

Concerned with Computer Games: A Collective Analysis of Being and Becoming Gamer in Denmark

NIKLAS ALEXANDER CHIMIRRI, MADS LUND ANDERSEN, TINE
JENSEN, DORTE MARIE SØNDERGAARD & ANDERS EMIL WULFF
KRISTIANSEN

In this chapter, we focus on a particular matter of concern within computer gaming practices: the concern of being or not being a gamer. This matter of concern emerged from within our collective investigations of gaming practices across various age groups. The empirical material under scrutiny was generated across a multiplicity of research projects, predominantly conducted in Denmark. The question of being versus not being a gamer, we argue, exemplifies interesting enactments of how computer game players become both concerned *with* and concerned *about* their gaming practices.

As a collective of researchers situated at universities in Denmark, and writing from within the field of psychology, we are particularly concerned with (human) subjectivity and processes of social and subjective becoming. Furthermore, we are all inspired and influenced by various neo-materialistic theories, which implies that we seek to understand the entangling material-discursive and social nuances, i.e. the complexities and the diversity of (human) subjectivity. We are concerned with zooming in on and analysing subjectivity and how it emerges from within the social and material relations of everyday life lived. From this follows that we are concerned about the danger that social and material relations are being forgotten or ignored in the study of subjectivity, and that in consequence, phenomena under scrutiny are not situated in the everyday life practices of those human beings with whom psychological theorizing is concerned. By means of a collective analysis of exemplifying empirical material, our aim is both to gain insight into one another's

ways of conceptualizing the social and material-discursive entanglements of everyday life and thus our respective ontological presumptions, and consequently also to challenge one another's ways of asking questions into the concerns of computer gaming subjects we have come to do research with.

Generally, concerns formulated in relation to everyday computer game production, regulation and use could potentially be understood in a myriad of ways, also because concerns emerge as complex, multifaceted and at times contradictory phenomena in everyday life. However, those academic and non-academic public discourses that most prominently emerge in our empirical material tend to focus on enacting two polarized understandings of concerns: Either concerns in terms of *being concerned about* meaning *worried* that computer games may be of detriment to specific individual and/or societal developments, or in terms of *being concerned with*, meaning *engaged* with computer games as productive-constructive forces in specific individual and/or societal developments.

What we as psychologically trained technology researchers are academically concerned with and about, then, is that this polarization of understandings shapes research outcomes as well as the public and professional debates without explicating its ontological and epistemological presumptions, i.e. the respective understanding of what a computer game concern is and from what position knowledge about it is produced and articulated. Hence, we are worried about debates that present and reproduce knowledge which implicitly accepts one of the two understandings of concern as more significant than the other, without grounding their understanding in the empirical complexity of all those who engage in computer gaming practices as part of their everyday life, including the potential ambiguity and contradictoriness of both understandings of computer game concerns engrained in these engagements. Our empirical examples instead show that concerns/worries about computer games and being concerned/engaged with computer game practices always emerge as mutually entangled in the complexity of gaming subjects' everyday lives.

MESSING WITH CONCERNS FROM WITHIN EVERYDAY LIFE

What our author collective is concerned with, then, is how computer game concerns emerge from within the everyday life of subjects who play computer games (henceforth generally referred to as *computer gaming subjects*, and in specific instances articulated as *players* or *gamers*, regardless of the platforms they play on). In this chapter, we argue that ontological and epistemological aspects of

knowledge production are intertwined (Haraway, 1991; 1997; Stengers, 1997; Law & Mol, 2002; Dreier, 2007; Barad, 2007; Teo, 2009). Thus, the understanding of concerns will take many forms. In this text we talk about these varying forms of understanding as fractal or as variously enacted *realities* (Law, 2002). By this we mean to emphasize that simultaneously enacted, but fragmented and possibly contradictory versions of realities will always be something that researchers have to relate to – but may also provide researchers the opportunity to expand and refine analytical potentials.

Therefore, this chapter presents our efforts to revisit and collectively analyse empirical material produced from within the everyday life of computer gaming practices, in order to question and transcend our respective epistemic partialities and ontological presumptions and collectively try to understand the situated character of computer gaming practices. Our aim is to keep the ontology of computer game concerns questionable and in movement, by allowing the possibility that these concerns may emerge as more complex, multifaceted and contradictory than each single one of us expected them to be before engaging in a collective methodology and analysis process. We focus on grasping the realities of being players and/or gamers from within the everyday life of those actually concerned with playing – the computer gaming subjects.

