

Article

Taking a Dialogical Approach to Guiding Gaming Practices in a Non-Family Context

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Abstract

As the inclusion of youths in decision-making around their media use is increasingly normalized in the family context in the Global North, one could ask how media literacy support can be adjusted for youths in vulnerable situations, situations where their family cannot be involved in regulating their media use, such as gaming. Drawing on interviews conducted in 2021 with 13 unaccompanied refugee youths (16–25 years old) and 10 social actors working in eight organizations, this study investigates the gaming habits of such youths in Norway and the ways in which relevant social actors are involved in guiding their gaming practices. This study shows that social actors' views on gaming vary according to their level of involvement in the youths' housing arrangements. Whilst those working directly with such arrangements are involved in direct or indirect rule-setting for gaming practices, others struggle to find their role within this context. The youths, however, emphasize the importance of gaming in building relationships with other unaccompanied refugees, learning about the culture of socialization, and mitigating trauma. Moreover, there is a lack of a dialogical approach to welfare services' regulation of these youths' gaming practices. Employing such an approach could not only give these youths a voice but also expand gaming's democratization ability beyond the family context.

Keywords

active meditation; digital care labor; gaming practices; refugee youths; social actors; video games

Issue

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1. Introduction

The point of departure for youth media literacy education should be the pre-existing usage and media experience patterns among youth, as Leurs et al. (2018) argued. Several recent studies have shown that, among children and young people, gaming has become a popular daily activity (Børsum, 2012). Moreover, scholars have further argued that “media literacy programs should seriously engage with the deeper cultural significance of media shifts,” such as the ways in which youths make sense of gaming and game cultures (Squire et al., 2005, p. 15). Digital games are interactive multimodal texts that “combine written and spoken language, images, graphics, and symbols with sound” (Steinkuehler, 2010, p. 93), interactive multimodal texts which create learning arenas for new literacies (Gee, 2003). Although gaming represents

valuable social capital and an important developmental arena for children's social skills (Dralega & Corneliussen, 2018b), gaming is also controversial, as gaming can negatively impact family life, health, and school performance (Gregersen, 2018).

As a consequence of gaming practices in family contexts, much of the media literacy support available is geared toward helping parents instill good gaming practices in their children (i.e., Norwegian Media Authority, 2021). In the Global North, active mediation that includes youths in decision-making around gaming practices is both normalized as an ideal parenting practice (Azam, 2022; Clark, 2013) and argued to have a democratizing effect on family life (Clark & Brites, 2018; Seddighi et al., 2022). As such, research on the gaming practices of youths without families in Norway can contribute to our understanding of the role of welfare

services in gaming mediation and thus expand the democratizing effects of a dialogical approach beyond the family context. This study investigates the gaming habits of unaccompanied refugee youths in Norway as well as how social actors that provide support for this group guide them toward good gaming practices.

In 2015, due to the so-called refugee crisis, the number of asylum seekers in Norway increased to 31,145 (Directorate of Immigration, 2015b), of which 5,480 were unaccompanied minors (Directorate of Immigration, 2015a). In the years leading up to this present study in 2021, the number sharply decreased, with 2,305 asylum seekers arriving in 2019 and 1,386 in 2020 (Directorate of Immigration, 2020b), of which only 89 were unaccompanied minors in 2020 (Directorate of Immigration, 2020a). However, due to the ongoing war in Ukraine, new refugee flows, with an overrepresentation of children and adolescents, are being seen across Europe and Norway in 2022 (Norwegian Institute of Public Health, 2022).

Refugee youths are not a homogeneous group; they have different needs, challenges, and resources. They come from different countries with great variation in their characteristics (Sirin et al., 2018). For instance, in terms of literacy, while 47.9% of young people between the ages of 15 and 25 in South Sudan can read and write (The United Nations Association of Norway, 2020b), that figure in Syria is almost double at 92.5% (The United Nations Association of Norway, 2020a). Moreover, there is a large variation in the extent to which war destroyed basic infrastructure, such as schools, and thus how long young people may have been out of school before arriving in their new country (Warriner et al., 2020). Despite these variations, youths with refugee backgrounds have several experiences in common. These youths are in vulnerable situations as they are going through psychological, social, and cultural changes without a close caregiver (Lidén et al., 2013). They have often lost one or more family members, been forced to leave their loved ones, or experienced physical violence. For example, research on Syrian child refugees in Turkey showed that 79% had lost family members and 66% had closely witnessed physical violence (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015). Post-traumatic stress disorder is common among this group of adolescents, and the fact that some flee without a caregiver can exacerbate the condition (Sirin et al., 2018).

