification for the game appeared to be right, or that the classification level provided them with information that allowed them to form a decision about suitability for their child.

6.5.2.1 Classification level

In all, 18% of comments about classification mentioned that the classification level given to the game was not high enough. The game that garnered the most calls for a higher classification was the 'MA15+' classified game *Dragon Age: Origins*. Some of the comments about this game were: "based on description, should maybe be considered as an R18+ rating" (Participant #55), and "should be classified 18+" (Participant #15). The ACB 'PG' classified game *Trinity Universe*, which was the game that most participants changed their game choice for in the game review section, was also one that engendered calls for a higher classification. Participants felt that "If this were a movie it would be classified M or M15+ due to sexual referencing and language" (Participant #3) and "It should be rated 17+" (Participant #18). In contrast, one participant was unsure about where the classification for this game should sit, as "It's too much for PG, but I don't think it's quite at M yet. If there was a middle ground it'd be easier to classify because it's neither PG or M" (Participant #73).

6.5.2.2 R18+ classification level

The 'R18+' classification level was introduced in Australia in 2013, and it appears that parents feel that there are some games that are currently classified 'M' and 'MA15+' in Australia would be more suited to this classification. One participant said about the ACB

'MA15+' classified game *Far Cry 2*, "judging on the description, language used, it should be an R18+ game" (Participant #55), and another said "I don't allow this it's sending out the wrong message to children...This game is only for 18yr olds" (Participant #64).

Some parents voiced their agreement about the ACB 'R18+' classification given to the game *Grand Theft Auto V* but this was tempered by the observation of missing consumer information: "I feel the classification given is appropriate but it should show more detail with what the game content contains such as violence" (Participant #72). Interestingly, even though this game is restricted to those over the age of 18, one participant feels that this game is "obviously not suitable for anyone under 16" (Participant #55).

6.5.2.3 Consumer advice

Some parents use consumer advice to assist them with their game choices, and about 21% of comments about classification stated that there were items of consumer advice missing for some games. This included comments such as "Australia's classification is lacking with informing us what the content contains such as alcohol." (Participant #72) and "...but who needs the tit comments etc. I'd like a language warning on the box accompanying the rating..." (Participant #17).

The *National Classification Guidelines* indicates that only high-impact elements need to be reported in games that carry an 'R18+' classification, and even though adults are the intended audience for these games it appears that parents feel the classification should still contain warnings about the type of content within the game. As one participant said about the 'R18+' classified game *Grand Theft Auto V*, which only carried a warning about drugs, "I feel the classification given is appropriate but it should show more detail with what the game content contains such as violence, etc." (Participant #72). Another said of this game that "Game classification info should also mention profanity, violence, sexual themes etcetera in the game (not just drug use)." (Participant #80). This

indicates that through the different levels, parent may still expect to see warnings about all classifiable elements within the game.

Parents may interpret a lack of consumer advice for a game to mean that it does not contain that element. This may be demonstrated by Participant #61 who was willing to permit his children less than 5 years of age to play this 'R18+' classified game as the lack of consumer advice led him to believe that the game did not contain any unsuitable content. This suggests that some parents in Australia look to the consumer advice to provide them with information that they use to form their game decisions, even when the classification level indicates that the game may not be suitable for their child.

Some parents appear to feel that there are shortcomings with video game classification, with comments such as "I go by my own personal view of the game not the classification as usually the classification is incorrect" (Participant #55), and there "Should be more emphasis on swearing/nudity in our classification system. Even to mention that it's there." (Participant #40). If parents are aware of shortcomings within the system, they are more likely to take the peripheral route through the VPMT, where they do not just accept that the classification given to the game indicates it is suitable for their child to play, but seek further information before making game choices.

6.5.2.4 Summary of video game classification

It appears that some parents are concerned about the fact that the classification given to some games may not accurately reflect the type of content within the game. Some participants voiced their concern that the classification level given to some video games could be higher, and some commented about missing items of consumer advice. It appears that some parents use consumer advice to help them form their game choices, relying on this information to inform them of any classifiable elements within the game. The absence of this information appears to give parents the message that the game does not contain that type of content.

As most of the games in the review were classified before the introduction of the 'R18+' classification, it appears that some parents may agree with iTWire (2009) in that there are some games with mature content that may have been inappropriately shoehorned into the 'MA15+' classification.

6.5.3 Mediation of video games

After classification, the theme that elicited the most comments in the data is mediation, with 25% of comments referring to mediation in some form. There were two types of mediation discussed throughout the data: restrictive mediation and active mediation. There does not appear to be any apparent mention of co-playing in the comments. As well, there were comments that indicated that some parents do not perform mediation of any kind, allowing the child to make their own game choices.

6.5.3.1 Mediation types

6.5.3.1.1 Active mediation

By discussing game content with their child, parents can help to mitigate any negative effects that may occur as a result of exposure to inappropriate content. Around 3% of comments about mediation mentioned discussion as a means of teaching their child about the content within the game, where it "is up to the Parent/s to discuss War with their Child/ren and monitor the impacts" and "I also communicate with my kids often and make sure they understand right from wrong...the trick is not to stop but to educate" (Participant #60). Some parents appear to be using factual mediation, whereby they discuss the factual aspects of some elements: "I know that he understands it is not real, it's a game, you don't come back from being shot 10 times! We have discussions about it." (Participant #28). No participants stated that they use positive mediation, whereby they present negative content in a positive light.

6.5.3.1.2 Restrictive mediation

The most frequently occurring mediation type mentioned was restrictive, with 40% of comments about mediation types mentioning this method. Comments were considered to indicate restrictive mediation if they explicitly stated that the game was restricted such as “Strong violence is an automatic no.” (Participant #1), as well as if there were implicit references such as “should be R18+ if that content is in it” (Participant #55) as it was deemed that as the participant’s child was younger than this, the intent was to restrict the child from playing the game.

Some comments offered a reason for restriction which provided an avenue with which to explore what motivates parents to restrict a game. Each of these comments were coded for only one reason; thus, if a comment stated that the game was disallowed because the content was too violent for a 10-year-old, this was coded for content, not age. This produced a variety of reasons for restriction, as illustrated in Figure 25. Of these reasons, 43% of comments said that restriction occurred due to game content, for example, “No it's not suitable if the language and comments are anything to go by” (Participant #17) and “definitely not appropriate due to violence, drug use and language” (Participant #39). Following this, 28% of comments stated the game would be restricted due to the classification level (i.e.: PG, MA15+). Then, 9% claimed restriction for a combination of content and classification together: “Again the classification and violent content would not be suitable for my children.” (Participant #84), and “don't want my child playing ‘MA15+’ games, or games with strong/realistic violence” (Participant #80). A further 9% of comments due to the age of the child, being too young to play the game: “I don’t think our 13 year old daughter needs to play games which contains such influential language” (Participant #8). Consumer advice was mentioned as the reason 7% of the time, and game genre 4%.

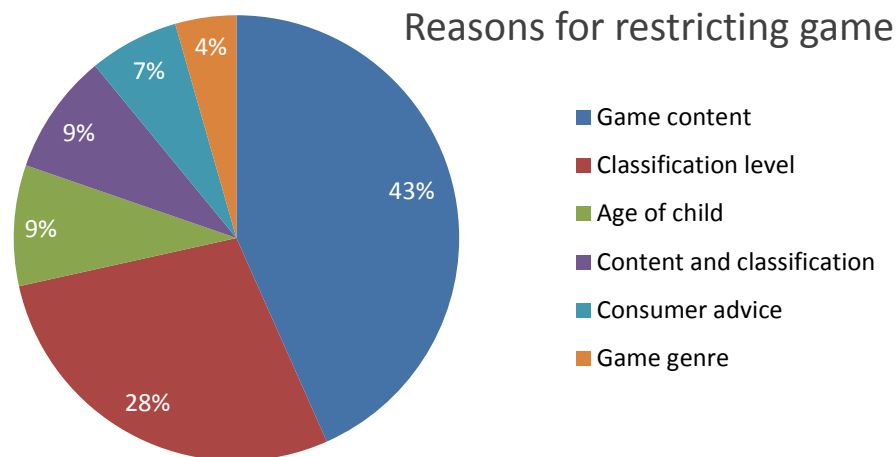


Figure 25 - Reasons why parents might restrict a game (n = 39)

A small number of parents allow their children to make their own game choices. One possible reason for this can be summed up by the comment “Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it’s only a game and ‘not real” (Participant #37). Another participant feels that “I wasn’t born yesterday so I understand there is a chance they’ll play a game not suitable for their age and/or maturity...the trick is not to stop but to educate.” (Participant #60). This presents two opposing aspects as to why parents allow their children to play whichever game they like: it’s only a game, and they will play them anyway so it is best to provide education about the content.

6.5.3.1.3 Co-playing

Although there was no explicit mention of co-playing, Tables 32 and 33 show that some participants do play games with their children, thus co-playing does occur. Co-playing may provide opportunities for active mediation (see section 2.2.4.7 for discussion), and although some participants mentioned playing a game first themselves in order to check whether it was suitable for their child to play, they did not clarify whether they then went on to play the game with their child. Of the 5% of participants who mentioned playing some games first before allowing their child to play the game, each of them stated they

did play games with their child (although 25% of these stated that it only happened rarely).

6.5.3.2 Parents and mediation

After viewing the game review section, some participants felt that there are some video games that are not suitable for children to play. There were 338 comments entered for the steps of the game review section; of these, 32% were coded for participants feeling that the game was not suitable for their child. A comment was deemed to have this status if it was explicit; for example, a comment such as “This game is not suitable for my child” or “My child is too young to play this game”. As well, the comment was coded as unsuitable for the child if the reference was implicit, such as stating that the game should only be for those aged older than 15 and the participant’s children were younger than this age. Also, any comments that said the game should carry an ‘R18+’ classification were determined as being unsuitable for the child, as it was clear the participant was stating the game was only suitable for adults.

All of the games in the game review section elicited responses from participants stating that the content in the game was not suitable for their child to play. The game with the least number of comments of this nature was the ACB ‘R18+’ classified game *Grand Theft Auto V*, where most comments about unsuitability focused on the classification the game held. Examples of this are: “I’m not letting a young child play any game rated R” (Participant #40), and “This game is too old for my 10 year old, 18+” (Participant #77).

Age was the reason that was mentioned the most in comments about the unsuitability of games, but participants also provided other reasons for why they felt the game was unsuitable. Some comments stated that the child was too young to play the game, with remarks such as “The cover highlights that this is not a suitable game for my children given their age.” (Participant #84), and “bit beyond him as he is still too young for violent games” (Participant #40). Other comments that did not refer to age claimed that content was the reason the game was unsuitable, which may reflect the parent’s values for their

children no matter what their age: “The fact that there is blood and gore would not be appropriate for my children.” (Participant #84).

A number of comments suggest that participants are not always happy about the type of content that is within some video games. There was evidence of this in the game review section where participants responded with comments such as “Violence Sexual violence killings toward people or thinking of that against other people is WRONG!!” (Participant #64) and “I am absolutely shocked that these videos even exist. When will our Country begin to protect our kids from such rot?” (Participant #8). Although not large in number, these comments occurred most often at the second and third steps, after participants were presented with more detailed classification information. This suggests that the first step, which presented the ACB classification, did not impart enough information to participants about the type of content within the game.

That different parents have different attitudes towards particular game genres is apparent. Some parents do not like games that are about war, with comments such as “I hate war games and it’s inappropriate for my children’s age group” (Participant #47) and “War games are inappropriate for all of my children” (Participant #8). However, others accept this genre as part of their child’s game repertoire, acknowledging that these games have scenes that the child may see in the news, and that “...it’s not about Classification so much as how much Exposure the Child has to such things” (Participant #60). Some parents recognise their child’s maturity towards the subject, saying “...he understands they are games and can separate the game from reality. He knows that war is not a game, and in real wars people die....” (Participant #26).

Some comments showed that parents feel that exposing children to some types of content in video games could cause harm. A very small number of these comments were fatalistic in nature, such as “It’s wrong if they watch it they think it’s alright to do this, THIS WELL [sic] GET THEM IN JAIL” (Participant #64) and “Teenagers playing these games WILL be affected in a very negative and damaging way!” (Participant #8). Other comments were more insightful, offering further detail about perceived harm:

“Realistic graphics on gang warfare can manipulate how a child might think about real life and it can distort the difference between reality and fiction” (Participant #66), and “The rating clearly states ‘MA15+’ and it appears like the player will shoot target/enemies which are likely people. I won't allow as this can affect her psychologically; harming other people even if it is fake.” (Participant #72). Opinion may also be divided on whether fantasy themes make a difference to the harm; some parents feel that children know the difference between reality and fantasy, whereas one parent stated that “Although a clear fantasy theme this is still unsuitable for my son.” (Participant #24).

To gain a measure of how parents feel about video games and the role of mediation, the emotive state of the data was analysed. This was achieved by balancing negative comments against positive. Some comments had been coded for several themes where relevant, which means that one comment may have two codes related to emotion. To deliver an accurate representation of the state of the data, comments with multiple codes for the same emotion were only counted once. In all, 30% of these comments conveyed a negative connotation, and 12% were positive. The rest were neutral. This shows that overall, the tone of qualitative data was deemed neutral, with more of a tendency towards negative when emotion was shown. This tendency towards negativity might be explained by the fact that participants in this study were self-selecting, which may have resulted in a set of data from those concerned enough about issues surrounding video games, who are more predisposed to provide negative feedback.

Some of the negative comments conveyed a sense of the emotion that participants felt about issues surrounding the video games and their children. Some participants used the exclamation mark in their comments, which suggests a state of heightened emotion. In all, 5% of comments contained exclamation marks, an example of which is those made by Participant #1: “Mild violence do [sic] not even begin to cover what is in the game description above. I would have definitely allowed my kids to play based on the classification and rating but not now!”, “I am shocked at what is written in the above

classifications that isn't in the Australian classification!", "...It is degrading to woman!", and "...It needs a much stronger classification!". Some parents also used the exclamation mark to reinforce a more positive point they were making, such as "...it's a game, you don't come back from being shot 10 times!...If this was not the case, he wouldn't be playing it!" (Participant #28), and "...all those that cry out about how bad video games are for children need to realise 'it is not real' IT IS ONLY A GAME!" (Participant #37). The use of emphasis conveys a feeling of passion about the topic under discussion.

Judging by the comments made by some participants, it is obvious that their perspective is grounded in contrasting theories about the source of aggression in children who are exposed to some types of content in video games (see section 2.2.1.1 for discussion of these theories). One participant feels that "Games/movies don't create anger in children they just make angry children more creative. The kid is either angry and violent or he isn't a game isn't going to change that." (Participant #80). This perspective can be linked to the *Catalyst Model* (discussed in section 2.2.1.1.8), whereby particular games may act as a catalyst for inappropriate behaviours rather than being the cause. Parents who feel this way are more likely to prescribe to the third person effect, because if they feel that their child is not aggressive or violent to start with, it stands to reason that they feel that inappropriate content in video games will not hurt them. Conversely, parents who feel that "THINKING THAT HE CAN PLAY THIS AND DO THIS OUTSIDE BECAUSE HE BELIEVES IF HE CAN PLAY IT THIS IS NORMAL" (Participant #64) are more closely related to the *Social Learning Theory* (discussed in section 2.2.1.1.1) in that they child may learn behaviours from observation.

Some parents will seek elaboration before making game choices, restricting some games unless they feel they have enough information on which to base their decision: "Without having more information, they would not be allowed to play an M rated game." (Participant #73) and "...I usually read reviews of all games before letting my kids play

them...” (Participant #13). This suggests that some parents are taking an active role in mediation, as described by the central route of the vigilance construct of the VPMT.

6.5.3.3 Tools that help with mediation

A very small number of comments mention tools that parents use to assist them with mediating games for their children. Most of these were in reference to reading reviews to assist with game choices: “I usually read reviews of all games before letting my kids play them” (Participant #13), and there is faith in the source of the review: “I saw a trusted review of this game and apart from the blood, as it is complete fantasy, I felt it was suitable for all of us. The trusted review I refer to is a show on ABC2 called Good Game where they review adult games” (Participant #13). Other comments mention using online filters to moderate content in games with an online component: “Online play can expose children to abuse etc however there is an online filter to help reduce this” (Participant #3). Also, although not a tool as such, some parents might mitigate the effects of language in some games by turning down the volume: “It’s his favourite game but we limit the time of play and mute the game when playing” (Participant #49). This corresponds to the comment made by Participant #17, who stated that “characters’ comments often reinforce the casual nature of the violence”.

6.5.3.4 Mediation outside of the home

Video games are a ubiquitous part of a child’s life, and as such, their usage transcends the boundaries of the child’s home. Some children have hand-held devices which they are able to use beyond the oversight by others, such as in the school playground, on public transport, or at the local shops. Children may also play games at houses other than their own where they may be under the oversight of another adult. As such, situations are presented where parents may have difficulty extending their mediation efforts to the houses of their child’s friends or extended family. As this research has shown, the process of choosing suitable video games for children involves knowledge of both the game content as well as understanding of the child’s maturity level. This is not a task that could be considered easy for the non-parental supervising adult,

especially when it may prove difficult for the parent to apply a blanket rule such as 'my child is only allowed to play M rated games' because this study indicates that there may be some games that carry this classification of which the parent may not approve. Thus, video game mediation outside of the home becomes a task that is fraught with uncertainty for parents who may attempt to maintain a level of control over the types of video games that their child plays. Epitomising this, one participant described her experience with mediation that her child received outside of the home:

Usually if my 8 yr old is at his mates house he is exposed to inappropriate games. His mum buys all sorts of games that are totally not suitable for an 8yr old. My son does let his friends mum [know] that he is only allowed to play G and PG rated games....I can't control what other parents buy their kids... (Participant #22)

It appears that this parent makes game choices that she feels are appropriate for her child, and also educates her child about the sort of games that are suitable for them to play. The experience of this parent highlights the fact that when a child is playing under the supervision of others, it is possible that the supervising adult has different views to the parent on which games are suitable for the child to play. As the child gets older, they are more likely to respond to peer pressure as well as the forbidden fruit effect. This may result in even less effective mediation outside of the home. Educating the child about the video games that are suitable for them to play may provide a solid framework on which the child can draw on to make game choices when out of the care of their parents, a solution which may only work while the child is young.

As the use of computers in the class room become more widespread, it would appear that some children may be accessing inappropriate games during class time. One parent related a disturbing account of his child's experience with peers accessing these games:

Primary school kids also use computers to troll around for free games that are ultra-violent. My son witnessed his classmates accessing this material during class in

grade 2. We thought the responsible thing to do was to bring it to the teacher and principals attention as they had no idea. Then they sought to remove all evidence that this had occurred from their school computers and tried to blame my son for instigating the entire incident in order to keep us quiet (his parent). We swapped our son to a catholic school because we had totally lost faith in the local government school. The kids at his old school continued accessing these games and even had the websites bookmarked for quick access and the teachers and principal were oblivious. (Participant #47).

This suggests that children are able to access games during school hours that may not be considered appropriate for them to play. It is not clear whether these games were classed as online games, or whether they are downloadable games of a similar nature to those available through stores. Whereas online games are outside of the scope for this research, the question remains about the level of mediation and policies that exist in schools surrounding games and acceptable use of the internet.

6.5.3.5 Influence from within the home

Not all influences on game choices come from external sources, originating instead from family members. One participant allows her 9-year-old daughter to "...play a game that is M and or 'MA15+' because her older sibling is playing with them" (Participant #72). This sets up a situation where the older sibling is co-playing with the child, but this is most likely passive, with either no active mediation, or if the older sibling is a minor, there may be positive active mediation where negative content may be presented in a positive light. If the parent has given permission for the child to play with their older sibling, this may give the child the message that the parent approves of the content within the game, and the fact that the sibling is playing reinforces this.

One mother described the difficulty she faced mediating games for her child when the stimuli to play inappropriate games stems from within the home: "...I feel I am quite firm on the subject and he doesn't dispute me but then his father plays games such as Metal Gear so sometimes I feel I'm fighting a losing battle. What I can control I do or try to....

and his father has bought some like Batman and Bioshock...” (Participant #17).

Although not co-playing, using the assumption that this child has watched his father play these games, this situation may be giving the child the message that his father approves of the content. As the child is not playing the game, the father is probably not performing evaluative mediation, therefore not mitigating any negative effects that may arise from the child viewing inappropriate content.

There does not appear to be any research into the effect on children when adults are playing games in their presence, and no figures to indicate how often this happens. As such, even though it is hard to determine the effect on a child who is passively exposed to inappropriate game content, future research in this area could be founded on results gleaned from research into co-viewing and active mediation.

6.5.3.6 Peer group pressure

Five percent of comments mentioned friends or peers in relation to their child’s video game play. Of these, 44% carried a negative tone and 11% a positive one. This included comments about how their child may discuss games amongst friends, or watch friends play games, which might lead to the child wanting to games that the parent may not consider appropriate for them to play. A comment that succinctly describes this stated that “Kids are going to gravitate towards anything that a) their friends are into and b) that is socially labelled as ‘Cool’” (Participant #60). They may do this “To feel included. Peer pressure is huge in the teenage years! They feel left out or 'different' to others if not allowed to play games other teenagers are playing.” (Participant #7). This is something that parents may be well aware of, accepting that there is not much they can do about it: “My kids do go over friend’s houses to play games and I wasn’t born yesterday so I understand there is a chance they’ll play a game not suitable for their age and/or maturity...” (Participant #60). A mother of a 13-year-old boy also acknowledges this situation in the following comment:

...I'd be a little on the fence about it in that he has played COD which I think is worse. Would I want him to play this in a perfect world? No. If he went to a friend's

house and they were playing it I'd figure he might look at it but he has said prev. that it's not really his thing, the peer pressure is definitely a factor. (Participant #17).