Accordingly, we will begin by illustrating a few of the enacted realities that should be well-known to many of our readers and will then destabilize them throughout the chapter to discuss how we can form more nuanced understandings of *whose* and *what* concerns we are researching. We argue that this depends on how we can formulate questions to research concerned about/with computer gaming subjects via various theoretical foci. To pursue this ambition, we let ourselves be inspired by John Law's understanding of *allegory*: "Allegory is about enacting, and knowing multiple realities. But [...] allegory is also about the movement between realities. In particular, it is about holding them together" (Law, 2004, p. 108). In this chapter, we will present a limited number of empirical stories we worked with in our collective analysis workshop, stories which exemplify how we have been rethinking our different conceptual frameworks together and how they came to empirically matter for debates about everyday computer game concerns.

In particular, we will do this so as to enact and show different performances and thus understandings of the computer gaming subject: "This is because it [allegory] makes space for ambivalence and ambiguity. In allegory, the realities made manifest do not necessarily have to fit together" (Law, 2004, p. 90). With inspiration from this method, we hope to illustrate the ambiguity of the computer gamer as a concept pointing to a subject performing an everyday life that includes computer gaming practices, and to render the concerns, ambiguities, nuances and

complexities that emerge out of this generative relationship visible. Allegory as method wishes to precisely allow for this process:

Even more important, it [allegory] is also generative. It messes with the boundaries between manifest absence, visible realities that can be acknowledged, and Otherness, those realities that are also being enacted but rendered invisible. It extends visibility – or it crafts and plays with different versions of visibility. By the same token it extends realities – or it crafts and plays with different and alternative versions of reality. (Law, 2004, pp. 97-98)

Before demonstrating how we came to collectively mess with the boundaries of visible and invisible concerns by collectively posing questions to our empirical examples, however, we will roughly illustrate a few of those visible realities that are more commonly acknowledged – also by the computer gaming subjects themselves. This is to serve as an argumentative background for underpinning the necessity of extending visibility and enacting alternative, less visible empirical realities.

VISIBLE CONCERNS ABOUT PLAYERS AND GAMERS

The first reality enacted is most commonly presented in popular media, and has a strong history: The image of boys sitting in dark rooms lost in fictional realities of violence – an image everyone should be able to recognize. It is the image that pops up most frequently when searching Google for *video game player*, *computer game player* or *gamer*. It taps into the concern of the parent and the stereotype of the addicted (teenage) boy, encapsulated in his room while becoming socially isolated, obese and losing connection to the ‘real world’. News, articles, videos, etc. commercialize this concern by offering advice on how to spot computer game addiction and set limits for screen time so as to allow for the healthy development of the child. This image is part of our (Western) culture, and is one to which the computer gaming subjects in our analyses – as well as caring others – relate to in various ways, as we will see.

Another enacted reality is one rendered visible by survey data. This data builds on a binary gender discourse, which enacts gender as a salient differentiating category. In the USA, the gender split of those playing computer games has been fluctuating between a male/female ratio of 60/40 per cent and 52/48 per cent since 2008 (Statista, 2016b). Age also appears as relevant survey category: For instance, data from Statista (2016a) shows that 27 per cent are under eighteen years old, 29 per cent are between eighteen and thirty-five years old, 18 per cent are thirty-six

to forty-nine years old and 26 per cent are fifty or older. This points to a much more even spread of gaming subjects across ages than the popular reality enacted in the media articulations illustrated above.

If we look at numbers from a report of the Entertainment Software Association, which is based on the same data set used by Statista, it found that the average computer gaming subject is thirty-five years old and that women aged eighteen and above represent 33 per cent of the gaming population, whereas males aged eighteen and younger represent only 15 per cent (Entertainment Software Association, 2015). In Europe, the Interactive Software Federation of Europe completed a consumer study in 2012 conducted in 16 European countries, where they found a gender split of 55 per cent male subjects and 45 per cent female subjects, with 51 per cent of gaming subjects below the age of thirty-five (Interactive Software Federation of Europe, 2012). Similar numbers were also reported from Australia in a report issued in 2016 by the Interactive Games and Entertainment Association (Brand & Todhunter, 2015): The median age of computer gaming subjects is generally in the thirties and the gender split is evening out to a near 50/50 split, with just slightly more males. However, the Australian report also shows that young males (teens and early twenties) spend significantly more time on in-depth playing than females, while so-called ‘casual gaming’ is evenly distributed. Later in life, the gender balance for in-depth playing eventually evens out. However, significantly more women than men play at an in-depth level after the age of seventy.