This article introduces data collected in Norway in 2021 from interviews with 13 unaccompanied refugee youths and 10 social actors working closely with them. Since most unaccompanied asylum seekers are young men, the scope of research is limited to this population. The youths interviewed were between 16 and 25 years old and had come from Afghanistan, Syria, South Sudan, and Palestine. All the interviewees, both youths and social actors, were recruited from high schools, adult education centers, and child welfare organizations.

This article is structured as follows: First, a contextualization of the study is presented, followed by an

introduction to the methods of inquiry, after which the analysis is presented in three main sections focusing on “social actors’ guidance for good gaming practices,” “youths’ perception of their own gaming practices,” and the “cultural and environmental gaming backgrounds.” In Section 4.1, I present how social actors identify youths’ poor gaming habits and guide them toward good practices. In Section 4.2, I introduce how these youths narrate their own gaming practices as beneficial, such as building friendships and mitigating trauma. In Section 4.3, I discuss how gaming practices that youths understand as beneficial can vary according to their social and cultural backgrounds. The gaming environment might also influence their gaming practices, which should be taken into consideration when creating good gaming practice guidance for them. The article ends with a discussion and conclusion that considers the empirical findings in relation to earlier research.

2. Contextualization of the Study

A child and media survey by the Norwegian Media Authority (Norwegian Media Authority, 2020) showed that 86% of children and young people between the ages of 9 and 18 play computer games. Moreover, the “EU Kids” study showed that online gaming is one of the most common daily activities among children (Smahel et al., 2020); for example, 43% of children in Norway between the ages of 9 and 16 play online games daily (Smahel et al., 2020, p. 26), and immigrant youths are no exception (Dralega & Corneliussen, 2018a). Indeed, research on digital media use among immigrant youths has highlighted not only how this group navigates identity through such cross-national platforms (Anguiano, 2011) but also how they use these mediums to maintain family ties across borders by creating a feeling of togetherness that transcends borders (Diminescu, 2008; Leurs, 2014). Further research also posits that gaming practices among youths with immigrant or refugee backgrounds contribute to building friendships in local communities and strengthening networks at school (Dralega & Corneliussen, 2018a; Karam, 2018).

As gaming has become a popular everyday activity among young people, research often looks at their video gaming habits within the family context (Aarsand & Aronsson, 2009; Ask, 2011; Dralega et al., 2019), “which is a particular and central context in Western sociality in that it is considered by most as existentially crucial and hence highly moral” (Helle-Valle & Storm-Mathisen, 2008, p. 62). Time spent gaming is argued to cause conflict with family and school obligations (Gregersen, 2018; Linderoth & Bennerstedt, 2007), making gaming highly controversial (The Ministry of Culture, 2018). As digital gaming has become a large, profitable industry with the technology to offer access via multiple platforms (including PCs, consoles, tablets, and mobile phones), many games now provide a world that continues even after the player logs out. For instance, violence in digital games is

one of the most persistent sources of controversy in the family and the scientific communities, with moral panics frequently arising around this issue in multiple Western countries (Elson & Ferguson, 2013; Markey & Ferguson, 2017). Many fear the harm virtual violence might cause the players and the real-life aggression that could ensue (Anderson & Dill, 2000).

These studies show both how gaming can become a site of conflict and how young people and their families negotiate the sociocultural rules and values determining good gaming practices (Aarsand, 2018; Seddighi et al., 2018). Parents can engage in regulation and rule setting using indirect strategies, such as limiting time use on gaming by introducing other activities such as sports, or direct strategies, such as shutting off routers after a certain time (Smette et al., 2016). Helle-Valle and Storm-Mathisen (2008) argue that when parents are not involved in children's gaming, its positive aspects go unrecognized. This impacts how gaming is regulated in the family (Dralega et al., 2019). However, active mediation—i.e., practices that include youths in decision making around their media use in the family context (Clark, 2013), understood as a process of the democratization of the family—has become increasingly idealized and normalized as positive parental mediation in the Global North (Clark, 2013). Research on the regulation of gaming in the context of immigrant families highlights various mechanisms ranging from “dictatorial (helicopter) parenting to conflictual, to self-regulation (non-intervention), and finally to dialogical and participatory regulation” (Dralega et al., 2019, p. 239). Dralega et al. (2019) argue that parental mediation varies both by the family situation and parents' knowledge of and interest in video games.