It is apparent that parents perceive the role that friends and peers have in their child's choice of games may indeed have a negative influence.

6.5.3.7 Forbidden fruit effect

There are not a lot of comments in the data to indicate that parents feel that a forbidden fruit effect has any impact on the type of games their child plays. However, the comments that were made confirmed that some parents recognise this effect in both their own child and others. There appear to be various sources from which this effect may stem: the graphics on the cover, the classification level given to the game, and the attraction they felt for the game. The forbidden fruit effect may not only be caused by restricting the game; the driving force behind the desire to play may also arise from peer group pressure, whereby "...just by seeing other friends play, they want to play as well..." (Participant #81).

The forbidden fruit effect was evident in comments for children of all ages, where "younger children are drawn towards games that are too old for them, mostly by the covers of the games" (Participant #7), and for older children: "Peer pressure is huge in the teenage years! They feel left out or 'different' to others if not allowed to play games other teenagers are playing." (Participant #8). The classification plays some part in this, where "The M rating attracts kids to the game despite whether it's good or bad..." and children may "...brag to one another that they played a M rated game rather than the name/ brand of the game" (Participant #47).

Perhaps explaining why boys will gravitate towards games with more extreme content, some participants acknowledged that some types of games may not appeal to boys. One participant feels that "My son would not be interested in this game to [sic] girlie. I find the Wii to have a larger range of G rated games. Xbox and PlayStation are always PG but mainly M and R rated - appeal to boys" (Participant #47). This sentiment was

also echoed by another participant who felt that "...it's suitable but he would not play it doesn't like anime etc would deem it too left of centre and girly" (Participant #17). This may be one reason why boys play games with higher classifications than girls, in that they are not as interested in games that do not contain more extreme content.

6.5.3.8 Third person effect

The third person effect, as discussed in section 2.2.1.2.2, shows that parents may feel that content in video games can harm children but that their child is mature enough/smart enough that the content will not harm them. To identify any comments that might indicate this effect, the comments were reviewed to determine whether the intent of the comment suggested this effect, or whether the parent was in fact rightfully stating that the content in video games would not hurt their child. To achieve this, comments were weighed against the age of the child. In cases where the child was young, the classification indicated extreme content, and the comment stated that the game content was suitable for their child, this comment was deemed to display the third person effect. Conversely, if the parent of a 17-year-old child stated that they were mature enough to play a violent game, this was not considered to be displaying a third person effect.

It is important to differentiate between comments that exhibit the third-person effect, and those that show the participant feels that exposure to inappropriate video game content does not cause any harm. An example of this is: "Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too." (Participant #37). This participant isn't setting their child apart from other children, they do not see any harmful effect at all - in fact, when this participant's responses were examined, it could be seen that they do not feel that inappropriate content in video

games can harm children, nor could it cause aggression, and it is not important to protect children from inappropriate content in video games. As such, comments like this were not coded for the third person effect.

There is evidence in the comments that the third person effect is very much in play for some parents. This was evidenced for young children, and can be seen by with the mother of a 10-year-old boy who stated that “On looking at it again I wouldn't let my child play this with 16 year olds as they are more immature and will teach him bad habits.” (Participant #77). This comment was deemed to have a strong third person effect as the parent felt that the 10-year-old child would handle the content of the game better than those 16 years of age. It is possible that this may have been the case, but as there is no way of verifying that information, the comment needed to be taken at face value. Another participant felt that “My younger child enjoys playing war games. He understands they are games and can separate the game from reality. He knows that war is not a game, and in real wars people die.” (Participant #26). This attitude was also seen by the comment made by Participant #28: “My son plays - COD 2, Ghost & Minecraft which I know is what a 10 year old shouldn't be playing but.... I know that he understands it is not real, it's a game, you don't come back from being shot 10 times! We have discussions about it. If this was not the case, he wouldn't be playing it!”. When the responses for both of these participants were examined, it could be seen they each feel that inappropriate content in video games can harm children, which indicates that these participants are exhibiting the third person effect.

Older children are more likely to be mature enough to play mature content in video games, but this did not stop the third person effect being identified in comments surrounding these children. If a comment was made about a 17 or 18-year-old being mature enough that content in any video game would not hurt them, it could be

assumed that this was indeed the case, thus no third person effect could be recorded. This was almost the case with one comment that the father of an 18-year-old boy made about the ACB 'MA15+' classified game *Far Cry 2*, who said, "I feel my son is mature enough to play this game at any age" (Participant #79). Whereas at this age, the boy is deemed mature enough to play the game, this parent's inclusion of the comment 'at any age' suggests that the third person effect is in play. As well, one parent of two 15-year-old children stated that their child may play games with content that the classification states is not suitable for them to play "Because I believe my child is well adjusted enough to understand that this is not reality and that the action performed is not how things are solved in 'the real world'.". This indicates third person effect as this comment suggests that this participant will allow their child to play games from the 'R18+' category as this is the only classification level that is considered inappropriate for this age.

6.5.3.9 Difficulties parents face when mediating video games

Some participants described the difficulties they face when mediating their child's video games, which showed that they are aware that their child may be accessing games that they feel are not appropriate for them to play. Summing this up, as presented earlier, one participant stated, "Would I want him to play this in a perfect world? No" (Participant #17). This imparts a feeling of wanting to make sure the child does not access inappropriate content, but that they recognise that this may not be possible due to other influences.

Some parents may feel powerless about mediation when their child is out of their care. Even though the parent may restrict their child from playing a game, their child may still play the game at other people's houses. This may be under the supervision of another adult, or it may be unsupervised with friends. Indeed, Table 58 shows that 20% of parents feel that their child will play a restricted game at someone else's house, and

26% are not sure. This is evidenced by some comments, where a child will play a game with inappropriate content “Only if they are somewhere other than at home and I do not know what they are playing” (Participant #18), and “Only if I was unaware that they were playing it (i.e. playing it at someone else's house)” (Participant #80). One participant stated that “My kids do go over friend’s houses to play games and I wasn't born yesterday so I understand there is a chance they'll play a game not suitable for their age and/or maturity” (Participant #60). As well, the child might end up “borrowing the game from a friend (unbeknownst to parents)” (Participant #44). This clearly shows that some parents recognise that they may have no control over the games their child has access to when out of their care. As well, the discussion in section 6.5.3.4, about some children being able to access inappropriate video games during class time further compounds the problem of mediation outside of the home.

Some participants felt that their child may have been primed to play video games that their parents have restricted or that are not considered appropriate for them to play. One of the reasons given for this was merchandising for the game, whereby “The kids can buy the toys (eg.Spiderman/Batman/Iron man) and of course they want to see the movie and play the video game but they are often M rated so they are not allowed” (Participant #47). As well, this might be a result of playing previous games in the franchise, which may cause problems if the desired title carries a higher classification than those earlier in the series. As one participant stated, their child may play games with inappropriate content as a result of “already having played one game from the same franchise” (Participant #44). Another said of the ACB ‘R18+’ classified game *Grand Theft Auto V*, “My son loves this game. He loved it when he was young & he loves it now.” (Participant #79). Games in this franchise carry classifications of either ‘MA15+’ or ‘R18+’. As a result of being primed, children who play the ‘MA15+’ versions may want to move on to play the ‘R18+’ version.

Some parents are unaware of the type of content this is in the games that their child plays, and may “allow it only to find it contains restricted material” (Participant #71). This

results in a situation where, once the parent discovers that the game has content that is not appropriate for their child, they either allow the child to continue playing the game, or they restrict the game from being played. Restricting the game after the child has been allowed to play it may offer the parent more control, but may impact the parent-child relationship by causing resentment at the restriction.

6.5.3.10 Summary of mediation of video games

Most participants who discussed mediation types have indicated that they use either restrictive or active mediation, and although some participants stated they would play games themselves before they allowed their child to play, there was no mention of co-playing. Some parents will research a game before allowing their child to play, which may be through game review sites or by playing the game themselves before allowing it for their child. Some parents experience difficulties mediating games when their child plays elsewhere, which could be a result of supervising adults not being aware of the type of content suitable for the child to play, or because the child is playing unsupervised with friends. Peers play a role in both the type of games their child wants to play, as well as providing an avenue for which to play games outside of their parent's supervision. It may also be that children are able to access inappropriate content while at school.

A significant number of participants did not agree with the ACB classification given to games in the review section, which included both the classification level for some games, and missing items of consumer advice. Even an ACB 'R18+' classified game garnered discontent about missing consumer advice, even though this game is considered to be suitable only for adults. This finding appears to be at odds with results of research from the Community Assessment Panels which show that generally, the community is in agreement with the classification awarded to video games in Australia, sometimes feeling it is too strict (see section 2.2.3.1 for discussion).

The variance in attitudes of participants into both the impact of video games on their child, and how they applied mediation, serves to show that parents differ in their

approach and attitudes to both video game content as well as the type of games they feel are suitable for their child to play. The third person effect is seen in parents of children of all ages, but there are some parents who feel that video game content will not harm children at all.

Participants acknowledged that they experience difficulties making sure their child does not access inappropriate content in video games. The reasons for this are varied, ranging from children accessing restricted games while under the supervision of others, including playing at their friends' houses, to children being drawn to merchandising which effectively primes children to play games that the classification suggests might not be considered suitable. Inconsistent classification applied to video games is likely to impact on the ability of parents to make appropriate game choices for their child.

6.6 Re-examining and updating the VPMT

The Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) has underpinned this research, providing a solid basis on which to develop the framework for *Study 2 - Exploring Parental Use of Game Classification*. In designing this study, the PMT was modified in order to include the Vigilance construct, which was inspired by the Elaboration Likelihood Model described in section 2.2.1.2.1. This construct offers pathways for parents to either trust information from authority via the peripheral route, in this case classification information applied to video games, or whether to seek elaboration about the type of content that is in the games that their child plays through the central route, thus increasing the parent's chance of making informed game choices. The modified theory was given the name of Vigilant Protection Motivation Theory (VPMT), to reflect the fact that in order to provide protection in an ever-evolving medium, parents need to remain vigilant with remaining informed about the type of content that is in the video games their child plays.

The analysis performed on the qualitative data for this study has suggested that there are issues surrounding mediating video games that are not explained by the VPMT. These issues take the form of barriers over which the parent has little control, so it is

proposed that a further construct be added to the VPMT in order to recognise these issues. Just as the Health Belief Model (HBM), discussed in section 2.2.1.2.4, has a construct for *perceived barriers*, representing someone's perception of barriers that stop them from carrying out the recommended course of action, it is proposed that the VPMT include a construct for *external barriers*. It is not anticipated that these be considered to be perceived barriers, as that places these issues into the realm of parental cognition, whereas in fact they are not dependant on how the parent perceives them to be, they are external forces which have an influence on the parent's ability to protect their child from inappropriate content in video games.

In presenting the modified VPMT, Figure 26 on the following page illustrates where the proposed *external barriers* construct sits within this model (see Appendix K for a larger version). This construct is considered to be stand-alone, not weighed against any other construct as a predictor of mediation. Rather, each of the issues within this barrier need to be satisfied in order to successfully carry out the action. This construct sits alongside the motivation to protect, as it does not precede the intention to protect, not does it come after. Protecting children from inappropriate content in video games depends on both the parent's motivation to protect, as well as overcoming external barriers.

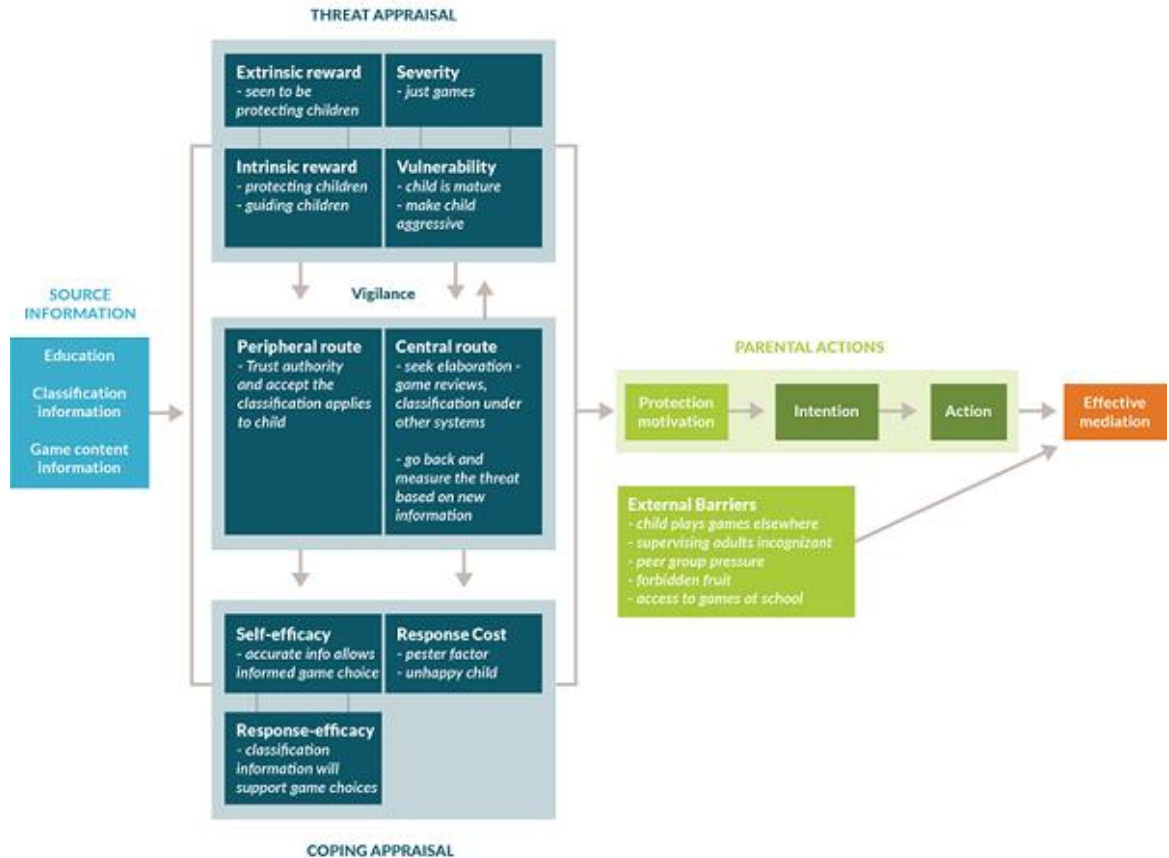


Figure 26 - Final modification of the proposed VPMT

6.7 Summary

The qualitative data collected in this study has proven to be a rich source of information that offered depth to the quantitative results presented in section 5.4 by providing a clear, thorough view of the attitude of parents towards game content, video game classification and mediation. Overall, it has demonstrated that most participants in this study appear to be concerned about the type of content that is in games that their child plays. In sum, the qualitative data shows that the most important concern for parents is video game classification, followed by how they mediate games and then the game content. Violence is the most discussed content within games, and parents are divided about whether they will allow their child to play games with this content; however, other classifiable elements such as language and sexual content do cause concern and

parents are more decisive about the fact that they do not want their child exposed to this type of content.

This analysis has also uncovered issues that parents may face when making appropriate game choices for their child. Some parents may be inadvertently allowing their child to play games that have content that they feel is inappropriate for their child; this is because their game choices may be compromised by insufficient information about game content, evidenced in the game review section in Stage 3 of *Study 2 - Exploring Parental Use of Game Classification* where a substantial number of parents made more restrictive game choices when provided with more information about classifiable elements within the game. This lends support to parental co-playing as discussed in section 2.2.4.4, which enables parents to be more informed about the games their child plays.

Effective mediation of video games outside of the home presents challenges of a type that may be hard to surmount. Some participants acknowledge that there are avenues that provide opportunities for their child to play games of which they do not approve, including playing games under the supervision of other adults who are incognizant of the types of games suitable for the child, playing games at friend's houses who are allowed to play these games, and possibly accessing restricted games during class time. These factors are largely beyond the parent's control, and need to be addressed before effective protection can be afforded.

This section also presented a final modification to the VPMT, which addressed external barriers that may hamper mediation, recognising their importance in the process of protecting children from inappropriate content in video games.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

The classification awarded to video games in Australia provides guidance for parents when they are making game choices for their children. This gives parents a tool with which they can determine games that are suitable for their child to play based on the suggested maturity of the child. Since the introduction of the 'R18+' video game classification in Australia in 2013, the topic of protecting children from inappropriate content in video games has become more important due to the adult-natured content that is in games that carry this classification. Whereas games may no longer have the need to be "shoehorned" into the 'MA15+' category, the 'R18+' classification allows games to be released on the Australian market that may have previously been classified 'RC'. Prior research that examined the ratings and consumer advice given to video games in the USA suggests that video game classification might not warn of all classifiable elements within the game (Thompson et al., 2006). Although there have been some comparisons of the classification level awarded to video games in Australia with overseas systems (EFAA, 2010), to date there does not appear to have been any research that examines either the validity or usefulness of consumer advice that forms part of the classification for these games.

Previous research related to video game classification has explored topics surrounding validity (Dogruel & Joecke, 2013; EFAA, 2010; Thompson et al., 2006), parental attitudes towards classification (Galaxy Research, 2007; Gentile et al., 2011; Kutner et al., 2008; Urbis Keys Young, 2005; Walsh & Gentile, 2001), video game content (Brand & Knight, 2003; Nikken, Jansz & Schouwstra, 2007; Smith, Lachlan & Tamborini, 2003), effects of video games on game players (Anderson & Dill, 2000; AGD, 2010; DeLisi et al., 2012; Walsh & Gentile, 2001), mediation of video games (Kutner et al., 2008; Martins et al., 2015; Nathanson, 2001; Nikken & Jansz, 2006; Nikken et al., 2007) and external barriers (Bijvank et al., 2009; Kutner & Olson, 2008; Turner, Kelly and McKenna, 2006). Whereas these topics are well represented in the literature, what

appears to be lacking is a cohesive view of all of these elements in relation to making game choices for children, and any influence they may have on parental attitudes while making these choices. This research addressed this shortcoming by exploring these topics in a holistic manner in order to deliver insights into how parents perceive video game classification, and how, if at all, they use this classification when making game choices for their child.

7.1 Research questions

In order to explore issues surrounding video game classification and the role that classification plays when parents make game choices for their children, this research asked the following questions:

RQ 1 - Does video game classification in Australia provide enough information for parents to make informed decisions about what games their children play?

RQ 2 - What are the factors that may prevent parents from protecting children from inappropriate content in video games?

7.1.1 Research Question 1

The first step in answering RQ 1 was to determine whether parents in Australia are provided with similar classification information as parents overseas. *Study 1 - Comparison of Video Game Classification* achieved this by comparing video game classification awarded to games in Australia with that awarded to the same title overseas. The results from this study showed that there are a substantial number of video games classified 'MA15+' in Australia that are recommended for at least 17 (USA) and 18 (Europe) years of age overseas. In addition, it was identified that video games classified in Australia generally carry fewer warnings about classifiable elements within the game than those rated by overseas systems. When it comes to violence, the ACB, ESRB and PEGI are consistent in applying this classification. However, when it comes to language, Australian classification differs from other systems (see Figure 7) with

warnings for this element applied to less than half the number of games than the PEGI system, and to around 30% of the games that warn about language through the ESRB. A similar situation can be seen with elements related to sexual content and themes, with the ESRB reporting that these elements are in 37% of games, while the ACB only provides warnings on 14% of games. Interestingly, PEGI provides warnings about sexual content on only 1% of games, perhaps due to more liberal social norms in Europe regarding content that is sexual in nature.

In order to identify whether the discrepancies in consumer advice applied between Australian and overseas systems were due to Australia having more liberal social norms or whether they are a result of inadequate classification applied to games, *Study 2 - Exploring Parental Use of Game Classification* surveyed parents to gain a measure of their attitudes towards issues surrounding video games and their classification. Results from this study showed that Australian parents are mostly concerned about sexual content within games, followed by coarse language and then violence (see section 5.5.1 for discussion). Given that the number of games that carry ACB warnings for violence corresponds with those that carry ESRB warnings for violence, and parents in Australia are more concerned about coarse language and sexual content in video games than they are about violence, it follows that the number of games that carry warnings for language and sexual content would be expected to equal those with warnings for these elements in overseas systems. The fact that some games carry fewer warnings for these elements than the same title overseas suggests that discrepancies between the consumer advice carried by video games classified in Australia and their overseas counterparts cannot be attributed to differences in societal norms.

The difference between consumer advice awarded by the ACB and that awarded to the same game title by overseas systems could also be a reflection of how the Australian classification system is designed. As discussed in section 2.1.3.7, the National Classification Guidelines use an impact-based method of reporting classifiable elements which might lend clarity to why the classification for some video games

appears to be missing items of consumer advice. The guidelines suggest that if an element is not deemed to be of an impact that matches the classification for the intended audience (e.g.: MA15+ classification level), no warning is considered necessary. This may result in what appears to be an inconsistent application of consumer advice, whereby the game may contain these elements but as they are milder in nature than the guidelines suggest the warning is not deemed necessary. However, this reason for the discrepancy may not be valid as the ESRB ratings system is also premised on the fact that the consumer advice is relative to the classification level, and this system provides more warnings on some games than the ACB. As such, differences in consumer advice awarded cannot be attributed to differences in approach to classification.

Parents may perceive a lack of warnings about classifiable elements to mean that the game does not contain elements of that nature, and as such they may be allowing children much younger than the recommended maturity level (or age in case of restricted classifications) to play these games as they may not perceive there to be any harmful content. An example of this is the *drugs* warning that originally accompanied the classification for *Grand Theft Auto V*, which some parents understood to mean that drugs was the only element of concern in the game (see comment for Participant #61 in the game review for this game), when in fact there were other elements added to the classification for this game at a later date (see Appendix D for details).