The data sets of course offer much more that we could delve into. But this is not the aim here. We merely wish to underline that survey data points to a different reality than the popular media illustration described above. This can be linked to the enactment of the gamer as a concept or identity marker for the computer gaming subject. In the *Digital Australia* report referred to above, findings related to the question “Are you a gamer?” led to the following interpretation:

The term ‘gamer’ means different things to different people. For 38% of those surveyed, a gamer is any person who plays any kind of game, even if casually or rarely; for 62% a gamer is someone who has been playing for many years, plays often and plays in-depth games. A quarter said the term has a negative meaning. Only 27% of the adult sample identified themselves as a gamer. It is clear the role of games in culture is something distinct from other media. (Brand & Todhunter, 2015, p. 13)

The discussion of what a gamer is plays into a third enactment of reality, which might at first glance seem unrelated to that of the survey data sets. It is the reality of rhetoric in everyday computer gaming practices. A diverging and yet specific

terminology is used in these practices and mastery of the respective language spoken is therefore essential in the enactment of oneself as a gamer or ‘real’ computer game player (cf. Sundén, 2012; Pulos, 2013).

The gamer term came to haunt us within and across our respective empirical material and subsequent collective debates. As psychological researchers we did not intuitively differentiate gamers from players of computer games: The terminology seemed somewhat interchangeable. What became apparent, though, was that in the societal space of computer game-playing subjects, the two terms carry (at least) two very different meanings across different realities within the allegory enacted throughout our collective analyses (cf. again Law, 2004).

What then is a gamer? And what is a player? How are gamers and players, respectively, concerned with this terminology? How are they concerned about it? And most importantly for us: How are these concepts helpful in approximating the realities they deem relevant? In the context of Andersen’s unpublished Master thesis study (cf. Andersen, 2015), a young man called Michael stated:

[I]n my opinion a gamer is, well you know, he doesn’t necessarily have to use a lot of hours on it. He just needs to have the interest and be up to date with what is new and what is upcoming and all that. Study stuff: ‘Why is this good’ and all that. And I don’t want to spend time doing that.¹

Computer gaming subjects conceptualize the term in slightly different ways, as will be shown later. But they find common ground in highlighting time spent on the games as a relevant analytical category. In the above excerpt, Michael does not define himself as a gamer, one of his reasons being that he does not want to spend the amount of time necessary to study in-depth and master the game. In his view, one would need to spend more time and effort playing than he does and furthermore master the various challenges programmed into the game in order to be recognized as a gamer. If we additionally relate investment of time and effort in order to become seen as a gamer to the survey data provided above by Brand & Todhunter (2015), the label gamer becomes predominantly accessible to male players, as they statistically spend more time playing computer games.

Given this variety of concern-related realities, what then becomes important for us as researchers is what we find within and across these different analytical

1 This is a previously unpublished excerpt from an interview conducted in the context of a Master’s thesis project by one of the authors (cf. Andersen, 2015). It was translated from Danish into English by the authors.

entanglements (Haraway, 1997; Barad, 2007): How are the various realities, computer game worries and engagements interrelated – how do they render one another visible and/or invisible? And how do different theoretical apparatuses, including varying understandings of subjectivity, of positionings, of performativities, etc., given our participation in multiple empirical realities emerging from within everyday life, question and nuance these empirical realities?

OPTING FOR THEORETICALLY DIVERSE INQUIRIES INTO COMPUTER GAME CONCERNS

Psychology has been playing a crucial and much-debated role in the formulation and discussion of computer game concerns (cf. in particular Nielsen, 2018, this volume). Recent sociomaterial and new materialist psychologies, however, inquire into and challenge psychology's most visible *foundations* (Brown & Stenner, 2009). They emphasize the sociomaterial and material-discursive relationality of embodied human existence and foreground the complexity and processuality of human subjectivity, subject formation and practice, as well as the central role which non-human agents play in these relations.

