LUND UNIVERSITY

Playing Productive: Pragmatic Uses of Gaming

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2009

Document Version:
Peer reviewed version (aka post-print)

Link to publication

Total number of authors:
1

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AUTHOR KEYWORDS

productivity, play, mothers, pragmatic-uses-of-gaming

ABSTRACT

What does productivity mean in the context of mothers who play computer games? This paper tries to answer that question using a questionnaire sent out to a number of adult female gamers who are also mothers. The answers received show that mothers' play-related productivity lies far from the game-cultural productivity of clan play or the practice of subversive or artistic modding [1, 2, 3, 4].

The playing practices of gaming mothers can be read as performed, interpreted and expressed – by themselves and others – as producing practical outcomes, producing "family" and family values. Play is turned into a pragmatic activity with practically useful outcomes. To play computer games appears motivated by its sensible functions, its appropriateness in regards to the family's or somebody's "need"; its usefulness as a relaxant and its suitability to fill short time slots rather than catering with mere "fun" or mindless time consumption.

Gaming mothers might be invisible but not unproductive; their culture of participation is different and may even require playing productive.

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