The hierarchy of impact described in section 2.1.3.7 shows that warnings are not required for classifiable elements that are of lower impact than the classification level suggests. As such, an ACB 'MA15+' classified game with sexual content considered to be moderate impact, therefore only requiring warnings at the 'M' classification level, will not contain warnings for this content. However, Table 51 shows that most parents do not want any sexual content at all in the games their child plays. Thus, parents may be allowing their child to play an 'MA15+' classified game that has sexual content of an 'M' nature of which they are not aware.

The game review section of Study 2 showed that parents may make different game choices when provided with more detailed and valid classification information. As parents who changed their game choice mostly did so after viewing the international classification, this suggests that parents may feel that the classification awarded to some video games in Australia may be inadequate. As can be seen when viewing the history of classification changes for the game *Grand Theft Auto V*, the ACB recognise that some games are not awarded sufficient classification information. From when this game was first released, it was available for almost two years with classification information that the ACB now deem to be lacking.

If differences in consumer advice awarded to some games by the ACB and overseas systems are not due to societal norms, and they cannot be attributed to differences in approach to classification, then it follows that the consumer advice applied to some games in Australia may not be sufficient to meet the needs of parents. If overseas systems deem a classifiable element to be extreme enough to provide warnings for those aged 17 and 18 years, and this warning is missing on games classified for 15 years of age in Australia, this implies that Australian parents are not being notified of all classifiable elements within some video games. In light of this, it can be concluded that the answer to RQ 1 is that no, video game classification in Australia does not always provide parents with enough information to make informed decisions about what games their children play.

7.1.2 Research Question 2

In answering the second research question, “What are the factors that may prevent parents from protecting children from inappropriate content in video games?”, several sub-questions were explored. These each explored different facets of parental awareness of, and approach to, issues surrounding video game classification and mediation.

The second study for this research, *Study 2 - Exploring Parental Use of Game Classification*, surveyed parents of children who play video games to explore how they perceive and use video game classification to make game choices for their child. This study was designed with a mixed-method approach which delivered a rich set of both quantitative and qualitative information. During the analysis for this study, it became clear that the PMT did not sufficiently explain the cognitive process of parents, and that there were potential barriers they may face when protecting their child from inappropriate content in video games. In order to address these limitations, this research modified the PMT which resulted in the VPMT.

7.1.2.1 Factors that may impede protection

The qualitative thematic analysis conducted in Chapter 6 uncovered issues that parents face while managing the games that their child plays. These issues fall within two distinct groups: factors that impede protection which the parent may be able to change, and factors that impede protection which are largely out of the parent's control. These groups are presented below along with discussion and recommendations related to each group.

7.1.2.1.1 Factors that impede protection which the parent may be able to change

There were several factors identified that may prevent parents from protecting their child from inappropriate content in video games over which the parent may have some control. These factors are:

- Games with inadequate classification information fail to provide effective guidance for parental game choices
- Parents may not understand the video game classification system
- Pester power puts pressure on the parent to allow access to a game which has been restricted

- Deceptive covers mislead parents about the nature of the content within the game
- Third-person effect results in parents recognising that inappropriate content in video games can harm other children, but feeling that their child is different, or mature enough, that the content will not hurt them

Although each of these factors presents impediments to parents when making game choices, which may result in their child not being protected from inappropriate content in video games, there is potential for the parent to improve the outcome of these factors thus increasing their ability to make informed game choices.

Exploring avenues towards informed game choices

There are several areas which can be looked at to improve the outcome of factors that may prevent parents from protecting their child from inappropriate content in video games: education, and information. The following sections discuss issues related to these areas.

Educating parents about video game classification

“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and critically...”

- Martin Luther King Jr

Some parents are confused about video game classification (AGD, 2015; Brand, Lorentz, & Mathew, 2013) and this research has shown that some parents do not feel that inappropriate content in video games can harm children (see Table 76). This suggests that parents may benefit by education about both how the classification system works, as well as the need for classification. Teaching parents about how the classification system works, why classification is needed, and how to use classification to choose appropriate games for their child can assist parents to make game decisions for their child that reflect their beliefs and values. This lends support to active mediation as parents may find that when a child questions the reason that a game has been

restricted, they have information on which to provide an explanation. Explanations that reflect the parent's values may present the information to the child in a manner that could be considered warm and supportive as recommended by Knafo and Schwartz (2003), rather than the parent restricting the game with no explanation. As children may be primed to understand their parent's values, this may support the parent-child relationship as parents may be giving a clear message to the child about the unsuitability of the game content, which may also further develop the child's values.

This research has shown that some parents, particularly married mothers, will change their mind about a restricted game if their child keeps asking. This is linked firmly with the self-efficacy component of the coping appraisal construct of the VPMT, in that it is related to the parent's perception of their ability to cope with the given course of action. The solution to this perhaps lies in the parent having enough information on which to base their game choice. If they are able to rationalise their decision to themselves, this may help them to maintain this decision in the face of pestering.

Educating parents about harm that may be caused by inappropriate content in video games and how this could impact their child may help to reduce the third person effect. This effect is evident in some parents who feel that their child is mature enough that inappropriate content in video games will not cause them harm (see section 6.5.3.8). However, any message about risks to their child may only reach parents who are receptive, as some parents feel that they are 'just games' and thus cause no harm. There is nothing wrong with this position if parents have considered the information presented to them and made an informed decision. The problem arises when parents do not apprise themselves of possible harm that can be caused by inappropriate content in video games, when even the literature cannot present a conclusion. Parents who take the approach that they are 'just games' essentially bypass the threat appraisal construct of the VPMT, with no mechanism to revisit it without a change of attitude towards the risk of harm.

The VPMT predicts that if self-efficacy and response-efficacy is high, and the perception of threat is high, then the motivation to protect increases. However, as Wu et al. (2005) discussed, if parents perceive the threat to be high but feel they are unable to successfully mediate their child's video game usage, this may reduce their intention to comply with any recommendations. Therefore, educating parents about any threats associated with their child's video game usage may prove to be ineffective unless parents are also offered strategies and methods to increase their self-efficacy and/or response-efficacy.

Resources to provide information

As seen in the game review section of Study 2, when provided with more information about both classification and the nature of the game, some parents appear to make more informed game choices. Step 3 of the game review provided the ESRB game synopsis, describing the nature of the game as well as any classifiable elements within the game. This synopsis appeared to help some parents decide if the game was right for their child (see discussion in section 5.5.11), demonstrating that providing rich and concise information can lead parents to make more informed game choices.

It is not only information that is important to parents when they make game choices, but the timeliness of the delivery. Although some games may be researched prior to purchase, some parents might make their decision at the point of purchase. When purchasing a game in a shop, the information available to parents is that which was provided in step 1 of the game review section of Study 2. As a substantial number of parents made a different decision about the game after being provided with more information, it becomes clear that providing information to parents at the point of sale will increase their chance of making more informed game decisions. Both the ESRB and PEGI provide apps for parents to check classification information for video games on their devices, but at this stage there has been no app released by the ACB. In all, 80% of parents own an internet-enabled device, and whereas 83% of parents use these

devices at the point of purchase to research game information, only 20% of parents say they do this all the time.

If the ACB released an app which offered information about the game, parents could use this to access Australian classification information more readily. Advertising could be displayed in-store to inform parents about the availability of this app. This advertising could include a QR (quick response) code that parents could scan on their device, which downloads the app. The app could provide information that consists of not only the classification information, but an explanation of what the warnings applied to the game mean. For example, if an ACB 'MA15+' game carried a warning for language, the scanned information could state the type of language this may represent. As well, the impact grid described in Figure 2 could provide information about all elements within the game, not just those that meet the level of impact that the classification level suggests. This would provide parents with information about all of the elements within the game, as suggested by Gentile et al. (2011) who argued that classification which recorded the presence of elements would allow parents to form their own decisions about the suitability of a game for their child. Just as with the ESRB classification for some games, a synopsis of the game could also be included. Information such as this might help overcome issues with deceptive game covers; as parents are presented with more information about the nature of the game, the cover may not play as large a role in game choices. By having an app that is advertised at the point of purchase, parents may be encouraged to research classification information before buying games.

There may be other methods that could offer parents the ability to research more details about the game they are considering purchasing. One method is an in-store scanner, which presents the same information as discussed for the app. This scanner could offer parents an easy method of accessing information about the game. Much like how price checkers in department stores work, the barcode of the game could be scanned and information about the game would show on-screen. In-store advertising could encourage parents to use the scanner. If stores were required to provide resources

such as this, it may encourage parents to investigate a game before purchase. It may also send a message to parents that they should check game content before purchase, thus normalising the process of researching the nature of the content in games they allow their child to play.

7.1.2.1.2 Factors that impede protection which are largely outside of the parent's control

The following are factors that prevent parents from protecting their child from inappropriate content in video games which are largely outside of the parent's ability to control:

- Forbidden fruit effect encourages the child to access games to which they have been restricted.
- Peer group pressure encourages the child to play games that may be inappropriate, potentially fuelling the forbidden fruit effect
- Game franchises upselling or cross-selling games may encourage pestering
- Supervising adults are unaware of the suitability of game content, possibly allowing children to play games which their parents may restrict
- Children may access inappropriate video games during class time

These factors fall outside of the parent's ability to control, whereby the child may either access, or be influenced to access, video games with inappropriate content. Both forbidden fruit and peer group pressure is situated in the realm of the child's cognition, playing on both desires and perhaps social insecurities that encourage a child to fit in with their peers. These issues may be difficult for parents to manage, especially with older children where the forbidden fruit effect has been shown to be stronger (Bushman & Cantor, 2003). Active mediation has been shown to mitigate negative effects of inappropriate media (Nathanson, 1999), as well as promote less liking of the content in adolescent boys, possibly reducing the forbidden fruit effect (Nathanson, 2002). As discussed earlier, active mediation may be supported by information and education.

Effective active mediation allows the parent to open up a dialogue regarding the suitability of game content, conveying their values to the child. When used in conjunction with restrictive mediation, this does not damage the parent-child relationship (Nathanson, 2002). As such, active mediation may support a healthy parent-child relationship, which may result in improved outcomes for both forbidden fruit and peer group pressure.

Informed game choices support mediation decisions

Game franchises and movie merchandising effectively prime children to want to play particular games, and when these games have content which is not suitable for the child to play, the parent may experience difficulties mediating the game. Children may put pressure on parents to allow them to play the game, which results in the parent facing pester power driven by the marketing for tie-ins to the game. Parents may find this situation easier to manage if they have made an informed game choice, as this may support them being able to stand firm on their decision if they are clear on why they restricted the game.

Improving third-party supervision

Protecting children from inappropriate content in video games cannot only be seen to be the concern of parents. Just as someone supervising children needs to be mindful of issues surrounding their care, they should also be aware of what types of video games are suitable for the child to play. As such, to provide effective mediation of video games to children in their care, those who are supervising children should also be aware of video game classification, as well as being educated about the type of games that are suitable for the child to play. Perhaps a national campaign, similar to the 'r u ok?' phrase coined by Gavin Larkin (www.ruok.org.au) to raise awareness about how this question could make a difference to someone struggling with life, could encourage supervising adults to ask the parent 'can they play?'. Bringing this issue into the thoughts of everyone who has care of children may open up a dialogue between

parents and supervising adults which in turn might support parents in their attempts to protect their children from inappropriate content in video games.

The case presented in section 6.5.3.4 regarding the child whose friends were accessing inappropriate video games during class time has highlighted the issue of children accessing games that their parents may not approve while at school. Some schools have policies surrounding access to inappropriate content, and it is up to supervising teachers to ensure these policies are followed. As parents generally enter into a contract with the school regarding their child's usage of laptops or tablets while at school, it is not inconceivable that their expectation is that their child's usage would be reasonably monitored during class time. That this situation occurred demonstrates that the expectations of parents towards their child's computer usage while at school may be different to the policies and processes of some schools, or at least the actions of some teachers. Schools may need to offer more transparency in their policies about how infractions are dealt with, and follow through with any stipulated response to breaches. Just as this research has shown that the attitudes of parents can vary greatly towards the effect of some types of video game content on children, teachers may also have varying attitudes about the suitability of video games for their students. As such, teachers may benefit by education about managing video game access during school time, both in awareness of the type of content that is suitable for children to access at

7.1.3 Parents in high-risk categoriesAs well as the factors that may prevent parents from protecting their child from inappropriate content in video games, this research has also identified the following subsets of parents as being at higher risk:

- Mothers with English as a second language
- Married fathers aged 26 - 35
- Single mothers aged 46 - 55
- Parents who do not play video games

These factors present a higher chance of children accessing inappropriate content in video games. As discussed in section 5.5.2, mothers who speak English as a second language are particularly unaware of game classification, thus messages about the suitability of the game for their child are likely to go unheeded. As some of these mothers are making game choices for their children, children of ESL parents may be at higher risk of being exposed to inappropriate content in video games.

There were two subsets of parents identified who initially expressed that they have enough information to make game choices for their child, but after being presented with further information realised that they did not. Married fathers aged 26 - 35 showed the greatest change, followed by single mothers aged 46 - 55. Although a greater number of parents within these subsets felt that they had enough information to make game choices for their child, that there was a significant change after being presented with more information suggests that these parents may be receptive to education.

Parents who do not play video games ideally need to research the game in order to apprise themselves of the suitability of the game content which will enable them to make informed game decisions as well as perform effective active mediation. Those taking the peripheral route through the Vigilance construct of the VPMT are at risk of allowing their child to play games that may have inappropriate content of which they may not be aware. For parents who do not play video games, to provide the best chance at protection parents need to seek elaboration, taking the central route through the Vigilance construct of the VPMT.

7.1.4 Protective methods

This research identified protective methods that parents can use that may prevent or mitigate any negative effects from inappropriate content that children may be exposed to in video games. These were identified as follows:

- Restrictive mediation - where parents restrict a child from playing a game

- Negative active mediation, where parents present inappropriate elements within the game in a negative light

Restrictive mediation has been shown to be an effective method when used with younger children (Martins et al., 2015), but it may induce the forbidden fruit effect in older children as well as potentially damage the parent-child relationship (Nathanson, 2002). There are multiple reasons why parents might restrict a game; two of the most commonly occurring are because the classification level indicates the game is not suitable for the child, and the nature of the content in the game (seen in Figure 25). When looking at these reasons in light of the fact that this research indicates that parents may not be aware of the nature of the content within some games, it becomes clear that restricting a game based on content becomes less effective as parents may not be cognizant of the nature of the content in the game. Also, as previous research has shown that some parents may find the classification system confusing (AGD, 2015; OFLC, 2005b; Brand, 2007; Brand, 2013), particularly ESL mothers (see section 5.5.2), this means that parents who restrict games based on classification information may be premising their decision on information that they do not understand.

As discussed in section 2.2.4.2, negative active mediation, a form of evaluative mediation, has been shown to be effective for all age groups. The success this method has seen is grounded in different reasoning between younger and older children. Younger children will accept negative comments about game content, possibly because they are at an age where they are interested in exploring social issues surrounding the character (Nathanson, 2004). As the child gets older, they are more likely to react negatively to restrictive mediation such as resentment towards the parent or enhancing their desire to play the game. In this situation, negative active mediation can mitigate some of these negative effects by opening up a dialogue between the parent and child which are predicated on parental values of which the child may understand.

7.1.5 Examining perceptions

No matter which type of mediation is used, a message is sent to the child about the parent's values in relation to the nature of the game content. Co-playing without negative mediation implies parental acceptance of the content, while restrictive or negative active mediation sends the message to the child that the parent finds the content unacceptable. As such, mediation could be seen as socialisation, or transferring parental values to the child, which some children may be primed to accept (Knafo and Schwartz, 2003). If parents are not aware of the content in some of the games they allow their children to play, their permission may convey the message to the child that the parent finds the content within the game acceptable; this may confuse the child about the values of the parent, as the child is not receiving consistent value messages and models as recommended by Knafo and Schwarz.

This research has shown that some parents in Australia use video game classification to assist them with game choices, as well as showing that the classification awarded to some games may not accurately reflect the nature of the content within the game. Coupled with the fact that 23% of parents never play video games with their children, and as such possibly do not get the opportunity to see the nature of the content in some games, this puts children at risk of being exposed to content in video games of which their parents may not be aware.

This research has also shown that parents adopt a variety of attitudes towards the effect that video games can have on children. While most parents recognise that some content can harm children, others feel that they are 'only games' and thus cannot result in harm. This has implications on attempts to educate parents about both unwanted effects of inappropriate video game content, as well as how to mitigate these effects as some parents may not change their attitude towards mediation, especially while the literature remains conflicted on any harmful effects.

Parents who feel that games can harm children, but their child is mature enough that the content will not harm them, may respond to the VPMT model. If these parents are

provided with enough education so that they can assess the threat to their child appropriately, they are better able to appraise any risks that their child may face if they are exposed to inappropriate content in video games. These parents are a high-risk cohort who need further education so they can make informed choices for their children.

The Australian video game classification system is primarily a maturity-based system which places the onus on parents to determine the suitability of the game for their child based on their child's maturity in respect of the nature of the content within the game. As consumer advice is applied to games based on the hierarchy of impact, this means that the decision about maturity has been somewhat decided already. As such, parents are only informed of the elements which the ACB feel they should know about based on their own decision of maturity. This would appear to expose a dual nature of the classification system for video games in Australia, as the maturity-based system expects parents to decide if their child is mature enough to view the content, whereas the system appears to make the decision for them, and fails to present them with information upon which they can form their own decision.

7.2 Theoretical implications

In modifying the PMT to the proposed VPMT, this research has added to knowledge by identifying further cognitive processes that form the Vigilance construct which explains how parents make protective choices in a medium that is constantly changing. As well, a barriers construct was identified which explains outside forces which do not impinge upon a parent's intention to protect, but rather present obstacles which make it difficult to carry out the protective action. These added constructs make this model suitable for protective issues that have a complexity that involves several parties. This model may be able to be transferred to other technology-related issues as it is suited to areas that may be fluid in nature with information that needs revisiting as it is constantly changing. This model is generalised and presented here for completeness.

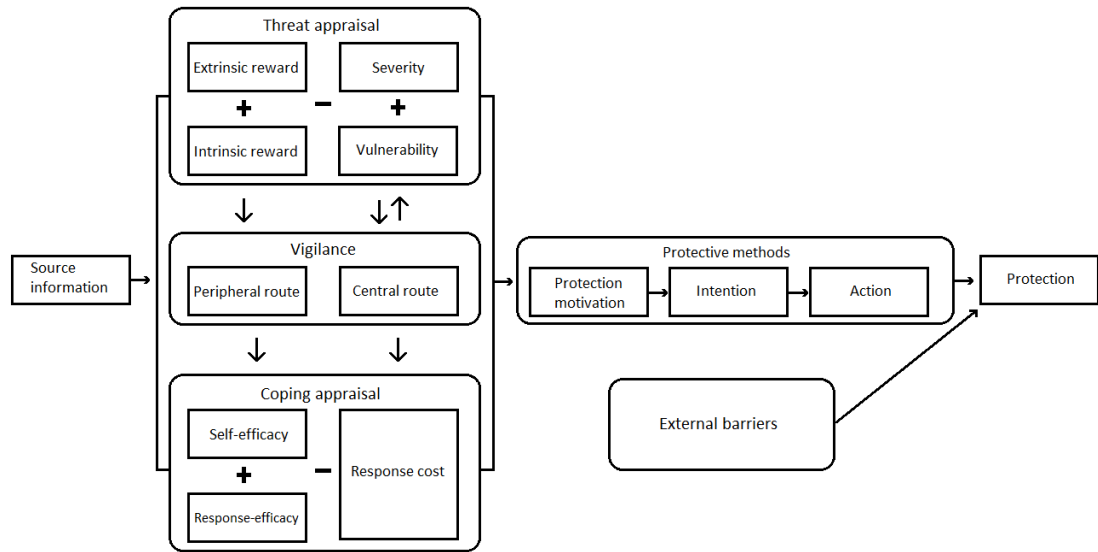


Figure 27 - Proposed VPMT model derived from the PMT

7.3 Limitations

Although the number of participants for *Study 2 - Exploring Parental use of Game Classification* was small, the qualitative data returned provided a rich set of data which allowed it to be mined for information about how parents manage their child's video game choices. As the sample size for this study is relatively small, the findings from the quantitative research presented in Chapters 5 and 6 may not provide an accurate representation of parents whose children play video games in Australia. Also, with such a small sample, relationships formed within the data may not be representative and care should be taken when attempting to generalise these results. As analysis was performed on the quantitative data as well as the qualitative data, the sample size is less of a concern for this thesis.

As there were problems recruiting participants, an incentive was offered to encourage participation. Although this incentive appeared to encourage more participants, it was not offered until after the invitation was sent out to schools. As a result, any benefit that could have been gained from offering an incentive to such a large, targeted audience was lost. If this incentive was offered when the survey was released through schools,

there may have been a greater response rate through this avenue. This may have also had the added benefit of pester power - where children might have encouraged their parents to complete the questionnaire in order to win the prize.

This research is related to issues surrounding video game classification in Australia, and as such the questionnaire in Study 2 was targeted towards Australian parents. Although the online delivery of the questionnaire could not guarantee that all participants were located in Australia, the IP address of each entry was checked and validated that each entry was completed from within Australia.

Content in video games may vary in different countries as a result of the type of content each country will allow. Although due care was taken in the content analysis for Study 1 to ensure that games marked 'Modified' in the ACB database were not included in the analysis, it cannot be guaranteed that the game content was not altered before it was first submitted for classification in Australia.