The authors of this chapter share the conviction that sociomaterial and new materialist psychologies invite more relevant and interesting analyses of computer gaming practices and related concerns. They enable a revitalization of notions of computer game concerns that emerge from within lived everyday life, which potentially question the above-mentioned dominating, polarized ontological presumptions of concerns as either worries or engagements – instead of as both. All of us have worked with different and yet similar inspirations and manifestations of critical qualitative psychologies on computer game concerned questions before, which can be related to the two major sociomaterial movements within psychology:

On the one hand, there are movements of thought exploring *technology and materiality from the perspective of subjectivity*; on the other, there are movements theorising in terms of the *emergence of enacted sociomaterial arrangements*, carefully tracing the multiplicity of human and non human actors involved in the *mutual becoming of subjectivity and materiality*. (Schraube & Sørensen, 2013, p. 3, emphasis in original)

1) The first set of theories enacted by our author collective can roughly be termed *Practice Psychology*: It develops its questions on subjectivity and experience from within a historically arranged practice and seeks to make its theorizing relevant to

those subjects constituting the respective sociomaterial practice. It has roots in Marxian thinking, resonates with *Social Practice Theory* (e.g. Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 2003; Holland & Lave, 2009) and its reading of (*Cultural Historical*) *Activity Theory* (for an overview see Langemeyer & Nissen, 2011), and particularly manifests itself within the author collective as *Psychology from the Standpoint of the Subject* (Holzkamp, 2013; Motzkau & Schraube, 2015), with a focus on investigating the reciprocally constitutive human-technology relationship. Subjects create, through human practice, the technological arrangements that can potentially lead to emancipation as well as alienation from the conditions on which human everyday life is dependent. Conflictual-democratic, teleology-oriented inquiry into one another's experiencing of technological practice is a prerequisite for emancipating one's sociomaterial self-understanding from one-sided, alienating conceptualizations of everyday life (Chimirri, 2014; 2015).

2) A more emergentist conceptual approach brought into the collective inquiry is Karen Barad's *agential realism* (Barad, 2007), reengaged with Judith Butler's conceptualizations of subjectification and subject positioning (e.g. Butler, 1993). Barad emphasizes the entanglement of ontology and epistemology, as well as of matter and discourse, and offers conceptualizations such as *ethico-onto-epistemology* and *material-discursive intra-activity* to maintain the dynamic, mutual entangling and complex enactment of all phenomena. Together with Butler's strong sensitivity to processes of subject formation, her conceptualization of performativity and the continuous processuality involved, these conceptual perspectives enable particular kinds of refinements in qualitative new materialist and poststructuralist analyses (cf. Søndergaard, 2013; 2016).

In order to productively enact these partly conflictual theoretical grounds for arguing across sociomaterial practices, as well as across psychological and new materialist understandings of human subject formation and practice, this chapter furthermore proposes a methodology for collectively analysing empirical material. The aim of the analytical process is to challenge one another's researcher realities via allegory, ergo identifying commonalities as well as differences across practice-psychological, poststructuralist and new materialist psychological views on computer game concerns. Above all, it emphasizes the questions on computer gaming practices and concerns that are rendered possible through this collective methodology – and thus potentially more relevant and complex understandings of how computer game practices constitute a significant part of human everyday life and simultaneously can never be understood as isolated phenomena: Computer gaming practices and related concerns are always already related to other practices and concerns.

A COLLECTIVE METHODOLOGY FOR POSING QUESTIONS TO ONE ANOTHER'S COMPUTER GAME CONCERNS

For developing a methodology that follows and simultaneously challenges conceptual development and thus does justice to multiplying realities of inquiring into computer game concerns, we drew on a method originally developed from within design studies, but altered by a few adjustments. Design studies commonly propose solution-seeking, product-developing research designs and processes, thereby reducing the mutual mediation of social subjectivity and materiality to the designers' ability to determine material outcomes. Meanwhile, the explorative-iterative negotiation processes these design practices undergo before proposing a *solution* to a (pre-determined) *problem* tend to follow a relatively anti-deterministic rationale. Throughout the design process, prototypes for how to more precisely inquire into and understand problems and possible solutions are developed and *tested* together with other researchers, designers and/or stakeholders. Our author collective found this relational processuality of participatory design methodology to be particularly inspirational for our approach to posing collective questions to computer game concerns. As a helpful prototype for developing our methodology, we therefore built on Simonsen & Friberg's (2014) book chapter on *Collective analysis of qualitative data*. The authors adapted Brassard's (1989) *affinity diagramming* technique, which in turn is inspired by *grounded theory's* inductive methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1992).

