Representations of Childcare Robots as a Controversial Issue

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Abstract : This paper interrogates online representations of robot companions for children, including promotional material by manufacturers, media articles and technology blogs. The significance of the study lies in its contribution to understanding attitudes to robots. The prospect of childcare robots is particularly controversial ethically, and is associated with emotive arguments. The sampled material is restricted to relatively recent posts (the past three years) though the analysis identifies both continuous and changing themes across the past decade. The method extrapolates social representations theory towards examining the ways in which information about robotic products is provided for the general public. Implications for social acceptance of robot companions for the home and robot ethics are considered.