Finally, the lack of research into most classifiable elements in video game content means that it was necessary to draw from research that explored these issues in relation to television. Even though there is some crossover in issues between the two subjects, the paucity of research in these areas warrants caution in applying this research to video games.

7.4 Contributions and significance of this research

This research has addressed a shortfall in the literature surrounding research into the validity and usefulness of video game classification information in Australia. Whereas prior research has explored parental uptake of classification (Brand, 2013), there does not appear to have been any research into the efficacy of classification when used for game choices.

Until now, research into issues surrounding classification has remained in the realm of surveying parents about their attitudes. This research appears to be unique in that it is

the first to observe parental cognitive processes that occur when making game choices after being presented with additional information. Exploring these processes enabled this research to identify points of failure, effectively opening up each step of the process for examination. This delivered a transparency into how parents make game choices, exposing a potential weakness in the ACB system which suggests that classification information applied to video games in Australia may be inadequate.

7.5 Future research

The derivation of the VPMT from the PMT is considered to be in its conceptual stage, requiring further research in order to test rigour. There was uncertainty about the placement of the additional constructs; does the Vigilance construct fit between the cognitive processes of threat and coping appraisal, or does it fit better after the source information construct, resulting in a circular central pathway that traverses between source information and coping and threat appraisal? It is recommended, for the sake of rigour, that future research explore this alternative placement of the Vigilance construct.

Future researchers may encounter issues if they attempt to reproduce the comparison of classification seen in *Study 1 - Comparison of Video Game Classification*. Since the ACB have started to classify games released through online app stores, there are a plethora of games listed through the ACB online database at www.classification.gov.au. As an indication of the difficulties this may present, when searching this database there were 59 results returned for all games classified 'MA15+' in 2013, compared to 8,762 results returned for the year 2015. As a lot of games state that the target platform is 'null', with no clear indication of the platform, this presents difficulties in differentiating between games that are classified for consoles and those classified for apps. A further impediment to this is that at this point in time, the online database does not have the facility to filter the games by platform. This means that future researchers into classifications applied to console games might be confronted with an onerous task in identifying these classifications.

As well as borrowing games from friends, children may also be purchasing games that they have been restricted from playing. This may include games with a 'MA15+' or 'R18+' classification which they may not be old enough to purchase. As there appears to be little compliance testing of video game sales through retail outlets in Australia, it is difficult to determine how likely it is that children are able to purchase games for which they are restricted, although informal testing has shown that it is possible that children are able to purchase these games (Sydney Morning Herald, 2010). To help deliver insight into how effective the classification system is at the retail level, future research should explore the compliance of video game retailers in regards to selling restricted video games to children. As these games can also be downloaded online, it may be prudent to examine whether children can access these games through online methods.

This research has identified that ESL mothers may not be aware of video game classification, but as the sample size was very small, it is difficult to generalise this result. Further research into the area of ESL understanding and usage of the Australian video game classification system is recommended to explore issues this subset may encounter. In light of these results, it is also recommended that research be broadened to explore the level of understanding that ESL parents have of general classification.

This research has explored issues surrounding video game classification and how parents use this classification to make appropriate game choices for their children. Results show that video game classification in Australia may not always provide an accurate representation of the content within the game, which presents difficulties for some parents when making game choices. It has also shown that parents will make different game choices when provided with more information. This suggests that the classification awarded to video games in Australia does not provide enough information for parents; it also demonstrates that Australian parents might benefit from education about video game effects, risks for their child, as well as how to use the Australian classification system to make game choices that protect the child from inappropriate content while supporting the parent-child relationship.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Countries using PEGI ratings

Table 79 - Countries encompassed by the PEGI rating system

Albania	Austria	Belgium	Bosnia & Herzegovina
Bulgaria	Croatia	Cyprus	Czech Republic
Denmark	Estonia	Finland	France
Greece	Hungary	Iceland	Ireland
Israel	Italy	Kosovo	Latvia
Lithuania	Luxemburg	Macedonia	Malta
Moldova	Montenegro	Netherlands	Norway
Poland	Portugal	Romania	Serbia
Slovakia	Slovenia	Spain	Sweden
Switzerland	United Kingdom		

Retrieved from <http://www.pegi.info/en/index/id/28/> on 16th April 2011. Updated on February 26, 2013 after correspondence with PEGI Consumer Affairs

Appendix B: Study 2 questionnaire format

Appendix B.1: Design and structure of questions

Table 80 - Demographic and preliminary information

Stage 1	Demographic and preliminary information		
1.1	Which state do you live in?	Dropdown	ACT, VIC, NSW, QLD, TAS, WA, SA, NT
1.2	What is your postcode?	Textbox	Postcode
1.3	What is your gender?	Radio button	M/F
1.4	Is English your first language?	Radio button	Y/N
1.5	If no, what is your first language?	Textbox	
1.6	What is your age bracket?	Radio button	Under 25, 26 – 35, 36 – 45, 45 – 55, 55+
1.7	What is your marital status?	Radio button	Single, Married/Defacto, Separated/Divorced/Widowed
1.8	What is the highest level of education you have completed??	Radio button	Less than Year 10, Year 10, Year 11, Year 12, TAFE/Diploma, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, Doctorate
1.9	What is your employment status?	Radio button	Employed full time, Employed part time (less than 32 hours), Self-employed, Full time student, Part time student, Not working or studying
1.10	Which category best represents your annual household income?	Dropdown	0 - 24,999, 25,000 - 49,999, 50,000 - 74,999, 75,000 - 99,999, 100,000 - 149,999, Higher than 150,000

Appendices

Table 80 (Cont.) - Demographic and preliminary information

1.11	What is your religious background?	Dropdown	Christian, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Agnostic/Atheist, Other
1.12	Do you own, or regularly use, any of the following hand-held devices with an internet connection (not wi-fi)?	Checkbox	Smartphone (Blackberry, iPhone etc), Tablet (iPad, Galaxy, Xoom, etc), I do not own or regularly use any of these devices
1.13	If yes, when you are choosing games from a shop, do you use your hand-held device to source information about the game you are buying?	Checkbox	Always, Most times, Occasionally, Never
1.14	Do you play video games?	Checkbox	I play a lot, I play occasionally, I never play
1.15	Do you play video games with your children?	Checkbox	Frequently, Sometimes, Rarely, Never
1.16	Are you aware that video games have a classification?	Radio button	Y, N
1.17	Which of the following gaming consoles are used in your household?	Checkbox	Xbox, Xbox 360, PlayStation 2, PlayStation 3, PC, PSP, Wii, DS, DS lite, DSI, Other
1.18	Parental controls on a gaming console allow you to set the highest classification level of games that can be played on the console. On which of the following consoles are you aware that there are parental controls?	Checkbox	Items selected from previous question
1.19	What are the ages and gender of children who play video games in your household?	Dropdown (age), Dropdown (gender)	Younger than 5, each age up to 18. M/F Government, Independent, Catholic, Home schooled, Does not attend school

Appendices

Table 80 (Cont.) - Demographic and preliminary information

1.20	Who decides which games are suitable for your children to play?	Checkbox	Myself, My partner or this child's other parent, This child makes their own choices about what is suitable to play, Other (Enter relationship)
Stage 2	Classification and child-centric information		
2.1	Which of the following parental controls do you use for your child aged xx [this question provides input for each child]	Checkbox	Items selected from question
	Do you feel that you are given enough information to make appropriate game choices for your child?	Radio button	Y, N
2.2	Which of the following classification levels would you allow your child xx to play [this question provides input for each child]	Checkbox	G, PG, M, MA15+, R18+
2.3	Do you feel that your child xx is in agreement with you about the type of games that they are allowed to play [this question provides input for each child]	Radio button	Yes, Most times, Sometimes, No
2.4	If your child xx does not agree with a game choice that you make (restricting them from playing the game) do you change your mind if they keep asking [this question provides input for each child]	Radio button	Yes, Most times, Sometimes, No
2.5	Do you feel that if you do not allow your child to play a game, they will just play it elsewhere? [this question provides input for each child]	Radio button	Yes, No, Not sure

Appendices

Table 80 (Cont.) - Demographic and preliminary information

2.6	When your child is playing games at someone else's house, do you feel that the supervising adult is aware of which type of games you feel are suitable for your child to play? [this question provides input for each child]	Radio button	Yes, No
2.7	When another child is playing video games at your house, are you aware of which type of games their parents or guardians feel are suitable for them to play?	Radio button	Yes, No
2.8	Do you feel that some content in video games can harm children?	Radio button	Yes, No
2.9	Do you feel that your child is mature enough that content in video games will not cause them harm? [this question provides input for each child]	Radio button	Yes, No, Not sure
2.10	When choosing a game, which of the following do you use to help you make game choices for each child? [this question provides input for each child]	Checkbox	Graphic design of the game cover, Description of the game on the back cover, Classification information, I don't use any of these to choose a game for this child
2.11	Which of the classification elements do you use to help you make game choices for each child? [this question provides input for each child]	Checkbox	Classification level (i.e.: PG, M), Consumer advice (i.e.: Violence, Language), I don't use classification information for this child
2.12	Which of the following information sources do you use to research information about whether particular games are suitable for each child? [this question	Checkbox	Australian Classification Board Website, Media review sites, Friends, Gaming websites, International game classification websites, Other, I

Appendices

Table 80 (Cont.) - Demographic and preliminary information

	provides input for each child]		do not use any source of information for this child
2.13	Which of the following game elements do you feel are suitable for each child? (Repeated for Violence, Sexual content and Coarse language) [this question provides input for each child]	Radio button	None at all, Some is ok, I don't care how much is in a game this child plays
Stage 3	Game review section (screenshots in Appendix B.2)		
3.1 step 1	I have played this game or seen this game played	Checkbox	
3.2 step 1	Looking at the game cover and reading the classification information, do you feel this game is suitable for your child aged xx [this question provides input for each child]	Radio button	Yes, No, Undecided
3.3 step 1	Please tell us whether your child has played this game [this question provides input for each child]	Radio button	Yes, No, Not sure
3.4 step 1	Please enter any comments you may have (such as why you might allow/disallow your child to play this game, or general thoughts about this game/classification):	Text area	Open ended question
3.4 step 2	Looking once again at the game cover, and considering these age recommendations, do you feel this game is suitable for your child aged xx [this question provides input for each child]	Radio button	Yes, No, Undecided
3.5 step 2	Please enter any comments you may have (such as why you might allow/disallow	Text area	Open ended question

Appendices

Table 80 (Cont.) - Demographic and preliminary information

	your child to play this game, or general thoughts about this game/classification):		
3.5 step 3	After reading this review, do you feel this game is suitable for your child aged xx [this question provides input for each child]	Radio button	Yes, No, Undecided
3.6 step 3	Looking once again at the Australian classification information given to the game, do you feel this information provides an accurate representation of the classifiable elements in this game?	Radio button	Yes, I feel that this information is an accurate representation of the classifiable elements in this game No, I do not feel that this information is an accurate representation of the classifiable elements in this game
4.7 step 3	Please enter any comments you may have (such as why you might allow/disallow your child to play this game, or general thoughts about this game/classification):	Text area	Open ended question
Stage 4	Classification and child-centric information		
4.1	Do you feel that some content in video games can harm children?	Radio button	Yes, No
4.2	Do you feel that it is important to protect children from inappropriate content in video games?	Radio button	Yes, No
4.3	Do you feel that exposure to violence in video games can make children aggressive?	Radio button	Yes, No
4.4	Do you feel that you are given enough information to make appropriate game choices for your child?	Radio button	Yes, No

Appendices

Table 80 (Cont.) - Demographic and preliminary information

4.4	Do you feel that it is important to be <i>seen to be protecting children</i> from inappropriate content in video games?	Radio button	Yes, No
4.5	<p>The PG classification level recommends parental guidance for children. The M classification level recommends mature audiences of 15. The MA15+ classification level restricts sale of these games to children over 15 unless accompanied by an adult.</p> <p>What are some of the reasons why your child might play a game which the classification level indicates may not be suitable for them to play?</p>	Text area	Open ended question
4.6	Please enter any comments you may have.	Text area	Open ended question

Appendix B.2: Game review section

Stage 1
Stage 2
Stage 3
Stage 4
End

Save and resume later

Game 1 |
Game 2 |
Game 3 |
Game 4 |
Game 5 |
Game 6 |
Game 7 |

Game 1 - step 1
Grand Theft Auto 5



Hover over image to zoom

Classification information:

Classification: R18+
Consumer Advice: Drug use

I have played this game or seen this game played

Looking at the game cover and reading the classification information, do you feel this game is suitable for your child:

Child 1 (age 5)

Yes
 No
 Undecided

Please tell us whether your child has played this game:

Child 1 (age 5)

Yes
 No
 Not sure

Please enter any comments you may have (such as why you might allow/disallow your child to play this game, or general thoughts about this game/classification):

Continue >>

Figure 28 - Example of game review section in Study 2 - step 1


Appendices

Stage 1
Stage 2
Stage 3
Stage 4
End

Save and resume later

Game 1 |
Game 2 |
Game 3 |
Game 4 |
Game 5 |
Game 6 |
Game 7 |

Game 1 - step 2
Grand Theft Auto 5



Hover over image to zoom

The following are recommended or stipulated ages to play this game in the following countries:

USA: 17 (recommended) - Blood and Gore, Intense Violence, Mature Humor, Nudity, Strong Language, Strong Sexual Content, Use of Drugs and Alcohol

Europe: 18 (recommended) The content of this game is suitable for persons aged 18 years and over only. It contains: Extreme violence - Multiple, motiveless killing - Violence towards defenceless people - Strong language. This game allows the player to interact with other players ONLINE.

Looking once again at the game cover, and considering these age recommendations, do you feel this game is suitable for your child:

Child 1 (age 5)

Yes
 No
 Undecided

Please enter any comments you may have (such as why you might allow/disallow your child to play this game, or general thoughts about this game/classification):

Continue >>

Figure 29 - Example of game review section in Study 2 - step 2

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	End
---------	---------	---------	---------	-----

Game 1	Game 2	Game 3	Game 4	Game 5	Game 6	Game 7
--------	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------

Save and resume later

Game 1 - step 3
Grand Theft Auto 5



Hover over image to zoom

The following is the ratings summary given to the game by the ESRB (ratings body in the USA). Please read this summary and think about which of your children this game would be suitable for.

In this open-world action game, players assume the role of three criminals whose storylines intersect within the fictional city of Los Santos. Players can switch between each character to follow his storyline, completing missions which often include criminal activities (e.g., stealing cars, executing heists, assassinating targets). Players use pistols, machine guns, sniper rifles, and explosives to kill various enemies (e.g., rival gang members); players also have the ability to shoot non-adversary civilians, though this may negatively affect players' progress as a penalty system triggers a broad police search. Blood-spatter effects occur frequently, and the game contains rare depictions of dismemberment. In one sequence, players are directed to use various instruments and means (e.g., pipe wrench, tooth removal, electrocution) to extract information from a character; the sequence is intense and prolonged, and it involves some player interaction (i.e., responding to on-screen prompts). The game includes depictions of sexual material/activity: implied fellatio and masturbation; various sex acts that the player's character procures from a prostitute - while no nudity is depicted in these sequences, various sexual moaning sounds can be heard. Nudity is present, however, primarily in two settings: a topless lap dance in a strip club and a location that includes male cult members with exposed genitalia in a non-sexual context. Within the game, TV programs and radio ads contain instances of mature humor: myriad sex jokes; depictions of raw sewage and feces on a worker's body; a brief instance of necrophilia (no nudity is depicted). Some sequences within the larger game allow players to use narcotics (e.g., smoking from a bong, lighting a marijuana joint); cocaine use is also depicted. Players' character can, at various times, consume alcohol and drive while under the influence. The words "f**k," "c**nt," and "n**ger" can be heard in the dialogue.

Note: a cut scene, or cutscene, is a short movie-like section of the game where you watch and do not play.

Figure 30 - Example of game review section in Study 2 - step 3, part 1

Appendices

After reading this review, do you feel this game is suitable for your child:

Child 1 (age 5)

Yes
 No
 Undecided

Australian classification information review

Looking once again at the Australian classification information given to the game, do you feel this information provides an accurate representation of the classifiable elements in this game?

Classification information:

Classification: R18+
Consumer Advice: Drug use

Yes, I feel that this information is an accurate representation of the classifiable elements in this game
 No, I do not feel that this information is an accurate representation of the classifiable elements in this game

Please enter any comments you may have (such as why you might allow/disallow your child to play this game, or general thoughts about this game/classification):

[Continue >>](#)

Figure 31 - Example of game review section in Study 2 - step 3, part 2

Appendix C: Details of games for review

Appendix C.1: Game 1: *Sleeping Dogs*

Element	ACB classification	ESRB rating	PEGI rating
Classification /Rating level	MA15+ (Restricted level, 15 years and over unless accompanied by an adult)	M (17+, recommended)	18 (Recommended)
Consumer advice	Strong violence, crime themes, coarse language and sexual references	Blood and Gore, Intense Violence, Sexual Content, Strong Language, Use of Drugs	The content of this game is suitable for persons aged 18 years and over only. It contains: Extreme violence - Multiple, motiveless killing - Glamorisation of drugs - Strong language
<p>Rating synopsis</p> <p>Provided by the ESRB as part of the classification information for some games.</p>	<p>This is a third-person shooter in which players assume the role of an undercover police officer who must infiltrate a crime organization in Hong Kong. As players complete missions to earn experience points and advance the plot, they use knives, meat cleavers, assault rifles, grenades, and other weapons to kill human enemies (e.g., armed/unarmed thugs, gang members). Hand-to-hand combat is a major component of gameplay: players can perform "environmental kills" such as throwing enemies into an ice chipper, pushing their heads into a table saw, impaling them on elevated meat hooks-these sequences are accompanied by slow-motion effects, exaggerated blood splatter, and scattered body parts. Cutscenes also depict intense acts of violence (e.g., unarmed characters getting shot at point-blank range; a restrained character being tortured with a razor and power drill). The game contains sexual material, which can be heard in the dialogue (e.g., "Hey, tell your sister to give me a call, huh? I wouldn't mind giving her a mouthful," "Tell Ming to stick with girls over 14 this time," The triads use those places as whorehouses"). In one sequence, a woman is briefly shown reaching for a man's crotch (both characters are fully clothed); in another, players can use in-game credits to make "massage parlor" purchases (the screen fades to black). Drug use is referenced several times, and one cutscene depicts a man snorting an illicit substance. Words such as "f**k," "c*nt," and "sh*t" can be heard in dialogue.</p>		

Appendix C.2: **Game 2: *Fable II***

Element	ACB classification	ESRB rating	PEGI rating
Classification /Rating level	M (Recommended for mature audiences)	M (17+, recommended)	16 (Recommended)
Consumer advice	Sexual references, sexual themes and violence	Blood, Language, Sexual Content, Use of Alcohol, Violence	The content of this game is suitable for persons aged 16 years and over only. It contains: Realistic looking violence - Nudity of a sexual nature - Encouragement of the use of alcohol/tobacco - Content that teaches or encourages gambling. This game allows the player to interact with other players ONLINE
<p>Rating synopsis</p> <p>Provided by the ESRB as part of the classification information for some games.</p>	<p>Fable II is a role-playing adventure game in which players assume the role of a 10-year old orphan who grows into adulthood amidst the fantasy world setting of Albion. Players engage in a variety of quests to gain experience and skills with which to 'level up' their customized character. Quest objectives sometimes involve using magic and hand-to-hand combat to defeat various creatures and enemy soldiers. Blood spray is depicted when enemies are slashed or injured during combat. Players can also gain 'points' and positive statistics for choosing good deeds over bad ones (e.g., 'Good points,' 'Renown points,' and a 'Good Reputation') or based on the way they communicate with other characters: Lewd gestures/language such as hip thrusts and raising of the middle finger generate negative responses; flirting and blowing a kiss can garner positive responses from characters. With enough positive affinity, players can engage in sexual relations with males, females, or groups of characters. Players are rewarded for having multiple relations, and can choose to have unprotected sex, although sexual acts are never shown. Several characters are depicted drunk during cutscenes, while players can also consume beer and wine from various taverns. A screen-blurring effect connotes a character's drunken state.</p>		

Appendices

Appendix C.3: **Game 3: Trinity Universe**

Element	ACB classification	ESRB rating	PEGI rating
Classification/Rating level	PG (Parental Guidance recommended)	T (13+, recommended)	12 (Recommended)
Consumer advice	Mild violence	Alcohol Reference, Fantasy Violence, Language, Suggestive Themes	The content of this game is suitable for persons aged 12 years and over only. It contains: Non realistic looking violence towards human characters - Mild bad language.
<p>Rating synopsis</p> <p>Provided by the ESRB as part of the classification information for some games.</p>	<p>This is a fantasy role-playing game in which players control a group of characters as they attempt to prevent evil forces from destroying their world. Players use swords and magic to battle humans, skeletons, and demons in turn-based combat. Sword slashes are accompanied by grunts of pain, cascading light effects, and hit points that rise above injured characters. Characters sometimes engage in suggestive dialogue, including several references to breast size; for example, 'I'll be able to pay sexy, curvy women to stand by me,' 'I'm SO sorry for having a flat chest,' and 'Don't be so arrogant just 'cuz you've got big, bouncy t*ts!' The dialogue contains references to liquor or being drunk; for example, 'I just want some liquor,' 'he's a total alcoholic' and 'Peace is the best for enjoying gratuitous amounts of hard liquor, dood.' The words 'sh*t,' 'b*tch,' and a*s' can also be heard in dialogue.</p>		

Appendix C.4: **Game 4: *Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War II***

Element	ACB classification	ESRB rating	PEGI rating
Classification/Rating level	M (Recommended for mature audiences)	M (17+, recommended)	16 (Recommended)
Consumer advice	Science fiction violence	Blood and Gore, Violence	The content of this game is suitable for persons aged 16 years and over only. It contains: Realistic looking violence - This game allows the player to interact with other players ONLINE.
Rating synopsis Provided by the ESRB as part of the classification information for some games.	This is a real time strategy game (RTS) in which players control an elite strike force that battles humans, aliens, and robots in different interplanetary campaigns. Battles are viewed from an overhead perspective as soldiers use weapons (machine guns, explosives, flamethrowers, etc.) and employ hand-to-hand combat to kill enemy units. Red blood spray is sometimes depicted when soldiers and enemies are shot. Most attacks are accompanied by cries of pain, while some attacks can cause soldiers' limbs to fly off and remain scattered on the environment.		