Affinity diagramming renders it possible to relate collective brainstorming notes to one another across the various analytical foci the respective researchers (or others involved) bring into the workshop's brainstorming. Thereby a first collective categorization/generalization of what is at stake in the design and/or research process can be negotiated and approximated. Simonsen & Friberg (2014) then suggest attaining yet another generalization via *problem-mapping* (Lanzara & Mathiassen, 1985) or *diagnostic mapping*, as the authors call it in their modified version. Through diagnostic mapping, it is not only what is at stake (or the problem) that is negotiated and categorized, but also possible causes, consequences and ideas for solutions. This latter step seemed less helpful for our collective analysis, as we did not seek to design a product as a response to a delimited problem, but rather to enact multiplied and ambiguous realities of computer game concerns and problems, and the conceptual-analytical developments they call for. This keys into the aforementioned inspiration from Law's concept of the allegory, as we could use the collective analytical process in order to presence the nuances and complexity of an allegory that can show the multiplicity of, among others, gamer-player subjectivities created in and through the concerns with and about computer

gaming practices. From an agential realist perspective, one could say that we expanded the apparatus of inquiry in order to diffractively reread the question of computer game concerns through a multiplicity of empirical materials as well as through various analytical-conceptual frameworks. *Diffraction* refers to an analytical approach in which realities move through each other like waves, and by those kinds of movements enact still other, new realities: “Diffraction is meant to disrupt linear and fixed causalities, and to work toward ‘more promising interference patterns’” (van der Tuin, 2011, p. 26; cf. also Jensen, 2015; 2016).

For our purposes, we thus primarily decided to adapt the design studies’ affinity diagramming technique as a means of approximating a collective understanding of what may be at stake in specific empirical descriptions that we had previously generated across a variety of research projects. Brainstorming notes were created by each of us while the researcher who generated the respective empirical material read out the description (observational data, interviews), or while we collectively read/watched material (interview transcripts, a video recording).

More specifically, the empirical material consisted of the following, previously unpublished data sets that were all translated by the authors from Danish to English for the purpose of writing this chapter:

- Field notes from a project on bullying and violent computer games in an after-school centre (for children generally aged ten to fourteen). This material is part of a larger set of empirical materials produced in relation to a project on bullying among children in school (2007-2012) (cf. e.g. Schott & Søndergaard, 2014; Søndergaard, 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016).
- Interview transcripts from a project on gender and gaming among adult *World of Warcraft* (Blizzard Entertainment, 2004) players (cf. Andersen, 2015).
- Interview transcripts from an ongoing project on the practices of computer gaming subjects, generally aged fifteen to seventeen, in a boarding school (cf. Wulff Kristiansen, 2015).

The questions we came to pose to one another’s empirical material at the collective analysis workshop emerged from empirical questions posed and concerns formulated around, by and together with gaming subjects while conducting ethnographically inspired work situated in everyday computer gaming practices. As mentioned above, our different onto-epistemological approaches enact different realities. Thus, in merging our different empirical material we do not triangulate data to find one singular reality (e.g. Flick, 2014), but rather we explode various realities into new, emerging questions about computer games.

DISCERNING COMPUTER GAME CONCERNS COLLECTIVELY: GETTING CHALLENGED BY ONE ANOTHER AND EVERYDAY LIFE

In what follows, we will enact and play with a range of realities found in collectively inquiring into or cutting through our empirical data in various ways to bring out the ambiguities, tensions, multiplicities of understandings, positionings and subject formations concerned with and about computer game playing. We exemplify this by picking up on the previously introduced question of how the realities of being and becoming a gamer play into (gendered and generationed) concerns formulated by computer gaming subjects; specify this further by inquiring into the ontology of being-becoming a non/gamer; and finally explore how this relates to more contradictory realities of experiencing computer game violence. While the following examples and analyses were selected in order to particularly highlight questions and concerns of gamer ontology, gender and violence, it is important to mention that this represents merely a small excerpt of the discussions and analyses which took place at the workshop – selected in order to provide readers a first impression of how a collective analysis can open up alternative realities. At the same time, focusing on gamer-gender-violence concerns always implies rendering other concerns less visible. It is therefore crucial to ensure that any analysis is situated in the everyday practice and concerns of those concerned, in our case the computer gaming subjects. The non-academic relevance of the following analyses' findings/realities cannot be presupposed, but must be iteratively re-explored together with those concerned (which includes the researchers as well) and resituated accordingly.