Appendix C.5: **Game 5: *Far Cry 2***

Element	ACB classification	ESRB rating	PEGI rating
Classification/Rating level	MA15+ (Restricted level, 15 years and over unless accompanied by an adult)	M (17+, recommended)	16 (Recommended)
Consumer advice	Strong violence	Blood, Drug Reference, Intense Violence, Sexual Themes, Strong Language	The content of this game is suitable for persons aged 16 years and over only. It contains Realistic looking violence -- Strong language - This game allows the player to interact with other players ONLINE.
Rating synopsis Provided by the ESRB as part of the classification information for some games.	This is a first-person shooter in which players assume the role of a mercenary-for-hire involved in covert African combat missions. Missions include assassination attempts, creation of political turmoil, and other criminal acts. Characters use a variety of weapons (guns, explosive projectiles, knives) against enemy soldiers and political factions. Combat can be frenetic, with repeated screen shakes and realistic sound effects (e.g., gunfire, explosions, demolition) during firefights. Realistic red blood spray is emitted when enemies are shot. Dialogue contains strong profanity (e.g., 'f**k,' 'c*nt,' 'sh*t') and references to sexuality (e.g., 'd*cks pay good money to watch girls sh*g chaps like you' and 'He's sh*ggd every woman, married or not, who's come through on holiday.'). One mission requires players to steal a bag of weed from a specific location and give it to a character who replies, 'you high as a kite or what?'		

Appendix C.6: **Game 6: *Dragon Age: Origins***

Element	ACB classification	ESRB rating	PEGI rating
Classification/Rating level	MA15+ (Restricted level, 15 years and over unless accompanied by an adult)	M (17+, recommended)	18 (Recommended)
Consumer advice	Strong violence	Blood, Intense Violence, Language, Partial Nudity, Sexual Content	The content of this game is suitable for persons aged 18 years and over only. It contains: Extreme violence - Multiple, motiveless killing - Violence towards defenceless people - Sexual violence.
<p>Rating synopsis</p> <p>Provided by the ESRB as part of the classification information for some games.</p>	<p>This is a role-playing game (RPG) in which players control a group of mythical warriors through missions and battles in the ravaged lands of Ferelden. The combat system in the game is similar to other third-person role-playing games where the user does not usually have direct control over combat moves. Instead, players select a target (e.g., soldier, stone golem, dragon, bear, etc.) and an action (e.g., 'attack,' 'kill,' and magic spells), then watch as the game executes the move. Players use swords, axes, knives, and magic to attack enemies that react to damage by emitting splashes of red blood; pools of blood are occasionally depicted near dead bodies as well. The most intense instances of violence occur when players have the option to kill non-combatant civilians: A prisoner can be stabbed to death in order to steal a key; a merchant who overcharges refugees can be slashed in the throat; and a boy possessed by an evil demon can be killed off-screen. During the course of the game, players are able to visit a brothel where a hostess asks what they are interested in. If players select 'Surprise me,' they can sometimes wind up face-to-face with a woman, a man, a transsexual, or an animal; sexual activity is never depicted during these brothel encounters. Players can also initiate brief cutscene sequences in which couples (male and female or same sex couples) can be depicted kissing, embracing, and caressing one another as the screen fades to black. Though the game never features human nudity, one female demon character is briefly depicted with bare breasts. Some profanity (e.g., 'sh*t,' 'b*tch,' and 'a*s') can be heard in the dialogue.</p>		

Appendix C.7: **Game 7: Grand Theft Auto V**

Element	ACB classification	ESRB rating	PEGI rating
Classification/ Rating level	R18+ (Restricted to those 18 years of age and over)	M (17+, recommended)	18 (Recommended)
Consumer advice	Drug use	Blood and Gore, Intense Violence, Mature Humor, Nudity, Strong Language, Strong Sexual Content, Use of Drugs and Alcohol	The content of this game is suitable for persons aged 18 years and over only. It contains: Extreme violence - Multiple, motiveless killing - Violence towards defenceless people - Strong language. This game allows the player to interact with other players ONLINE.
Rating synopsis Provided by the ESRB as part of the classification information for some games.	In this open-world action game, players assume the role of three criminals whose storylines intersect within the fictional city of Los Santos. Players can switch between each character to follow his storyline, completing missions which often include criminal activities (e.g., stealing cars, executing heists, assassinating targets). Players use pistols, machine guns, sniper rifles, and explosives to kill various enemies (e.g., rival gang members); players also have the ability to shoot non-adversary civilians, though this may negatively affect players' progress as a penalty system triggers a broad police search. Blood-splatter effects occur frequently, and the game contains rare depictions of dismemberment. In one sequence, players are directed to use various instruments and means (e.g., pipe wrench, tooth removal, electrocution) to extract information from a character; the sequence is intense and prolonged, and it involves some player interaction (i.e., responding to on-screen prompts). The game includes depictions of sexual material/activity: implied fellatio and masturbation; various sex acts that the player's character procures from a prostitute - while no nudity is depicted in these sequences, various sexual moaning sounds can be heard. Nudity is present, however, primarily in two settings: a topless lap dance in a strip club and a location that includes male cult members with exposed genitalia in a non-sexual context. Within the game, TV programs and radio ads contain instances of mature humor: myriad sex jokes; depictions of raw sewage and feces on a worker's body; a brief instance of necrophilia (no nudity is depicted). Some sequences within the larger game allow players to use narcotics (e.g., smoking from a bong, lighting a marijuana joint); cocaine use is also depicted. Players' character can, at various times, consume alcohol and drive while under the influence. The words "f**k," "c*nt," and "n**ger" can be heard in the dialogue.		

Appendix D: Grand Theft Auto V classification changes

At the time of conducting the questionnaire for *Study 2 - Exploring Parental Use of Game Classification* in late 2013, the classification and consumer advice awarded to each of the games in the review section in Stage 3 of the questionnaire for Study 2 was current. Since that time, the ACB has twice modified the consumer advice for *Grand Theft Auto V*. Table 81 below details these changes which occurred over a period of two years. The game was first given consumer advice for *Drug use*, and this advice remained in place for just over one year. The ACB then amended the classification so that it included *high impact themes*. This amended classification remained in place for almost a year, at which time the ACB once again amended it to include *violence and sex*, and *online interactivity*. Each of these changes were performed without the input of the CRB, indicating that the classification for the game was modified without a CRB review.

Table 81 - Changes in classification for *Grand Theft Auto V*

Date	Classification level	Consumer advice
31 st July 2013	R18+	Drug use
13th October 2014	R18+	High impact themes and drug use
22nd July 2015	R18+	High impact themes, drug use, violence and sex, online interactivity

Source: www.classification.gov.au

This game carries a 'R18+' classification, which, before its introduction, proponents argued would send a clear message to parents about the unsuitability of the game for children. Indeed, this certainly appears to be the case for some of the participants in this research. The comments in the game review section of Study 2 show that some parents will not allow their child to play a game that carries an 'R18+' classification. However, one particular comment showed that some parents might use consumer advice as a guide to the type of content within the game, assisting them with game

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choices. After viewing the ACB 'R18+' classified game *Grand Theft Auto V*, one participant said that "Given the only warning is drugs, I am ok because my kids would be too young to understand. I am mostly concerned about violence and language" (Participant #61). After being presented with more detailed classification information that further described the game content, this participant changed his mind about allowing his children to play the game, saying, "Based on the Australian classification, I assumed it was only a driving game with some depictions of drugs, not anything listed there". This suggests that some parents may look past the classification level and use the consumer advice for guidance, reinforcing the need for detailed, accurate classification information.

Appendix E: Plain language information statement (PLIS)

Win an iPad Mini!!!
*First 200 participants go into a draw
to win an iPad Mini!*

University of Ballarat
Learn to succeed



Plain Language Information Statement

Project Title:	Video game classification in Australia: Does it enable parents to make informed game choices for their children?
Principal Researcher:	Dr Charlynn Miller
Other/student researchers:	Dr Peter Vamplew Julie Ross, PhD student
School:	Science, Information Technology and Engineering

You are invited to participate in this study which explores issues surrounding using classification information to choose video games for your children. This document provides information about this research so that you can make an informed decision to participate.

The aim of this project is to explore issues parents and guardians may face when using the Australian game classification system to make game choices for their children. The results from this study will provide a deeper understanding of the role of games classification in Australia for parents and guardians, as well exploring how game choices are made. Understanding these issues will help guide resources and education that can support parents and guardians when choosing video games for their children.

Participation

What will be expected of you?

If you choose to participate in this research you will be asked to complete a web-based questionnaire which asks about how you choose video games for your children, as well as some general information such as your age group and education level. You are not required to answer each of these questions, and may choose the 'Prefer not to answer' option for questions of a personal nature (such as age, income etc). You will also be asked to review information about several video games. It is anticipated that the questionnaire will take about 20 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this research is appreciated, with the understanding that any participation is voluntary. If you choose to participate, this will be considered as consent. Please note that it will not be possible to withdraw your consent after you have started the questionnaire as the data collected is non-identifiable.

Your entry into the draw to win an iPad Mini

The first 200 participants will be placed into a draw to win an iPad Mini. To be eligible, you must be over 18 years of age and provide a valid email address so that we can contact you if you win. Only one entry per person; entries that are considered to be duplicates will be removed. The draw will take place on October 31st 2014 at 5pm, and the winner will be notified by email. Once the email address has been collected to be placed in the draw, the email address will be detached from your questionnaire responses so that you cannot be linked to your questionnaire through the draw entry.

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You can view the terms and conditions of the draw at <http://gameresearch.info/competition-terms.php>.

Exploring shared game decisions

If you state that you share decisions about video game usage in your family with a partner or other parent/guardian, we would also like to encourage this person to participate in this research as this will provide more understanding about how game choices are made in families. To provide relevance, if they choose to participate, only the children for which this person shares game decisions will show on their questionnaire. This person will not be able to see any responses that you provide. At the end of the questionnaire you will be given a code to give to this person and they can enter it when they complete the questionnaire, linking the resultant data with yours. To make this process easier, you will also be given the option of having the code embedded in a link and sent to an email address of your choice. This email address will not be stored and is only used to send the requested email.

Follow-up interviews

At the conclusion of this questionnaire, we would like to be able to conduct follow-up interviews with some parents and guardians. This would take the form of a telephone call or an email. If you would like to participate in a follow-up interview, you will be asked to provide an email address with which we can contact you. This email address will be stored with the questionnaire information that you submit, and will be removed when it is no longer required.

Save and resume later

You may choose to resume the questionnaire at a later date by having a link to your saved questionnaire emailed to you. You will be asked to provide an email address to allow this link to be sent, and when clicked this link will take you back to the same page that you were last completing. Your email address will not be stored. It will only be used to send the resume link.

Confidentiality

The questionnaire will not ask for any information which may personally identify you, with the exception of an email address that you may provide to allow us to contact you about participating in a follow-up interview. Some comments that you provide during the questionnaire may be used in reports to provide depth to the results but cannot personally identify you.

How the information will be used

The information you provide during the questionnaire will be used collectively for analytical purposes, and may be included in publications arising from this research. The information will be stored in an online database which is secured by a password and will only be accessed by the researchers. Data will not be distributed to any persons in a raw form, and will only be presented after manipulation to suit research objectives. The data will be stored for the required 5 years, after which time it will be destroyed.

Discomforts/risks of participating

There are no apparent risks involved with participating in this study; however, some may find the content within the questionnaire to be offensive. This content is seen when reviewing information about games, and consists of detailed descriptions about the game content including strong language, violence and sexual content. Descriptions of language has most of the letters replaced with asterisks, such as 'F**k'. There are descriptions of acts of violence that the player may view or participate in, such as shooting, physical combat, and description of blood and gore. Description of sexual content may include the state of undress of game characters, and interactions between game characters that are considered to be of a sexual nature. If you find this content to be upsetting, there are some links to resources which you may find helpful both at the bottom of this page and repeated at the end of this questionnaire.

Results of the study

If you wish to view any results from this study you will have the option of providing a contact email address at the end of the questionnaire. This email address is separate from any email address you may provide for follow-up interviews, and will not be stored with the information you provide for the questionnaire. After this research is finished, you will be sent a copy of the results in a format that has been disseminated and presented for distribution. While the researchers will make every effort to distribute the results to those who register their interest, they will not be obliged to do so and can offer no guarantee that this will happen.

Research affiliations

This research is being conducted as part of PhD studies, and is not aligned with any funding body or sponsor.

The research will be performed under the supervision of Dr. Charlynn Miller, Senior Lecturer at the University of Ballarat, and Dr. Peter Vamplew, Senior Lecturer at the University of Ballarat. The student researcher holds both a Bachelor of IT and a Bachelor of Computing (Honours).

Links to external resources

Beyond Blue: the national depression initiative - www.beyondblue.org.au

Lifeline Australia - www.lifeline.org.au - 13 11 14

Community Health - www.health.vic.gov.au/pch

Australian Classification Board - www.classification.gov.au

Parentline - statewide telephone counselling service - 13 22 89

Linking questionnaires from the same family

If you have been given a linking code from a person with whom you share game choices who has already completed this questionnaire, please enter it below.

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Linking code:

Consent to participate

I have read this preamble and give my consent to participate in this study.

[Continue to questionnaire >>](#)

If you have any questions, or you would like further information regarding the project titled (Video game classification in Australia: Does it enable parents to make informed game choices for their children?), please contact the Principal Researcher, Charlynn Miller, of the School of Science, Information Technology and Engineering:

PH: 03 5327 9545

EMAIL: c.miller@ballarat.edu.au

Should you (i.e. the participant) have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this research project, please contact the University of Ballarat Ethics Officer, Research Services, University of Ballarat, PO Box 663, Mt Helen VIC 3353. Telephone: (03)5327 9765, Email: ub.ethics@ballarat.edu.au

CRICOS Provider Number 00103D

Appendix F: Invitation leaflet

Win an iPad Mini!!!

First 200 participants go into a draw to win an iPad Mini!

Does your child play video games?

We invite you to take part in our online research project exploring issues surrounding video game classification



It only takes 20 minutes, and you could win an iPad Mini!
16GB WI-FI, Space Gray - great christmas present, or a present just for you!

www.gameresearch.info

Federation UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA

Figure 32 - Invitation leaflet distributed through some businesses located in Central Victoria and along the route between Victoria and Queensland

Appendix G: Survey responses for Study 2

Appendix G.1: Questionnaire demographic and preliminary information for Study 2

Table 82 below presents the data that was collected from Stage 1 of the questionnaire. This included demographic as well as preliminary information which helped set up questions in the following stages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Table 82 - Raw data collected from Stage 1 of the questionnaire

Age of participant	Male		Female		Overall %
	n	%	n	%	
Under 25 (<i>n</i> = 15)	7	23.3%	8	14.6%	17.6%
26 to 35 (<i>n</i> = 26)	10	33.3%	16	29.1%	30.6%
36 to 45 (<i>n</i> = 22)	5	16.7%	17	30.9%	25.9%
46 to 55 (<i>n</i> = 17)	6	20%	11	20%	20%
Over 55 (<i>n</i> = 3)	1	3.3%	2	3.6%	3.5%
Prefer not to answer (<i>n</i> = 2)	1	3.3%	1	1.8%	2.4%
First language spoken	Male		Female		Overall %
	n	%	n	%	
English (<i>n</i> = 76)	28	93.3%	48	87.3%	89.4%
Mandarin (<i>n</i> = 2)	1	3.3%	1	1.8%	2.4%
Other (Cantonese, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, German, Gujarati, Hindi) (<i>n</i> = 7)	1	3.3%	6	10.9%	8.2%
Marital status	Male		Female		Overall %
	n	%	n	%	
Single (<i>n</i> = 23)	9	30%	14	25.5%	27.1%
Married/DeFacto (<i>n</i> = 47)	16	53.3%	31	56.4%	55.3%

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Table 82 (Cont.) - Raw data collected from Stage 1 of the questionnaire

Separated/Divorced/Widowed (<i>n</i> = 6)	1	3.3%	5	9.1%	7.1%
Prefer not to answer (<i>n</i> = 9)	4	13.3%	5	9.1%	10.6%
Highest completed education	Male		Female		Overall %
	n	%	n	%	
Less than Year 10 (<i>n</i> = 9)	4	13.3%	5	9.1%	10.6%
Year 10 (<i>n</i> = 3)	1	3.3%	2	3.6%	3.5%
Year 11 (<i>n</i> = 3)	2	6.7%	1	1.8%	3.5%
Year 12 (<i>n</i> = 6)	3	10%	3	5.5%	7.1%
TAFE/Diploma (<i>n</i> = 33)	9	30%	24	43.6%	38.8%
Bachelor's Degree (<i>n</i> = 21)	8	26.7%	13	23.7%	24.8%
Master's degree (<i>n</i> = 8)	2	6.7%	6	10.9%	9.4%
Doctorate (<i>n</i> = 0)	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0%
Prefer not to answer (<i>n</i> = 2)	1	3.3%	1	1.8%	2.4%
Employment status	Male		Female		Overall %
	n	%	n	%	
Employed full time (<i>n</i> = 23)	14	16.5%	9	10.6%	27.1%
Employed part time (<i>n</i> = 19)	4	4.7%	15	17.6%	22.4%
Self-employed (<i>n</i> = 5)	3	3.5%	2	2.4%	5.9%
Full time student (<i>n</i> = 7)	3	3.5%	4	4.7%	8.2%
Part time student (<i>n</i> = 2)	0	0%	2	2.4%	2.4%
Not working or studying (<i>n</i> = 20)	4	4.7%	16	18.8%	23.5%
Prefer not to answer (<i>n</i> = 9)	2	2.4%	7	8.2%	10.6%

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Table 82 (Cont.) - Raw data collected from Stage 1 of the questionnaire

Household income	Male		Female		Overall %
	n	%	n	%	
0 - 25,000 (<i>n</i> = 15)	5	16.7%	10	18.2%	17.6%
\$25,000 - \$50,000 (<i>n</i> = 20)	8	26.7%	12	21.8%	23.5%
\$50,000 - \$75,000 (<i>n</i> = 11)	3	10%	8	14.6%	12.9%
\$75,000 - \$100,000 (<i>n</i> = 12)	7	23.3%	5	9.1%	14.1%
\$100,000 - \$150,000 (<i>n</i> = 9)	2	6.7%	7	12.7%	10.6%
More than 150,000 (<i>n</i> = 2)	1	3.3%	1	1.8%	2.4%
Prefer not to answer (<i>n</i> = 16)	4	13.3%	12	21.8%	18.8%
Religious background	Male		Female		Overall %
	n	%	n	%	
Christian (<i>n</i> = 36)	13	43.3%	23	41.8%	42.4%
Agnostic/Atheist (<i>n</i> = 16)	7	23.3%	9	16.4%	18.8%
Buddhism (<i>n</i> = 4)	1	3.3%	3	5.5%	4.7%
Islam (<i>n</i> = 4)	3	10%	1	1.8%	4.7%
Hinduism (<i>n</i> = 3)	1	3.3%	2	3.6%	3.5%
Other (<i>n</i> = 12)	1	3.3%	11	20%	14.1%
Prefer not to answer (<i>n</i> = 10)	4	13.3%	6	10.9%	11.8%
Devices owned	Male		Female		Overall %
	n	%	n	%	
Only smartphone (<i>n</i> = 30)	13	43.3%	17	30.9%	35.3%
Only tablet (<i>n</i> = 3)	1	3.3%	2	3.6%	3.5%
Smartphone and tablet (<i>n</i> = 37)	11	36.7%	26	47.3%	43.5%

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Table 82 (Cont.) - Raw data collected from Stage 1 of the questionnaire

Do not use any (<i>n</i> = 15)	5	16.7%	10	18.2%	17.6%
Participant's children (age)	Boys		Girls		Overall %
	n	%	n	%	
Under 5 (<i>n</i> = 21)	13	18.8%	8	16.7%	18%
5 (<i>n</i> = 5)	3	4.4%	2	4.2%	4.3%
6 (<i>n</i> = 5)	3	4.4%	2	4.2%	4.3%
7 (<i>n</i> = 8)	4	5.8%	4	8.3%	6.8%
8 (<i>n</i> = 12)	5	7.3%	7	14.6%	10.3%
9 (<i>n</i> = 10)	5	7.3%	5	10.4%	8.5%
10 (<i>n</i> = 8)	7	10.1%	1	2.1%	6.8%
11 (<i>n</i> = 12)	7	10.1%	5	10.4%	10.3%
12 (<i>n</i> = 8)	5	7.3%	3	6.3%	6.8%
13 (<i>n</i> = 7)	4	5.8%	3	6.3%	6%
14 (<i>n</i> = 4)	3	4.4%	1	2.1%	3.4%
15 (<i>n</i> = 9)	5	7.3%	4	8.3%	7.7%
16 (<i>n</i> = 3)	1	1.5%	2	4.2%	2.6%
17 (<i>n</i> = 3)	2	2.9%	1	2.1%	2.6%
18 (<i>n</i> = 2)	2	2.9%	0		1.7%

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Table 83 - Raw data collected for who makes game choices for each child - results by child (n = 117)

Response	Mothers	Fathers	Total
Myself	13 (39.4%)	28 (33.3%)	41 (35%)
Both myself and partner	11 (33.3%)	20 (23.8%)	31 (26.5%)
This child	6 (18.2%)	11 (13.1%)	17 (14.5%)
My partner	0	14 (16.7%)	14 (12%)
Myself, partner and child	3 (9.1%)	4 (4.8%)	7 (6%)
Myself and child	0	3 (3.6%)	3 (2.6%)
Other (Aunt, older sibling)	0	3 (3.6%)	3 (3.6%)
My partner and child	0	1 (1.2%)	1 (.9%)
Total	33 (28.2%)	84 (71.8%)	117

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Table 84 - Raw data for which classification levels children are allowed to play, results by child (n = 114)

Age of child	G	PG	M	MA15+	R18+	Not sure
Under 5 (n = 21)	20	7	2	2	2	1
5 (n = 5)	5	3	0	0	0	0
6 (n = 6)	4	2	1	0	0	0
7 (n = 8)	7	7	1	0	0	0
8 (n = 12)	10	8	1	0	0	1
9 (n = 10)	9	9	1	0	0	1
10 (n = 8)	7	5	5	1	0	0
11 (n = 10)	7	10	1	1	0	0
12 (n = 7)	6	7	3	2	0	0
13 (n = 7)	5	6	5	2	0	0
14 (n = 4)	3	3	3	1	1	0
15 (n = 9)	9	9	9	6	0	0
16 (n = 3)	2	2	2	3	0	0
17 (n = 2)	0	0	0	2	0	0
18 (n = 2)	0	0	0	0	1	0

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Table 85 - Raw data for whether parents feel child is in agreement about the type of games they are allowed to play, results by child (n = 113)

Age of child	Yes	Most times	Sometimes	No
Under 5 (<i>n</i> = 21)	18	3	0	0
5 (<i>n</i> = 5)	4	1	0	0
6 (<i>n</i> = 5)	1	3	1	0
7 (<i>n</i> = 8)	5	3	0	0
8 (<i>n</i> = 12)	6	5	0	1
9 (<i>n</i> = 10)	2	6	2	0
10 (<i>n</i> = 8)	3	2	0	3
11 (<i>n</i> = 10)	4	2	2	2
12 (<i>n</i> = 7)	3	2	1	1
13 (<i>n</i> = 7)	2	2	3	0
14 (<i>n</i> = 4)	2	1	0	1
15 (<i>n</i> = 9)	5	2	2	0
16 (<i>n</i> = 3)	2	0	1	0
17 (<i>n</i> = 2)	1	0	1	0
18 (<i>n</i> = 2)	2	0	0	0

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Table 86 - Raw data for whether parents change their mind if their child pesters for a game for which they have been restricted, results by child (n = 113)

Age of child	Yes	Most times	Sometimes	No
Under 5 (<i>n</i> = 21)	0	0	3	21
5 (<i>n</i> = 5)	0	0	1	4
6 (<i>n</i> = 5)	1	2	0	2
7 (<i>n</i> = 8)	0	0	1	7
8 (<i>n</i> = 12)	2	0	1	9
9 (<i>n</i> = 10)	1	0	4	5
10 (<i>n</i> = 8)	0	0	1	7
11 (<i>n</i> = 10)	1	0	3	6
12 (<i>n</i> = 7)	1	0	1	5
13 (<i>n</i> = 7)	1	1	1	4
14 (<i>n</i> = 4)	0	0	1	3
15 (<i>n</i> = 9)	2	1	1	5
16 (<i>n</i> = 3)	1	0	0	2
17 (<i>n</i> = 2)	0	0	1	1
18 (<i>n</i> = 2)	0	0	0	2

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Table 87 - Raw data for whether parents feel their children will play games elsewhere for which they have been restricted, results by child (n = 113)

Age of child	Yes	No	Not sure
Under 5 (<i>n</i> = 21)	1	13	7
5 (<i>n</i> = 5)	1	4	0
6 (<i>n</i> = 5)	2	3	0
7 (<i>n</i> = 8)	0	7	1
8 (<i>n</i> = 12)	2	8	2
9 (<i>n</i> = 10)	2	5	3
10 (<i>n</i> = 8)	1	3	4
11 (<i>n</i> = 10)	3	5	2
12 (<i>n</i> = 7)	2	2	3
13 (<i>n</i> = 7)	1	3	3
14 (<i>n</i> = 4)	1	2	1
15 (<i>n</i> = 9)	3	4	2
16 (<i>n</i> = 3)	2	1	0
17 (<i>n</i> = 2)	0	1	1
18 (<i>n</i> = 2)	2	0	0

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Table 88 - Raw data for whether parents feel that supervising adults are aware of games that are suitable for their child to play, results by child (n = 113)

Age of child	Yes	No
Under 5 (<i>n</i> = 21)	11	10
5 (<i>n</i> = 5)	4	1
6 (<i>n</i> = 5)	2	3
7 (<i>n</i> = 8)	5	3
8 (<i>n</i> = 12)	6	6
9 (<i>n</i> = 10)	7	3
10 (<i>n</i> = 8)	5	3
11 (<i>n</i> = 10)	7	3
12 (<i>n</i> = 7)	0	7
13 (<i>n</i> = 7)	3	4
14 (<i>n</i> = 4)	3	1
15 (<i>n</i> = 9)	4	5
16 (<i>n</i> = 3)	1	2
17 (<i>n</i> = 2)	1	1
18 (<i>n</i> = 2)	1	1

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Table 89 - Raw data for whether parents feel their child is mature enough that content in video games will not cause them harm, results by child (n = 113)

Age of child	Yes	No	Not sure
Under 5 (<i>n</i> = 21)	3	18	0
5 (<i>n</i> = 5)	2	3	0
6 (<i>n</i> = 5)	1	2	2
7 (<i>n</i> = 8)	2	6	0
8 (<i>n</i> = 12)	5	7	0
9 (<i>n</i> = 10)	3	6	1
10 (<i>n</i> = 8)	2	4	2
11 (<i>n</i> = 10)	1	7	2
12 (<i>n</i> = 7)	6	1	0
13 (<i>n</i> = 7)	3	3	1
14 (<i>n</i> = 4)	2	2	0
15 (<i>n</i> = 9)	5	1	3
16 (<i>n</i> = 3)	1	2	0
17 (<i>n</i> = 2)	1	0	1
18 (<i>n</i> = 2)	2	0	0

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Table 90 - Raw data for which game elements parents use to make game choices, results by child (n = 113)

Age of child	Graphic design on cover	Description on back cover	Classification information	Don't use any of these
Under 5 (n = 21)	9	11	15	2
5 (n = 5)	4	4	4	1
6 (n = 5)	2	4	3	0
7 (n = 8)	6	8	8	0
8 (n = 12)	6	8	9	1
9 (n = 10)	7	8	9	0
10 (n = 8)	5	7	7	0
11 (n = 10)	1	7	9	0
12 (n = 7)	1	3	4	2
13 (n = 7)	1	5	7	0
14 (n = 4)	1	2	2	2
15 (n = 9)	4	5	6	3
16 (n = 3)	1	3	3	0
17 (n = 2)	0	0	1	1
18 (n = 2)	0	0	1	1

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Table 91 - Raw data for which classification elements parents use to make game choices, results by child (n = 113)

Age of child	Classification level	Consumer advice	Do not use any classification information for this child
Under 5 (n = 21)	15	6	5
5 (n = 5)	4	4	1
6 (n = 5)	4	2	0
7 (n = 8)	7	6	0
8 (n = 12)	11	9	1
9 (n = 10)	9	6	0
10 (n = 8)	8	7	0
11 (n = 10)	10	8	0
12 (n = 7)	6	3	0
13 (n = 7)	7	7	0
14 (n = 4)	2	2	2
15 (n = 9)	7	5	2
16 (n = 3)	3	3	0
17 (n = 2)	0	1	1
18 (n = 2)	1	0	1

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Table 92 - Raw data for which sources of information parents use to assist them with game choices, results by child (n = 113)

Age of child	ACB website	Media review sites	Friends	Gaming websites	Intl. class. sites	Other	Do not use any
Under 5 (n = 21)	8	6	5	2	1	1	7
5 (n = 5)	1	1	3	2	1	0	2
6 (n = 5)	3	2	1	3	1	0	0
7 (n = 8)	0	4	5	6	1	2	1
8 (n = 12)	2	7	5	7	2	0	3
9 (n = 10)	1	2	6	5	2	2	3
10 (n = 8)	2	3	4	3	0	2	2
11 (n = 10)	3	4	8	4	1	1	1
12 (n = 7)	0	1	2	4	0	0	3
13 (n = 7)	0	3	3	3	1	2	2
14 (n = 4)	0	0	2	2	1	0	2
15 (n = 9)	2	4	4	6	3	0	3
16 (n = 3)	0	3	3	2	0	0	1
17 (n = 2)	0	1	0	2	0	0	0
18 (n = 2)	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

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Table 93 - Raw data for whether parents feel that violence is acceptable in games for their child, results by child (n = 112)

Age of child	No violence at all	Some violence is acceptable	I don't care how much violence
Under 5 (n = 21)	17	2	2
5 (n = 5)	2	3	0
6 (n = 4)	3	1	0
7 (n = 8)	2	6	0
8 (n = 12)	6	5	1
9 (n = 10)	5	5	0
10 (n = 8)	3	5	0
11 (n = 10)	5	5	0
12 (n = 7)	2	4	1
13 (n = 7)	2	5	0
14 (n = 4)	2	1	1
15 (n = 9)	1	6	2
16 (n = 3)	0	3	0
17 (n = 2)	0	1	1
18 (n = 2)	0	1	1

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Table 94 - Raw data for whether parents feel that sexual content is acceptable in games for their child, results by child (n = 112)

Age of child	No sexual content at all	Some sexual content is acceptable	I don't care how much sexual content
Under 5 (n = 21)	18	1	2
5 (n = 5)	5	0	0
6 (n = 4)	4	0	0
7 (n = 8)	8	0	0
8 (n = 12)	11	0	1
9 (n = 10)	10	0	0
10 (n = 8)	8	0	0
11 (n = 10)	10	0	0
12 (n = 7)	5	2	0
13 (n = 7)	5	2	0
14 (n = 4)	2	1	1
15 (n = 9)	6	3	0
16 (n = 3)	3	0	0
17 (n = 2)	0	2	0
18 (n = 2)	0	1	1

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Table 95 - Raw data for whether parents feel that coarse language is acceptable in games for their child, results by child (n = 112)

Age of child	No coarse language at all	Some coarse language is acceptable	I don't care how much coarse language
Under 5 (n = 21)	19	0	2
5 (n = 5)	5	0	0
6 (n = 4)	4	0	0
7 (n = 8)	6	2	0
8 (n = 12)	9	2	1
9 (n = 10)	6	4	0
10 (n = 8)	5	3	0
11 (n = 10)	7	3	0
12 (n = 7)	2	5	0
13 (n = 7)	3	4	0
14 (n = 4)	2	1	1
15 (n = 9)	1	7	1
16 (n = 3)	2	1	0
17 (n = 2)	1	0	1
18 (n = 2)	0	0	2

Appendix H: Stage 4 Open-ended questions and responses

Table 96 below presents the responses to the following question, asked at Stage 4 of the questionnaire: "What are some of the reasons why your child might play a game which the classification level indicates may not be suitable for them to play?"

Table 96 - Qualitative responses to why children might play games which the classification level indicates is not suitable for them to play

#	Gender	Children	Comment
1	F	F, 8 M, 7	I would not allow them to play those games, however they may tell me their friends play it. I would make my husband play the game before exposing them to it. Even if it says accompanied by an adult, this will never happen as no one will stop mid way thought a game to explain a 'theme' to a child.
3	M	M, 7	Our child plays up to PG rated games as we are almost always present when he is playing them. We discuss openly with him why we do or do not allow him to play certain games and promote him to give us feedback on his feelings about this. He is allowed to occasionally watch me play games above this classification however if I feel that there is too much violence, language or sexual content in what I am playing I will either cease playing or ask him to leave the room and play elsewhere. To the best of my knowledge, he understands why he cannot play or watch certain games and always voices his concerns if he has any.
5	F	M, 9 F, 7	If it is only low level violence then it may be ok, as they see this sort of thing in movies and on the news. Also if it is minimal swearing then they hear that elsewhere too, like shit, arse
6	F	F, 7	If I have played the game and I feel that the context in which the material is presented is suitable under my supervision. I base my decision after having played the game and come to a decision based the age rating, reviews and my experiences whilst playing.
7	F	M, 10 F, 9 F, 5	They wouldn't in my house but they might at friends houses. I think younger children are drawn towards games that are too old for them , mostly by the covers of the games. My son particularly always asks me to buy him m rated games and doesnt understand why I don't allow it.
8	F	F, 13 F, 10 M, 8	To feel included. Peer pressure is huge in the teenage years! They feel left out or 'different' to others if not allowed to play games other teenagers are playing.
12	F	M, 9 M, 11	Peers have told them that it is a good game and they feel that they are old enough and mature enough to play a game that is not designed for children their age. Many children these days think they are older than they really are.

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Table 96 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses to why children might play games which the classification level indicates is not suitable for them to play

13	F	M, 13 F, 11	My older child age 13 may play some of the M and/or M15 games but only if I have played them myself as I know what his maturity can handle.
15	F	F, 15 M, 15	Because I believe my child is well adjusted enough to understand that this is not reality and that the action performed is not how things are solved in 'the real world'.
17	F	M, 13	Peer pressure every time and re last question that implies I only care about being seen to protect him whereas I do and whether I'm seen or not is not the issue. I feel I am quite firm on the subject and he doesn't dispute me but then his father plays games such as Metal Gear so sometimes I feel I'm fighting a losing battle. What I can control I do or try to. But when he was in Gr 5 primary school mates were tea bagging I didn't know what it was (subsequently googled it) but they a group of about 5 were all playing COD in which the soldiers do this. So while he was never into that game other friends played some that he likes Assasain's Creed etc and his father has bought some like Batman and Bioshock, you can turn the kill or blood level down on it so maybe that go some way. but definitely boys rely on what each others opinions are of games.
18	F	M, 7 F, 11 F, 13	Only if they are somewhere other than at home and I do not know what they are playing
22	F	M, 8 F, 13	Usually if my 8 yr old is at his mates house he is exposed to inappropriate games. His mum buys all sorts of games that are totally not suitable for an 8yr old. My son does let his friends mum that he is only allowed to play G and PG rated games. It's very frustrating when he comes home and asks why his friends are allowed to play games like Assasins Creed (I think that's the name) . I can't control what other parents buy their kids, but I am proud of my son for speaking up and maybe giving these parents a wake up call about the games they are buying for their kids as young as 7.
23	F	F, 12	My child doesn't unless out of my care.
25	F	M, 15 M, 12 M, 6	Depends on the content and the individual child. Each parent should view the game first, understand the game content and what your own child understands and will process from the game. One of our own children will turn off a game if he doesn't like the content regardless of whether the rating is below his age or not.
26	M	M, 10 F, 16	My younger child enjoys playing war games. He understands they are games and can separate the game from reality. He knows that war is not a game, and in real wars people die. When I introduce him to a new game I always play the game first to make sure there is no unnecessary violence or offensive dialogue. War games are violent by nature. The difference is the intent of the violence.

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Table 96 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses to why children might play games which the classification level indicates is not suitable for them to play

27	F	M, 16	To compete with friends their age, want more of a challenge, want to play something that their not allowed as they are underage
28	F	M, 10	He plays games his friends are playing or wants games that they have or are about to get.
36	F	M, 11 F, under5 M, under5 F, under5	At friends houses
37	F	M, under5	It's a cool game! And that's just it, it's 'only a game' and parents, promoters. developers, the government and all those that cry out about how bad video games are for children need to realise 'it is not real' IT IS ONLY A GAME! For goodness sake how precious is society becoming to blame their inadequacies and poor parenting skills on video games? If your kid is a psycho, they're a shit regardless SO DO NOT BLAME THE GAME. Blame the parents for not teaching the child to differentiate between reality and fantasy aka fact and fiction. As I said earlier, Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
39	F	F, 9	Game classification rating is too low cover images are misleading of content
40	F	M, under5	If he plays it at a friend's house. if we think he is mature enough to handle the content. if he plays it under direct supervision.
43	F	M, 8	If the child is mature and can handle it.
44	F	F, 15	Hearing about a game through a friend or playing at their house, seeing games with positive reviews in gaming magazines/websites, already having played one game from the same franchise, borrowing the game from a friend (unbeknownst to parents)
45	F	M, 18	At a friend's house and me not knowing what they get up to
46	M	M, under5	They do not
47	M	M, 12 F, 8	There are so many classifications most of them are subjective Parental guidance recommended = What the hell does that actually mean? If a Kids buys this from a store, brings it home but the parents no way - The cant even return it for a refund so they are stuck with it and eventually the kid will play it when the parent is not watching - This is totally wrong MA15+ = 15 I know people in their early 20's that are not Mature Adults

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Table 96 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses to why children might play games which the classification level indicates is not suitable for them to play

			Just have clear classifications G= General (everyone), AO =Adults only, R=Restricted
49	F	M, 12	Because there friends play
50	F	F, 8 M, 6	Is fun but not violent
53	M	M, under5	nope
55	F	F, under5	Based on my personal opinion and if I approve of the game or not first to see what content is in it. Really PG rated content shouldn't be shown to a child under 12 years of age, I find some of the PG ones are ok, but then others should really be an M rating.
56	F	F, under5	My child is watched constantly, and therefore won't be in a situation where she may be exposed to harmful content. many of my family and friends have the same values, and feel they need to protect their children from advertising and gaming, as well as movies and so on
60	F	M, 11 F, 14	My kids do go over friend's houses to play games and I wasn't born yesterday so I understand there is a chance they'll play a game not suitable for their age and/or maturity however, I also communicate with my kids often and make sure they understand right from wrong. They both know they can come to me with any question, any time and void of consequences as long as they are honest. Both my kids see more Violence and Aggression on T.V and in the News than they do in Gaming. Kids are going to gravitate towards anything that a) their friends are into and b) that is socially labelled as "Cool", the trick is not to stop but to educate.
64	F	M, 10	It's wrong if they watch it they think it's alright to do this, THIS WELL GET THEM IN JAIL
65	M	M, 10	They might think it is more fun to play a violent video game
71	F	F, 7	Someone else allows it, I allow it only to find it contains restricted material
72	F	F, 9	My child may play a game that is M and or MA15+ because her older sibling is playing with them.
73	F	F, 11 F, 11	If the game seems over-restricted. But then if they were playing it they would be supervised for at least the beginning few hours of the game to make sure it's appropriate.
76	M	M, under5	More violence is fun

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Table 96 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses to why children might play games which the classification level indicates is not suitable for them to play

77	F	M, 10	Because he might get bored of the games he does play
80	F	F, 7	Only if I was unaware that they were playing it (i.e. playing it at someone else's house).
81	F	M, under5	For attraction Some parents does not care and let their children play, so just by seeing other friends play, they want to play as well Out of curiosity They always to things first when they been told not to
82	F	F, 6	Due to their age group and their maturity levels.
86	F	F, 8 F, 6 M, under5	If I have played the game and think they are mature enough
87	F	F, under5	If you believe personally the classification does not match and may be a more gentle game then it says.

Appendix I: Final comments

Table 97 below presents the comments that participants entered at the end of the questionnaire to the open-ended question: “Please enter any comments you may have.”

Table 97 - Qualitative data for final questionnaire comments

#	Gender	Children	Comment
28	F	M, 10	My son plays - COD 2, Ghost & Minecraft which I know is what a 10 year old shouldn't be playing but..... I know that he understands it is not real, it's a game, you don't come back from being shot 10 times! We have discussions about it. If this was not the case, he wouldn't be playing it! He plays with kids his own age & 1-3 years older than him - sometimes not so good as he hears a lot of stuff on Xbox Live. He has fun chatting to other kids & his friends online. We as parents don't have a problem with these games, we have a problem with how long he can play them for! I don't believe playing these games has changed him at all, all it is to him is playing Xbox with his friends. Thanks :0
37	F	M, under5	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
43	F	M, 8	Games/movies don't create anger in children they just make angry children more creative. The kid is either angry and violent or he isn't a game isn't going to change that.
47	M	M, 12 F, 8	There are so many classifications most of them are subjective Just make classifications clear and simple G= General (everyone), AO =Adults Only, R=Restricted PG (Parental guidance recommended) = What the hell does that actually mean? If a Kids buys this from a store, brings it home and the parents say no - They can't even return it for a refund so they are stuck with it and eventually the kid will play it regardless of what parent guidance is - This is totally wrong. MA15+ (mature adults 15+) I know people in their early 20's that are not Mature Adults - again this is subjective. This classification is designed to divest themselves of any responsibility whatsoever. Just have clear classifications G= General (everyone), AO =Adults only, R=Restricted The kids can buy the toys (eg.Spiderman/Batman/Iron man) and of course they want to see the movie and play the video game but they are often M rated so they are not allowed. They are resourceful and will find a way to play them regardless of classification.
53	M	M, under5	nope

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Table 97 (Cont.) - Qualitative data for final questionnaire comments

55	F	F, under5	I go by my own personal view of the game not the classification as usually the classification is incorrect
73	F	F, 11 F, 11	All of the games are very male-orientated. 11 year old girls have no interest in any of the games shown so it wouldn't be an issue anyway
76	M	M, under5	Games are fantastic they take you out of reality and put you in a world that YOU as the player have the most control, so games like gta 5 puts you in to a world where there is lots of violence and out can act out in your own way. the argument that some people have that violence in games makes someone more aggravated is total lies, it's like saying that a sport game makes you better at that particular sport, but it doesn't. if i play nba 2k13 that does not mean that i can go pick up a basketball and play in the nba does it? Or if I play fifa does that mean i can so and play soccer at a top level? now if when i play gta 5 does that mean i now magically poses the skill to go up to someone and knock them out? or to pick up a sniper rifle and kill someone 1 km away? let me answer all my own questions and say NO. so all this crap especially in Australia about video game getting banded it total rubbish case in point south park the stick of truth, in that game there are a total of 7 moments that are cut out of the aus version of the game, now i ask why? why should the government decide on what i as a 24 year old man view? what makes them think that they have this god like power to choose what i play and watch? if i want to subject myself to something why should anyone else make that decision for me? now in the COD franchise that have something that you can chose to activate that turns OFF all the let's just say unsavory moments in the games, why can't that be in games that are deemed inappropriate then it is my choice if i want to watch them and play them no one else gets to make this decision for me. now in conclusion video games are not the real world they are just here the let you escape into a fake world thank you for reading this I hope it helps you in your quest Zachariah
82	F	F, 6	Due to their age group and their maturity levels.
87	F	F, under5	Some classifications can be updated as they are worse than they look on the covers and with the information provided.