What Is a Gamer?

As illustrated earlier, the concept of being or not being a gamer is one that is enacted within and across the digital/analogue realities of everyday computer gaming practices, i.e. based on manifold enactments across various sociomaterial arrangements: Everyday life is lived across many digital/analogue spaces and with many digital/analogue social relations. The rhetoric of gaming could thus be said to hold iterative power (cf. Butler, 1993) across both players/gamers and avatars' subjectivity (cf. Sundén, 2012; Eklund, 2015), and thereby be a deciding factor in determining which differences come to matter in related realities (cf. Law, 2004; Barad, 2007). The following analysis will elaborate on the relevance of inquiring into this entanglement through further empirical enactments.

Firstly, Michael, whom we already met earlier in this chapter, did not view himself as being a gamer. He deems himself unworthy of the term as he does not spend enough *time* on different games, nor enough time on what one might conceptualize as *mastering* the different games. Another subject who actually does view herself as a gamer was asked to define the term. Karina came to define it thusly:

Karina [...] someone who likes to play computer games, and I actually think the degree [of time spent] can be a little different. There are those who are hard-core, sitting there for 23 hours a day in front of their computer, just playing World of Warcraft. And then there are those who just play two to three hours, but I would still call them gamers. But those just playing Facebook games – they are not it! They need to leave [laughter].

Interviewer Then where is the limit in terms of being a gamer?

Karina We are on the top scale, time-wise, and you need to have the will and understanding for it. Just because someone plays World of Warcraft for half an hour, they don't become a gamer, obviously. They lack that 'need'. They must be hooked. They need to think: 'this is great. I want to do this again tomorrow'. I think that is it. And then the entire medium, you must be a little hooked on it.

Karina understands herself as a gamer. What she deems necessary in order to become worthy of the title relates to a need to play: You “must be hooked” on a game, before truly becoming a gamer. And a gamer is thus not the same as, but actually distinct from, simply being a player of computer games. There is furthermore a clear distinction between gamers or players of computer games and players of browser or Facebook games. What emerges is a kind of elitist ideal, where performativity and a form of professional vigour are important for the iteration of being or not being a gamer. Such as any other fixating categorization, this ideal of the gamer can be enacted as both inclusive and exclusive, and we could point to several instances of gamer also being used as a denigrating term.

Relating these interview realities of being a gamer to the above survey data realities calls upon an additional analysis, which enquires into how analogue gender plays into virtual encounters and bodies – given that time played, which is generally greater for male than female gamers, appears to be a discerning factor in obtaining recognition as a gamer, and that statistically speaking the analogue male gamer is more prevalent (cf. above with reference to Brand & Todhunter, 2015). It may also be of relevance to inquire into the game industry's co-produc-

tion of this ideal category and its entangledness with other social material-discursive ideals – for instance how the professionalization of a certain gaming practice is enacted in relation to sports-like events and/or future job security.

But back to our empirical examples of female gendered gaming subjects interviewed in the context of Andersen's (2015) study:

- Interviewer What do you associate with being a gamer?
- Lene Ehm. That, that you play primarily every day, basically. But also that you are committed, it's not just on a leisure-basis, but something you're passionate about. You have to always want to be better at your game.

Formerly, Lene identified with being a gamer. This changed, however, due to several conflicts arising in relation to other sociomaterial, intra-acting arrangements, among others pregnancy and her studies. What she provides us with via her reflections, is an elaboration of the performance aspect of being a gamer. She herself is then capable of analysing the complexities of her own everyday reality: How to be or not to be a gamer?

Non/Gamers? And Their Concerns

In this part we move from adults discussing what a gamer is, to teenage boys at a boarding school negotiating a gamer/non-gamer identity, as well as discussing their related frustrations and concerns. During a group discussion arranged by the researcher, they addressed their concerns concerning computer games: They painted a picture of how they were engaged with their computer games, but met with specific resistance from those around them in various ways – which was something the boys themselves had become concerned about. Engaging in computer gaming practices required special allowances to be acceptable. This emerged in a group discussion on the difference between engaging in playing soccer and computer games, conducted by one of the authors in the context of his Master thesis (cf. Wulff Kristiansen, 2015). Both could be regarded as activities where teams of players cooperate to score more points than an opposing team – sometimes in leagues, sometimes in single matches:

- Interviewer-2 The view that they [parents, teachers, some of their peers] kind of looked down on it [playing computer games] you were talking about...
- Ben I really find that, like, annoying. It... my life, when people look down on people who play computer games, that it's nerdy, it's wrong, then no... it's like

playing soccer for eight hours a day, or doing sports. We are just doing something else we find awesome for eight hours a day, so I've always been, like, annoyed with people. Also just, you know, when people have said it was nerdy and stupid and looked down on us just because we were playing computer games.