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Table 98 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Sleeping Dogs*

Appendix J: Game review open-ended responses

Following are the responses for each step of the game review in Stage 3 of Study 2. The columns are reference number, gender of participant and whether they have played the game themselves, comments for each step, and the theme to which the comment maps.

Appendix J.1: Qualitative responses for game review - *Sleeping Dogs*

Table 98 below shows the open-ended responses that were collected at each step of the game review for *Sleeping Dogs*.

Table 98 - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Sleeping Dogs*

Sleeping dogs			
#	Gender	Child	Steps
1	F Played: N	M, 7 F, 8	1 -
			2 It should have a much higher rating as it contains sexual content.
			3 This game contains gruesome deaths and images and sexual references about underage girls. Definitely requires an R rating.
3	M Played: Y	M, 7	1 The game cover and description clearly shows that it contains violence as well as the M15+ Rating at the bottom
			2 -
			3 The Australian Government has been typically slow to embrace changing game development around the world. They have an outdated view on how to handle video game classification. Games are not like movies in that they are interactive and quite often played online with friends.
8	F Played: N	M, 8 F, 10 F, 13	1 -
			2 Disgusted
			3 Throwing enemies into an ice chipper, pushing their heads into a table saw, impaling them on elevated meat hooks-these sequences are accompanied by slow-motion effects, exaggerated

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Table 98 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Sleeping Dogs*

				blood splatter, and scattered body parts. Cutscenes also depict intense acts of violence (e.g., unarmed characters getting shot at point-blank range; a restrained character being tortured with a razor and power drill). The game contains sexual material, which can be heard in the dialogue (e.g., "Hey, tell your sister to give me a call, huh? I wouldn't mind giving her a mouthful," "Tell Ming to stick with girls over 14 this time," (This is sick)Drug use is referenced several times, and one cutscene depicts a man snorting an illicit substance. Teenagers playing these games WILL be affected in a very negative and damaging way!
13	F Played: N	F, 11 M, 13	1	I'm told by friends that younger kids would have problems with the difficulty settings, it is a very hard game.
			2	-
			3	-
17	F Played: N	M, 13	1	-
			2	-
			3	Should be rated R
18	F Played: N	M, 7 F, 11 F, 13	1	-
			2	-
			3	should be rated 17+
24	M Played: N	M, 13	1	obviously unsuitable for a maturing young man.
			2	-
			3	Could be higher classification.
26	M Played: N	M, 10 F, 16	1	-
			2	-
			3	I don't believe there is any reason for the type of foul language being used in games such as this. I don't want my children listening to that sort of thing. No wonder children these days can't tell right from wrong.
28		M, 10	1	This is not the type of games he or his friends plays - yet

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Table 98 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Sleeping Dogs*

	F Played: N		2	-
			3	It could be a little more indepth like the USA version!
31	F Played: N	M, 14	1	-
			2	These look to violent even for me
			3	-
37	F Played: Y	M, under5	1	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
			2	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
			3	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
39	F Played: N	F, 9	1	way too violent as depicted in images
			2	The description of content is clearly inappropriate MA rating
			3	The classification information does not contain enough details of content, understated
40	F Played: N	M, under5	1	Rated too high and not ready to play games of this skill level
			2	and again
			3	I think it's appropriate for 15yo children but my child won't see it anytime soon
55	F Played: N	F, under5	1	not appropriate
			2	obviously too violent/not appropriate for a young child
			3	should be R18+ due to content. That material should not be shown to children

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**Table 98 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review:
*Sleeping Dogs***

64	F Played: N	M, 10	1	I would disallow this game as well I am so against violence killings drugs and others for 10 yr olds
			2	Disallow for a 10 yr old
			3	-
73	F Played: N	F, 11 F, 11	1	They don't play games above PG or occasionally M
			2	-
			3	Should be 18+
76	M Played: Y	M, under5	1	the game is fun and my kid likes to shoot people in it he likes it
			2	-
			3	-
77	F Played: N	M, 10	1	Not suitable for a 10 year old
			2	Not suitable for a 10 year old
			3	Not suitable for a 10 year old
80	F Played: N	F, 7	1	Not appropriate for age
			2	-
			3	-
82	F Played: Y	F, 6	1	Not suitable to her age.
			2	Not suitable to her age.
			3	Not suitable to her age.

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Table 99 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Fable II*
Appendix J.2: Qualitative responses for game review - *Fable II*

Table 99 below shows the open-ended responses that were collected at each step of the game review for *Fable II*.

Table 99 - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Fable II*

Fable II			
#	Gender	Child	Steps
1	F Played: N	M, 7 F, 8	1 Cover is deceiving
			2 I am shocked at what is written in the above classifications that isn't in the Australian classification!
			3 Any sexual theme and violence needs an R rating, like the in the movies.
3	M Played: N	M, 7	1 -
			2 -
			3 Promotion of alcohol and promotion of poor habits is overlooked
7	F Played: N	F, 5 F, 9 M, 10	1 All too young for m rated games
			2 -
			3 -
8	F Played: N	M, 8 F, 10 F, 13	1 -
			2 Realistic looking violence - Nudity of a sexual nature - Encouragement of the use of alcohol/tobacco - Content that teaches or encourages gambling. Is this what we want for teenagers in Australia?
8			3 With enough positive affinity, players can engage in sexual relations with males, females, or groups of characters. Players are rewarded for having multiple relations, and can choose to have unprotected sex, although sexual acts are never shown. Several characters are depicted drunk during cutscenes, while players can also consume beer and wine from various taverns. A screen-blurring effect connotes a character's drunken state. What a sad Country we live in, I am absolutely shocked that these videos even

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Table 99 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Fable II*

				exist. When will our Country begin to protect our kids from such rot?
13	F Played: Y	F, 11 M, 13	1	Again I don't recall any sex scenes as such.
			2	We haven't used online live.
			3	Unprotected sex usually results in a baby.
17	F Played: N	M, 13	1	As soon as the sexual themes references etc rears its' head I would not allow him to play it but I am being hypocritical allowing violence rather than sex I think.
			2	Ah well the sex stuff does not seem as much as some of the other games. The online thing I still object to so that's out but someone nude doesn't worry me too much although it's probably gratuitous. The alcohol etc doesn't worry me too much he's seen every James Bond film.
			3	How can you choose to have unprotected sex in this game - I thought there was only nudity? Worrying about the build up of points to be able to have sex with various characters -
18	F Played: N	M, 7 F, 11 F, 13	1	-
			2	-
			3	should be rated 17+
26	M Played: N	M, 10 F, 16	1	No information is given about the 'sexual' nature of the game, so from the cover it is hard to judge.
			2	At least the 'sexual' content is now explained.
			3	Definitely more information is required
28	F Played: N	M, 10	1	Not the type of game my son or his friends play
			2	-
			3	We need to step up our reviews!
31	F Played: N	M, 14	1	My s/son is disabled mentally so he plays more baby nice things
			2	na

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Table 99 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Table II*

			3	-
37	F Played: Y	M, under5	1	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
			2	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
			3	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
39	F Played: N	F, 9	1	The graphics on the cover appear to mature and that they may include some violence
			2	The classification - m rating
			3	Too much violence in the description Classification is in sync with description
40	F Played: Y	M, under5	1	again, rated too high and not ready to play games of this skill level
			2	see previous answer.
			3	the game is pretty accurately depicted by the Australian classification system
44	F Played: N	F, 15	1	-
			2	-
			3	MA15+ more suitable
47	M Played: N	F, 8 M, 12	1	-
			2	The should just have a simpler AO (adults only) classification
			3	The M rating attracts kids to the game despite whether it's good or bad They brag to one another that they played a M rated game rather than the name/ brand of the game.

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Table 99 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Fable II*

53	M Played: N	M, under5	1	nope
			2	nope
			3	nope
55	F Played: Y	F, under5	1	Have played this game and think M15+ is suitable
			2	think M rating is correct
			3	doesn't seem as extreme as other games out there, sexual content isn't shown and language isn't as bad. M is appropriate
60	F Played: Y	M, 11 F, 14	1	As a whole I believe the Classification on Fable is wrong. It isn't that violent at all and if anything, is Educational because it requires the player to make certain choices and as such, their choices determine the consequences in the game making my kids and I think about our choices.
			2	-
			3	-
64	F Played: N	M, 10	1	-
			2	-
			3	-
71	F Played: N	F, 7	1	Classification and content unsuitable
			2	As previously stated
			3	-
72	F Played: N	F, 9	1	-
			2	-
			3	Australia's classification is lacking with informing us what the content contains such as alcohol.
73	F Played: N	F, 11 F, 11	1	Would not let them play an M game without more information
			2	Goes against all family values

Appendices

Table 99 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Fable II*

			3	-
76	M Played: Y	M, under5	1	i like to be evil in this game cos its fun to kill every one
			2	kill kill kill every one
			3	I like this game cos you can be gay or lesbian it shows that there is an equal choice in all game forms
77	F Played: N	M, 10	1	Not suitable for a 10 year old
			2	Not suitable for a 10 year old
			3	Not suitable for a 10 year old
80	F Played: N	F, 7	1	Wouldn't allow my child to play this, too young. Classification info indicates sexual themes and violence, not appropriate for children.
			2	-
			3	-
82	F Played: Y	F, 6	1	not suitable to her age.
			2	not suitable to her age.
			3	not suitable to her age.

Appendices

Appendix J.3: Qualitative responses for game review - *Trinity Universe*

Table 100 below shows the open-ended responses that were collected at each step of the game review for *Trinity Universe*.

Table 100 - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Trinity Universe*

Trinity Universe			
#	Gender	Child	Steps
1	F Played: N	M, 7 F, 8	1 Girly cartoons depicted on the cover seems to give me a sense of security.
			2 I would not allow my child to play something with suggestive themes or alcohol references
			3 Mild violence do not even begin to cover what is in the game description above. I would have definitely allowed my kids to play based on the classification and rating but not now!
2	M Played: N	M, 11	1 No video games for children
			2 -
			3 -
3	M Played: N	M, 7	1 -
			2 The PG classification should include 'Adult Themes' in reference to alcohol reference and language. Once again this shows that no real solid research is put into classification by the Australian Classification Board.
			3 If this were a movie it would be classified M or M15+ due to sexual referencing and language.
8	F Played: N	M, 8 F, 10 F, 13	1 -
			2 -
			3 Characters sometimes engage in suggestive dialogue, including several references to breast size; 'Don't be so arrogant just 'cuz you've got big, bouncy t*ts!' The dialogue contains references to liquor or being drunk; for example, 'I just want some liquor,' 'he's a total alcoholic' and 'Peace is the best for enjoying gratuitous amounts of hard liquor, dood.' The words 'sh*t,' 'b*tch,' and a*s' can also be heard in dialogue. I don't think our 13 year old daughter needs to play games which contains such influential language.

Appendices

Table 100 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Trinity Universe*

13	F Played: N	F, 11 M, 13	1	-
			2	To be honest my 'child 2' would not be interested in this game anyway.
			3	Reading some of the dialogue I feel it is degrading to females and glorifying alcohol etc. However I usually read reviews of all games before letting my kids play them and am fairly certain at least some reviews would mention this.
17	F Played: N	M, 13	1	Yes it's suitable but he would not play it doesn't like anime etc would deem it too left of centre and girly.
			2	-
			3	The rating is not appropriate only because of the comments, the language really annoys me as even though players think it's a minor part of the game and sometimes don't even seem aware of it this just makes it insidious so that it creeps into everyday vocab. It may be peculiar to anime that they like exaggerate chests on females but who needs the tit comments etc. I'd like a language warning on the box accompanying the rating - it looked very My Little Pony so it's a bit deceptive in that girls may well play this - my daughter loves anime and it's clearly not a great subtext for them.
18	F Played: N	M, 7 F, 11 F, 13	1	-
			2	-
			3	It should be rated 17+
26	M Played: N	M, 10 F, 16	1	-
			2	-
			3	No mention of sexual innuendo and bad language. I guess that language is the accepted norm now.
28	F Played: N	M, 10	1	We wouldn't even look at this game!
			2	The cover looks harmless enough & girly? So you would not think that's a violent game at all.
			3	Mild Violence - OK
36			1	-

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Table 100 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Trinity Universe*

	F Played: N	M, under5 F, under5 F, under5 M, 11	2	only with an adult
			3	-
37	F Played: N	M, under5	1	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
			2	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
			3	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
39	F Played: N	F, 9	1	Cartoon characters make it appear appropriate PG rating
			2	The recommendations do not really correspond with the rating - I would be reluctant to let my child play this game after proper consideration
			3	should be more warning of violence, dont like 'evil' forces
40	F Played: N	M, under5	1	Violence and PG rating. He also isn't at this level, skill-wise.
			2	see previous answer.
			3	wouldn't be very impressed about the lack of warning re sexual content. still wouldn't let my <5yo play it.
47	M Played: N	F, 8 M, 12	1	My son would not be interested in this game t0o girly. I find the Wii to have a larger range of G rated games. Xbox and Playstation are always PG but mainly M and R rated - appeal to boys
			2	-
			3	Inappropriate language and subject matter. The Japanese Kawaii (Cute) style cartoon graphic contradicts the actual content
48		M, 15	1	Looks harmless compared to the games he currently plays

Appendices

Table 100 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Trinity Universe*

	F Played: N		2	Looks harmless compared to the other games he currently plays
			3	-
50	F Played: N	M, 6 F, 8	1	looks ok but may have too much vilience
			2	-
			3	-
55	F Played: N	F, under5	1	says mild violence on the front. I don't think any child needs to be taught that
			2	my child is too young for this game
			3	Should be classed as at least M rating due to language and nature of content
60	F Played: N	M, 11 F, 14	1	-
			2	-
			3	I think Children see and Hear worse out in the real World and through media as opposed to in Gaming.
64	F Played: N	M, 10	1	Even mild violence is not allowed for a 10 yr old
			2	-
			3	-
71	F Played: N	F, 7	1	-
			2	-
			3	language and sexual content
72	F Played: N	F, 9	1	-
			2	The cover and the information on the back about the game seem okay but after seeing the other two countries' classification I am not sure. I would ask my eldest sibling what they think about the game.

Appendices

Table 100 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Trinity Universe*

			3	-
73	F Played: N	F, 11 F, 11	1	It looks fine but they wouldn't be interested in it anyway
			2	-
			3	It's too much for PG, but I don't think it's quite at M yet. If there was a middle ground it'd be easier to classify because it's neither PG or M
76	M Played: N	M, under5	1	game looks sexual
			2	-
			3	-
77	F Played: N	M, 10	1	It's one of his favourite games
			2	Plays it all the time
			3	I watch him play it
79	M Played: N	M, 18	1	The game looks terrible.
			2	I don't think he should play the game but then again it's up to him if he wants to.
			3	The game sounds cool to me.
80	F Played: N	F, 7	1	Looks like it is aimed at older kids.
			2	-
			3	Classification info should make reference to adult themes in the game (i.e. sexualised language, references to alcohol)
81	F Played: N	M, under5	1	-
			2	Cover looks kids friendly but information is not matching
			3	-
82	F Played: Y	F, 6	1	allow to play this game.
			2	allow to play this game.
			3	May allow to play this game.

Appendices

Table 101 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War II

Appendix J.4: Qualitative responses for game review - Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War II

Table 101 below shows the open-ended responses that were collected at each step of the game review for *Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War II*.

Table 101 - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War II

Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War II			
#	Gender	Child	Steps
1	F Played: N	M, 7 F, 8	1 I believe the cover is deceptive, considering it has an M rating.
			2 Anything that states it may have with realistic violence, blood and gore is not acceptable for my children or any children for that matter.
			3 -
3	M Played: Y	M, 7	1 -
			2 -
			3 Whilst this game has an online component the game itself does not change. Online play can expose children to abuse etc however there is an online filter to help reduce this.
8	F Played: N	M, 8 F, 10 F, 13	1 War games are inappropriate for all of my children
			2 Having realistic looking violence and interacting with others makes me hope my 18 y.o. son is not playing it. What benefit is there?
			3 18+ should be the minimum classification on this game
13	F Played: N	F, 11 M, 13	1 -
			2 while I know my 'child 1' is mature enough to handle this game, my worry is that it is online. Child 1 could end up playing against any aged person using all kinds of language etc. I would definitely have to think on this one.
			3 -

Appendices

Table 101 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War II

17	F Played: N	M, 13	1	don't know it - again the subject matter would not be his thing.
			2	He doesn't play online and I will not allow him to do so I think it becomes an excuse for longer play and there are some kids at his school who log in Sat. am and logout Sun pm. If left they will play virtually the whole day, The violence might be realistic but if it's robots or space creatures sadly I don't get as bothered, whereas I really don't like anything where he would shoot / harm a person or animal.
			3	I've ticked yes but it depends on what the level of violence is, to me it's bloody but I am sure that for gamers it's fairly minimal.
18	F Played: N	M, 7 F, 11 F, 13	1	-
			2	-
			3	should be rated 17+
23	F Played: N	F, 12	1	I would buy this rubbish. My child isn't interested in this either.
			2	Not at all
			3	HOWever people still allow their children to play them. Some people just don't get it.
28	F Played: N	M, 10	1	It does like a bad a Sleeping Dogs
			2	This is not the type of games he or his friends plays - yet
			3	Again - not too much information about it, could have a bit more information about it
37	F Played: N	M, under5	1	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
			2	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
			3	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
39	F Played: N	F, 9	1	image is too graphic
			2	game rating M violent image

Appendices

Table 101 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War II

			3	the classification should be higher considering content
40	F Played: N	M, under5	1	Rated M and has themes he is unfamiliar with and we are not comfortable allowing a young child to play violent games. Also a bit beyond him, skill-wise.
			2	Same comments as last time, bit beyond him as he is still too young for violent games and doesn't have the skill required to play a game like this.
			3	Again (this is very repetitive) he is too young for violence.
47	M Played: N	F, 8 M, 12	1	I hate war games and it's inappropriate for my children's age group
			2	If a 16 year old can't legally own a credit card why should they be allowed to play online
			3	-
49	F Played: N	M, 12	1	It looks like an ok game to play
			2	He would maybe enjoy it
			3	-
53	M Played: Y	M, under5	1	-
			2	nope
			3	nope
55	F Played: Y	F, under5	1	-
			2	-
			3	seems similar content to other M rated games
64	F Played: N	M, 10	1	LIKE I HAVE SAID BEFORE THIS IS WRONG FOR A TEN YEAR OLD THINKING THAT HE CAN PLAY THIS AND DO THIS OUTSIDE BECAUSE HE BELIEVES IF HE CAN PLAY IT THIS IS NORMAL
			2	I WOULD NOT LET MY CHILD EVEN LOOK AT THIS NOT A GOOD IDEA FOR A 10 YEAR OLD
			3	I DONT THINK THESE SHOULD BE AVAILABLE AT ALL LOOK WHAT IS HAPPENING TO OUR WORLD TODAY

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**Table 101 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review:
Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War II**

73	F Played: N	F, 11 F, 11	1	Without having more information, They would not be allowed to play an M rated game. I doubt they'd be interested in this game anyway
			2	-
			3	-
76	M Played: N	M, under5	1	looks fun
			2	-
			3	-
77	F Played: Y	M, 10	1	I think it would be okay for my child to play his friends with this game.
			2	On looking at it again I wouldn't let my child play this with 16 year olds as they are more immature and will teach him bad habits.
			3	I don't think this is suitable for a 10 year old
80	F Played: N	F, 7	1	Not appropriate for age
			2	-
			3	-
82	F Played: Y	F, 6	1	Because of too much violence in this game.
			2	i will not allow to play this game due to violence.
			3	i will not allow.
84	F Played: N	F, 8 M, 9	1	Again the classification and violent content would not be suitable for my children.
			2	The fact that there is blood and gore would not be appropriate for my children. Online playing with other player- not something I wish to introduce my children to.
			3	-

Appendices

Appendix J.5: Qualitative responses for game review - *Far Cry 2*

Table 102 below shows the open-ended responses that were collected at each step of the game review for *Far Cry 2*.

Table 102 - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Far Cry 2*

Far Cry 2			
#	Gender	Child	Steps
1	F Played: N	M, 7 F, 8	1 -
			2 -
			3 Again the strong language aspect is not covered anywhere in this classification. It is degrading to woman!
4	M Played: N	F, 5 M, 7	1 -
			2 -
			3 Language and sexual references should be mentioned
17	F Played: N	M, 13	1 He likes only certain games and does not own and to my knowledge has not played this one.
			2 Although he hasn't - as per previous comments - played this game to my knowledge I'd be a little on the fence about it in that he has played COD which I think is worse. Would I want him to play this in a perfect world? No. If he went to a friend's house and they were playing it I'd figure he might look at it but he has said prev. that it's not really his thing, the peer pressure is definitely a factor.
			3 No it's not suitable if the language and comments are anything to go by. The violence is also an issue but I do notice in game play that the characters comments often reinforce the casual nature of the violence so in this example I would not allow him to play it.
18	F Played: N	M, 7 F, 11 F, 13	1 -
			2 -
			3 I think this should be rated 17+

Appendices

Table 102 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Far Cry 2*

23	F Played: N	F, 12	1	-
			2	-
			3	I just think there are a lot of people who don't take this seriously.
28	F Played: N	M, 10	1	Sorry not the type of game my sons or friends play at the moment. Roleplaying is not what they play!
			2	-
			3	Mmmmm not close it is!
37	F Played: Y	M, under5	1	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
			2	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
			3	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
39	F Played: N	F, 9	1	too much violence MA rating
			2	dont like the level of violence or interacting wth other players online
			3	the classification information needs more detail wouldnt allow due to rating and game information
40	F Played: N	M, under5	1	what a surprise, same again
			2	and again
			3	the swearing isn't really severe enough to warrant a warning, and a mild reference to drug use is fine.
47	M Played: N	F, 8 M, 12	1	My kids are too young
			2	-
			3	Online games such as Xbox Live are a parent's nightmare. You cannot monitor what they are doing and if linked to a credit card it

Appendices

Table 102 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Far Cry 2*

				can wipe you out. I think these games are prepping kids for online gambling in their adulthood.
53	M Played: N	M, under5	1	nope
			2	nope
			3	nope
55	F Played: Y	F, under5	1	Too Young. Not suitable for any age under 15 at LEAST
			2	Obviously a lot of violence in this game, I don't think any child should play it before turning 16 or older
			3	judging on the description, language used, it should be an R18+ game
60	F Played: Y	M, 11 F, 14	1	It shows War Scenes which are shown daily on the news so it's not about Classification so much as how much Exposure the Child has to such things. In games such as these, I think it depends on the child and is up to the Parent/s to discuss War with their Child/ren and monitor the impacts. If it becomes an issue then Cease the allowance of the game play.
			2	-
			3	-
61	M Played: N	M, under5 F, under5	1	-
			2	-
			3	There should be at least a warning about language in the Australian classification.
64	F Played: N	M, 10	1	All these games are suitable for any child aged 10 years old
			2	I don't allow this it's sending out the wrong message to children
			3	This game is only for 18yr olds
66	F Played: N	F, 12 F, 15	1	Blood and gore isn't suitable anyone under 18. Realistic graphics on gang warfare can manipulate how a child might think about real life and it can distort the difference between reality and fiction.
			2	-

Appendices

Table 102 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Far Cry 2*

			3	beside the information on strong violence, the consumer advice missed the bit on sexual themes and strong coarse languages.
71	F Played: N	F, 7	1	adult content
			2	-
			3	language warning
72	F Played: N	F, 9	1	The rating clearly states MA15+ and it appears like the player will shoot target/enemies which are likely people. I won't allow as this can affect her psychologically; harming other people even if it is fake.
			2	Definitely no. USA and Europe rate as 16+ and 17+.
			3	Australia needs to classify more of what the game content contains such as coarse language not just the violence.
73	F Played: N	F, 11 F, 11	1	They don't play games above PG; M occasionally but never MA15+
			2	-
			3	-
77	F Played: N	M, 10	1	Not suitable for a 10 year old
			2	Not suitable for a 10 year old
			3	Not suitable for a 10 year old
79	M Played: N	M, 18	1	He makes his own decisions about what he wants to watch.
			2	I feel my son is mature enough to play this game at any age.
			3	I used to kill toy soldiers, what was the harm in that.
80	F Played: N	F, 7	1	Not appropriate for age
			2	-
			3	Classification info only mentions violence, not profanity and sexual references.

Appendices

Table 102 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Far Cry 2*

82	F Played: Y	F, 6	1	not suitable to her age.
			2	not suitable to her age.
			3	not suitable to her age.
84	F Played: N	F, 8 M, 9	1	As a parent I condone violence including killing, using guns and weapons. The ratings for this game is aimed at 15 plus and therefore my children would not be allowed to purchase or play this game.
			2	The cover highlights that this is not a suitable game for my children given their age.
			3	-

Appendices

Appendix J.6: Qualitative responses for game review - *Dragon Age: Origins*

Table 103 below shows the open-ended responses that were collected at each step of the game review for *Dragon Age: Origins*.

Table 103 - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Dragon Age: Origins*

Dragon Age: Origins				
#	Gender	Child	Steps	
1	F Played: N	M, 7 F, 8	1	Strong violence is an automatic no.
			2	The use of the word "dark" sums up another reason why I would not allow it.
			3	I don't believe the use of the word Strong Violence adequately depicts what has been written in the summary. It contains people being murdered and evil spirits. It needs a much stronger classification!
3	M Played: Y	M, 7	1	-
			2	-
			3	Another scattergun approach to classification. It shows that the game itself is not looked at and the rating appears to be a softened up version taken from review or game classification websites.
4	M Played: Y	F, 5 M, 7	1	-
			2	-
			3	Sexual references
8	F Played: N	M, 8 F, 10 F, 13	1	-
			2	extreme violence, multiple motiveless killing, violence towards defenseless people, sexual violence - No 15 y.o. should be allowed to play these games. They are at a very influential age. This is definitely not appropriate. My guess is that parents of 15 & 16 year olds playing these games have no idea they are playing them!
			3	This one gets me really cross. They definitely have got this classification wrong!!!

Appendices

Table 103 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Dragon Age: Origins*

13	F Played: Y	F, 11 M, 13	1	I saw a trusted review of this game and apart from the blood, as it is complete fantasy, I felt it was suitable for all of us. The trusted review I refer to is a show on ABC2 called Good Game where they review adult games. They also have a show Good Game SP which is the same people but they review only G or PG games for kids.
			2	Having played it many times I don't recall any 'motiveless' killing or violence towards defenceless people unless it is referring to the 'bad guys'. I also don't recall any sexual violence.
			3	Oh yes I forgot about the brothel and the sex scenes, but it is all consensual. You also don't have to romance anybody, in fact it is quite a difficult task to get a person to like you to the point where that is even an option.
15	F Played: Y	M, 15 F, 15	1	-
			2	-
			3	Should be classified 18+
17	F Played: N	M, 13	1	-
			2	Extreme and sexual is a nit more than the Aus classification of Strong so the rating is incorrect to me.
			3	-
18	F Played: N	M, 7 F, 11 F, 13	1	-
			2	-
			3	I think this should be rated 17+
24	M Played: Y	M, 13	1	Although a clear fantasy theme this is still unsuitable for my son.
			2	A more suitable restriction at 18.
			3	-
26	M Played: N	M, 10 F, 16	1	-
			2	-

Appendices

Table 103 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Dragon Age: Origins*

			3	There seems to be a pattern emerging. Australian classification really doesn't identify the issues.
28	F Played: N	M, 10	1	He is not yet into this Fantasy type game.
			2	-
			3	How can they fit all this information on the cover?
37	F Played: Y	M, under5	1	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
			2	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
			3	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
39	F Played: N	F, 9	1	too graphic according to cover image MA rating would not allow
			2	Far too violent
			3	Clearly describes the game - image is a clear indicator though too
40	F Played: N	M, under5	1	same as before.
			2	and again
			3	Should be more emphasis on swearing/nudity in our classification system. Even to mention that it's there.
47	M Played: N	F, 8 M, 12	1	My son and his peers would be attracted to this graphic despite it not being appropriate for his age
			2	-
			3	-
49	F Played: N	M, 12	1	Strong violence, we don't tolerate violence in our home on tv or games and find it too much for children

Appendices

Table 103 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Dragon Age: Origins*

			2	-
			3	-
50	F Played: N	M, 6 F, 8	1	too violent
			2	-
			3	-
53	M Played: N	M, under5	1	nope
			2	nope
			3	nope
55	F Played: N	F, under5	1	-
			2	based on description, should maybe be considered as an R18+ rating
			3	should be R18+ if that content is in it
60	F Played: Y	M, 11 F, 14	1	This is a Fantasy/Sci-Fi Game and my kids know the difference between real and not real. This is played purely for enjoyment and skills and my kids are well aware of that.
			2	-
			3	Ultimately, the decision is up to the Parent/s however again, Like Fable, it gives the player/s choices so yes there may be options for merciless killing however it doesn't mean the child is going to take that option.
64	F Played: N	M, 10	1	I don't like my child thinking any kind of violence is ok
			2	This kind of game is not appropriate for children at this age it should be for adults. Violence Sexual violence killings toward people or thinking of that against other people is WRONG!!
			3	For a ten year old boy is not alright they will think that this is alright and go off the rails IT IS WRONG!!
71		F, 7	1	Same as last game

Appendices

Table 103 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Dragon Age: Origins*

	F Played: N		2	previous comments apply
			3	Should also state sexual content
73	F Played: N	F, 11 F, 11	1	-
			2	-
			3	Should be 18+
77	F Played: N	M, 10	1	Not suitable for a 10 year old
			2	Not suitable for a 10 year old
			3	Not suitable for a 10 year old
79	M Played: N	M, 18	1	It looks crappy but he might have given it a go.
			2	-
			3	-
80	F Played: N	F, 7	1	Classification - don't want my child playing MA15+ games, or games with strong/realistic violence
			2	-
			3	Classification info makes no reference to sexual themes or language
82	F Played: N	F, 6	1	not suitable to her age.
			2	not suitable to her age.
			3	not suitable to her age.
85	M Played: Y	M, 11	1	maybe because it is more fantasy sci fi
			2	-
			3	-
87	F Played: N	F, under5	1	Classification means no go for the child!
			2	-
			3	-

Appendices

Appendix J.7: Qualitative responses for game review - *Grand Theft Auto V*

Table 104 below shows the open-ended responses that were collected at each step of the game review for *Grand Theft Auto V*. The number of responses is lower for this game as it was added after the initial release of the questionnaire.

Table 104 - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Grand Theft Auto V*

Grand Theft Auto V				
#	Gender	Child	Steps	
35	F Played: N	M, 5 M, 10	1	far too much violence and coarse language in this game.
			2	-
			3	-
37	F Played: Y	M, under5	1	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
			2	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
			3	Children can play any and every game, as long as their parents teach them that it's only a game and 'not real'. I was raised this way with games, TV and movies and I am fine, as will my child be too.
39	F Played: N	F, 9	1	appropriate cover image but classification would make me reconsider - would need more research of description of content
			2	more thorough inspection of description tells me content is definitely not appropriate due to violence, drug use and language
			3	classification information does not include the violence, sexual reference or language NOT APPROPRIATE!
40	F Played: N	M, under5	1	I'm not letting a young child play any game rated R
			2	-

Appendices

Table 104 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Grand Theft Auto V*

			3	Aussie classification system doesn't mention anything about sexual references or violence/crime.
45	F Played: Y	M, 18	1	He is old enough to make his own mind up.
			2	-
			3	-
47	M Played: N	F, 8 M, 12	1	I know a lot of parents make judgements on video games based on their own experience and are sometimes completely deluding themselves. (Games = Space Invaders and Pacman) and the cartoon style graphics on the cover equates to (bugs bunny and tom and Jerry style slapstick violence which is ok) They have no idea how psychotic some of the content actually is. Primary school kids also use computers to troll around for free games that are ultra-violent. My son witnessed his classmates accessing this material during class in grade 2. We thought the responsible thing to do was to bring it to the teacher and principals attention as they had no idea. Then they sought to remove all evidence that this had occurred from their school computers and tried to blame my son for instigating the entire incident in order to keep us quiet (his parent). We swapped our son to a catholic school because we had totally lost faith in the local government school. The kids at his old school continued accessing these games and even had the websites bookmarked for quick access and the teachers and principal were oblivious.
			2	They should just have a simple AO (Adult only) classification
			3	They should just have a simpler AO (adults only) classification
49	F Played: Y	M, 12	1	It's his favourite game but we limit the time of play and mute the game when playing
			2	-
			3	-
55	F Played: Y	F, under5	1	-
			2	obviously not suitable for anyone under 16
			3	It has adult content which an adult can view, as in 18 years plus
61	M Played: N	M, under5	1	Given the only warning is drugs, I am ok because my kids would be too young to understand. I am mostly concerned about violence and language.

Appendices

Table 104 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Grand Theft Auto V*

		F, under5	2	-
			3	Based on the Australian classification, I assumed it was only a driving game with some depictions of drugs, not anything listed there.
64	F Played: N	M, 10	1	These games are showing the wrong ideas for 10 yr olds
			2	Disallowed for 10yr olds
			3	This is not appropriate for a 10 yr old they are giving the wrong signals
66	F Played: Y	F, 12 F, 15	1	Definitely not suitable for anyone under 18.
			2	-
			3	-
71	F Played: Y	F, 7	1	strong language disallows it
			2	-
			3	leaves out strong violence and language
72	F Played: N	F, 9	1	-
			2	-
			3	I feel the classification given is appropriate but it should show more detail with what the game content contains such as violence, etc.
73	F Played: Y	F, 11 F, 11	1	Definitely would not let them play this; definitely an adult game
			2	-
			3	-
76	M Played: Y	M, under5	1	the game if fun and my kid likes to shoot people in it he likes it
			2	-
			3	-

Appendices

Table 104 (Cont.) - Qualitative responses from each participant at each step of game review: *Grand Theft Auto V*

77	F Played: N	M, 10	1	This game is too old for my 10 year old, 18+
			2	Not suitable for a 10 year old
			3	Not suitable for a 10 year old
79	M Played: Y	M, 18	1	My son loves this game. He loved it when he was young & he loves it now.
			2	How many people have been killed due to the game "Grand Theft Auto"?
			3	This game touches on reality, doesn't it.
80	F Played: N	F, 7	1	Not appropriate for age
			2	-
			3	Game classification info should also mention profanity, violence, sexual themes etc in the game (not just drug use). I wouldn't think this game was appropriate for anyone under the age of 18.
82	F Played: Y	F, 6	1	not suitable her age.
			2	not suitable to her age
			3	not suitable to her age

Appendix K: Proposed VPMT

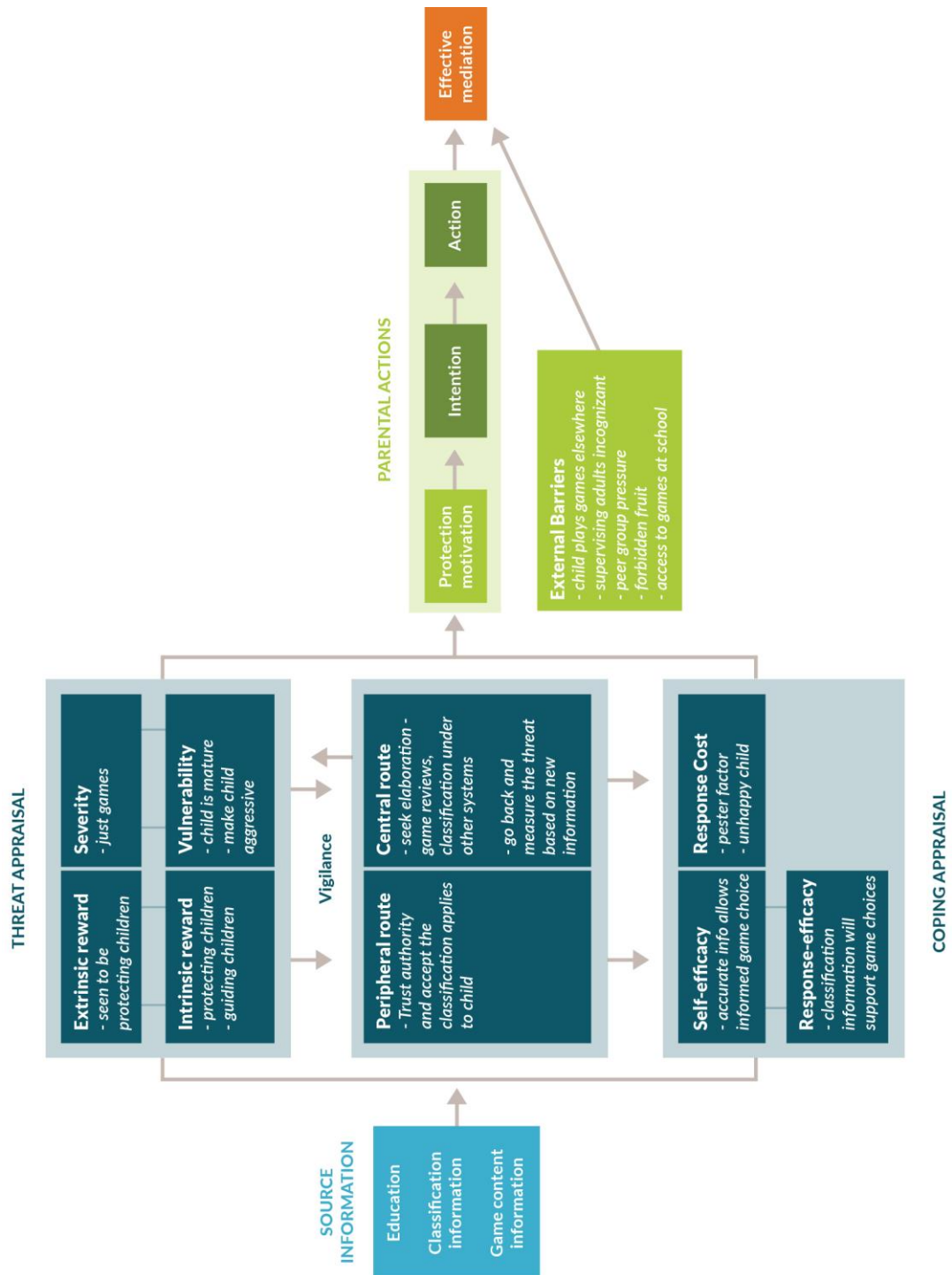


Figure 33 - Proposed Vigilant Protection Motivation Theory

Appendix L: Human Research Ethics Committee final report

Final Project Report

Human Research Ethics Committee



1) Project Details:

Project No:	A13-068
Project Name:	Video game classification in Australia: Does it enable parents to make informed game choices for their children'?

2) Principal Researcher Details:

Full Name:	Dr Charlynn Miller
School/Section:	Faculty of Health
Phone:	9545
Fax:	
Email:	c.miller@federation.edu.au

3) Project Status:

Please indicate the current status of the project:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Data collection complete	<input type="checkbox"/> Abandoned
Completion date: 31/10/2014	Please give reason:

4) Special Conditions:

If this project was approved subject to conditions, were these met?		
<input type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No * NB: If 'no', please provide an explanation:

5) Changes to project:

Were any amendments made to the originally approved project?	
<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes * NB: Please provide details: All amendments that were filed were approved. The conditions for all were met.

Final Project Report

Human Research Ethics Committee



6) Storage of Data:

Please indicate where the data collected during the course of this project is stored:

Data is stored on password-protected hard disks and are held by the Principal Researcher for a period of not less than five years.

7) Research Participants:

Were there any events that had an adverse effect on the research participants?

No Yes * NB: Please provide details:

8) Summary of Results:

8.1. Please provide a short summary of the results of the project (no attachments please):

This research achieved 85 participants. Initially, participants were sourced from all primary and secondary schools across Victoria. An email was sent to 2237 schools with an invitation for parents in their school community to participate in this research. Out of these, 220 schools responded, and 69 schools agreed to participate. This method of recruitment garnered 20 responses from parents, of which 14 completed the questionnaire.

In an effort to gather more responses, other methods of recruitment were utilised. These included leaflet distribution and advertising in online forums and sites such as Gumtree and Facebook. Response to these methods was only marginally better, with 24 people participating.

Finally, as a recruitment incentive, participants were informed that they would be placed into a draw for an iPad mini. This method achieved the most responses, with 41 people entered into the draw.

Of the 85 participants, 61 completed the questionnaire in full. The response rate was very low; however, along with qualitative data, quantitative data was also collected which provides a rich source of information that can be used to provide insights into the data.

8.2. Were the aims of the project (as stated in the application for approval) achieved? Please provide details.

This research aims to determine whether games classification in Australia provides enough information for parents to make informed game choices for their children; this was achieved by presenting participants with classification information that is given to video games in Australia as well as overseas. Early results from this research show that 21% more parents felt that they were

Final Project Report

Human Research Ethics Committee




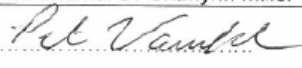

not provided with enough information to make appropriate game choices than at the start of the questionnaire (34% and 13% respectively). The qualitative data gathered through this research will provide insight into how parents manage which games their child plays.

9) Feedback:

The HREC welcomes any feedback on:

- Difficulties experienced with carrying out the research project; or
- Appropriate suggestions which might lead to improvements in ethical clearance and monitoring of research.

10) Signature/s:

Principal Researcher:	 Print name: Dr Charlynn Miller	Date:	14/4/2015
Other/Student Researchers:	 Print name: Dr Peter Vamplew	Date:	11/5/2015
	 Print name: Ms Julie Ross	Date:	11/5/2015

Please return to the Ethics Officer, at either the Gippsland or Mt. Helen campus, as soon as possible.

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