Alex Do you mean the teachers or the pupils of the boarding school?

Interviewer-2 Just the view you were just saying that the school has, and how they wanted to reduce playing time and try to get you to play less, or at least that's what I'm understanding from what you're saying?

Interviewer-1 Is it more acceptable here to play soccer than to play computer games?

Alex Yes, totally! Yes! And it's like that everywhere, and it really pisses me off!

Carl They just want to, I mean soccer is social, you know, but...

Ben But it...

Carl For example, like, because with soccer you are many people out together, but World of Warcraft is just as social for us, because we're just together in there, you know. Like, we sit together and play, and that is just as nice for us, you know, rather than... because it's not really our thing to go out and play soccer most of the time, but we're still social together.

The boys throughout the group interview expressed a strong sense of frustration with the view they felt was attached to the practice of playing computer games – that it was “nerdy”, “wrong” and something “people look down on”. The boys point out how they feel this affective reality is being enacted “everywhere” and how it “really annoys [us] a lot.”

The strong entanglement of time and control in computer game practices is a theme seen often in computer game research (cf. Aarsand, 2018, this volume; also Martin & Abmann, 2018, this volume). Where playing soccer, reading, etc. for hours or days is fine, strict time control is often enacted when computer games are involved. This becomes especially interesting when seeing how the boys from the boarding school speak about these constraints. On the one hand they express strong levels of frustration with the constraints imposed on them, while at the same time they express gratitude towards friends who got them to engage in things other than computer games. They point out how girlfriends and social lives at times run counter to playing computer games, while stressing how spending whole days or weekends playing computer games with the boys can become a form of male bonding experience. This multiple enactment of affect, where feelings of community, shame, frustration, defensiveness, attraction to an activity, etc. are created, is a perspective that requires approaches sensitive to the perspectives and affective

realities of situated computer gaming subjects. Furthermore, entangled conceptualizations of time must thus be rendered questionable, and how they play into the arrangement of everyday practices and related concerns. While most commonly, wasted versus sensible use of chronological time is particularly emphasized in concerns about (excessive) computer game playing, more circular understandings could open up for understanding how alternative time realities and affectivities can be something actively sought by gaming subjects.

Concerning Gender and Embodiment (and Violence)

Everyday concerns about and with gaming not only deal with how dedicated computer gaming subjects are or should be, or with how this dedication is related to gender norms, but often also focus upon the potential aggressive and violent aspects of many gaming scenarios, designs and practices. In the material generated within the previously mentioned project on bullying (Søndergaard, 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016), one theme that repeatedly emerged across the material centred on the meaning and mattering of violence, aggression and what some would term *playing with evil*. The play with such phenomena seems to engage children and young people intensely. In much research literature concerning computer games, it is precisely these games that are the focus of shared anxiety and concerns among adults: What does this playing with violence and with ‘evil’ do to the children and young people, who spend hours engaged in avatar shooting and combat scenarios?

We came, however, to pose different questions, such as: How is analogue/digital violence and evil enacted and processed, in the lives of which computer gaming subjects and in which games? More specifically: How is it picked up, (trans)formed, lived, embraced and/or rejected? And what, for instance, does the ironic conduct of digital violent acts mean in different situations to differently positioned computer gaming subjects under which life circumstances (cf. also Søndergaard, 2013; 2016)?

Entangled within the theme of aggression and evil, a variety of social categories were materially-discursively enacted across the different sets of empirical examples. Gender, for instance – as particularly emphasized here in order to connect it to the above analyses – intra-acted and saturated seemingly violent gaming scenarios in various forms. One case, written down as field notes by Søndergaard in the context of a large research project on bullying among children at school (cf. Schott & Søndergaard, 2014; Søndergaard 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016), recounts an episode which took place in a computer room at an afterschool centre filled with children aged ten to twelve:

A group of boys and a girl are playing Counter-Strike. The pedagogue has left the room and the children turn up the sound on all machines. They shout at each other and at their avatars as the game moves on:

Mick shouts angrily: ‘Daniel, you!’ and hits Daniel’s analogue body hard the moment after his avatar body is hit by Daniel’s avatar. ‘It’s because you play every day, man!’

The others get frustrated with Daniel because he keeps shooting them. They hit and kick him continuously (analogue space) – but Daniel stays seemingly unaffected, bends a bit to one side or the other to counter the hitting (analogue space) while his avatar (digital space) keeps moving and killing. The atmosphere is intense.

‘Yeah, I got him!’ James shouts out loud in triumph, having killed Sarah’s avatar.

Sarah: ‘It was a her!’

An avatar soldier has been whacked, falls forward, blood splashes everywhere. Getting no response Sarah shouts again, this time louder, that the man on the screen is a her – and next time it works. Ryan shouts: ‘I whacked her!’ and cheers loudly. Sarah says with badly hidden contempt in her voice: ‘Yeah! It wasn’t that hard, was it?’ stating her satisfaction with the correction of the gendered naming.

In this small field note excerpt, one of the themes that becomes evident is a negotiation of a gendering of violence: Is it possible to acknowledge war, killing, soldiering and fighting as female agency – or would a girl doing those things have to be addressed as male? The design of the game points out the gendering of such phenomena as male. All avatars are obviously male. But Sarah calls that premise into question: What kind of agentic embodiment counts in a game, the digital or the analogue – does the male virtual body demand male naming with *he*, or is it the subject’s female body that by virtual agency through a male avatar sets the premise for a *she*-naming? Where is the analytical cut to be enacted – between analogue and digital body? Between bodies and agencies regardless of analogue and digital situatedness? And what do the children make of the avatar agency offered to them in the games they play – which kinds of negotiations of social and in this case gendered order and gendered becoming do they engage in, how do they reiterate or transform that order, how do agential cuts between analogue and digital premises matter, dissolve, re-matter in transformed versions; and how do they hamper, assist or ease the desires and strategies of negotiation among the children?

Had we chosen not to selectively highlight the gender-violence entanglement above, still further questions to the empirical example could be raised – which, among others, could more generally point to the productive-creative side of violence: Why is it so relevant for our societies to uphold practices of violence and why is it so fascinating to many that computer game designers are attracted to

recurrently reproducing this topic? Are computer game practices not all-entangled with other practices that build on this fascination, both in digital and analogue terms? In any case: Concerns *about* violence must be considered together with *being concerned with* violence, noting as well how violence is co-constitutive of and co-constitutes the social and material-discursive arrangements we enact through the practices of everyday life.

CONCLUSION: COLLECTIVELY INQUIRING INTO ONE ANOTHER'S COMPUTER GAME CONCERNS

When delving into the empirical everyday practices of computer gaming human subjects, being concerned or engaged with and being concerned or worried about become entangled with one another and play a crucial role in shaping realities, such as understandings of what it means to be and become a gaming subject, as gamer, player, or none of these. The most visible and reproduced realities of concern, though, hinder a more nuanced, ambiguous and complex view of how this may create empirical problems for the gaming subjects in their respective daily lives – thus the concerns of those people computer game research is concerned with and about tend to become rendered invisible.

This is why this chapter aimed to propose psychological concepts inspired by sociomaterial practice psychology and new materialism as well as a methodology of collective analysis, both of which to keep the ontology of concerns and thereby our analytical enactments fluid and sensitive to gaming subjects' everyday lives. In consequence it argued for both a combined, ambiguous conceptual framework that calls for shedding a more contrasting light on computer game practices – a framework that situates psychological research about concerns within the everyday life of gaming subjects – as well as for a methodology of collective analysis, which enquires into this conceptual framework and simultaneously into the preferred realities of each member of the author collective. In order to pose questions and enact knowledge that is relevant to those concerned, then, psychology needs to ground its inquiries in everyday social material-discursive practice together with those concerned – and to have that knowledge explicitly inquired into and challenged by other onto-epistemological, theoretical-empirical realities.

Thus what the chapter calls for is an invitation to collectively inquire into one another's ontological presumptions about computer game concerns, irrespective of whether in academia, in non-academic professional practices, regulatory institutions, the industry, families or any other everyday life practice, and irrespective

of whether one considers oneself or others to be a gamer, a player, a game designer, a programmer, a regulator, a wholesaler, a parent or a researcher.

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