Adjusting media literacy support to youths in vulnerable situations requires an acknowledgment of the ways in which under-researched youths perceive their own gaming practices. For instance, a recent pilot study on digital media use among youths with mental vulnerabilities showed that digital media—which can be gamified or amplified by algorithms designed to capture users' attention—may increase marginalization and mental vulnerabilities (Stoilova et al., 2021). Furthermore, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on youths raised questions about their well-being and ways of coping with such unusual and uncertain circumstances. Research on youth gaming practices during the pandemic shows that gaming practice patterns changed during this time (Barr & Copeland-Stewart, 2022). For instance, the number of games played in multiplayer mode increased, indicating the growing desire to socialize. The study also showed that gaming has helped to relieve stress and combat loneliness during this time, findings which align with research on the impact of gaming on youths with mental illnesses (Pine et al., 2020) and studies on gaming's usefulness in reducing stress and anxiety (Pallavicini et al., 2021). However, the effects strongly depend on the game's specific characteristics; not all video games have such effects (Pallavicini et al., 2021).

These experiences of gaming should be included in social actors' guidance for good gaming practices. As such, this study gives voice to the gaming experiences of unaccompanied refugee youths in order to inspire the development of dialogical approaches to guiding good gaming practices in relevant welfare services.

3. Methodology

This article introduces data collected in Norway in 2021 from interviews with 13 unaccompanied refugee youths and 10 social actors working closely with them. The interviewed youths were all young men between the ages of 16 and 24, and both youth and social actor interviewees were recruited from high schools, adult education centers, and child welfare organizations. The youths were either living in co-housing arrangements overseen by child welfare services or studying at high schools or adult education centers. The interviews lasted from 40 minutes to one hour.

This study was approved by the Norwegian Center for Research Data. The names of all informants have been anonymized, and the research process followed the ethical guidelines for research with and for children and young people, as prescribed by the National Research Ethics Guidelines for Social Sciences and Humanities (Den nasjonale forskningsetiske komité, 2021) and the International Ethical Guidance for Research Involving Children (Ethical Research Involving Children, 2020). These guidelines establish the right to informed consent adapted to age for children and youth.

3.1. Interviews with Youths

Through semi-structured interviews, this study sought to understand what video games mean to youths in the context of their everyday routines. These interviews included questions about their housing arrangements and everyday routines, the video games they play, any conflicts they experienced due to gaming, and the media literacy support they received as a guide to good practice. The youths were given the option of participating in either individual or group interviews. As a result, there were two group interviews held with three to four participants each and six individual interviews. Those who chose to be interviewed in a group were either classmates or roommates and were younger than those who agreed to individual interviews. In one case, a contact person from child welfare services was also present in an individual interview, at the young adolescent interviewee's request. All interviews were conducted face-to-face.

Thirteen youths from Afghanistan, Syria, South Sudan, and Palestine participated in this study. They ranged in age from 16 to 24 years, with an average of 19. At the time of the interview, each had lived in Norway between two to six years, with an average of three. Most attended school full-time, and a few combined

school and work. Many of these youths had also lived as refugees for one to two years before arriving in Norway.

3.2. Interviews With Social Actors

Ten social actors were interviewed for this study, all of whom worked closely with unaccompanied refugee youths in Norway, but in different roles: five worked in co-housing arrangements for unaccompanied minor asylum seekers; two worked as school advisors for minority pupils; two worked at child welfare organizations; one was a teacher at an adult education center. In the interviews, social actors were asked how their specific institution worked with this group of youths, how video games could become a topic of discussion amongst themselves and the youths, and how their institution supported and guided youths to combat problematic gaming habits. Only one of these interviews was conducted face-to-face; the others were all held online.

3.3. Reference Group and the Co-Researcher

For this study, I used a reference group consisting of three social workers: an advisor for minority pupils, a social worker at child welfare services, and a teacher at an adult education center in Norway. The study also had a co-researcher, a young man who had come to Norway as an asylum seeker when he was a minor. Both the reference group and co-researcher provided consultation during the recruitment process and in the preparation of interview guides.

3.4. Language Considerations

Limited knowledge of the Norwegian language and a low level of trust in such studies made the recruitment process challenging. Indeed, many of the young participants did not want their interviews recorded, and thus notes taken in the interview are the only record of these conversations. This had implications for how the study is presented here, as I had access to fewer direct quotes. As I am fluent in Dari, several interviews were conducted in this language and resulted in richer content than those in Norwegian. I translated the Dari interviews first into Norwegian and then into English.

4. Analysis

This study views active mediation centered around a dialogical approach to the regulation of gaming as an ideal guide to good gaming practice among youths without close caregivers. As such, this research investigates both the gaming practices of unaccompanied refugee youths and how social actors working with these youths provide good gaming guidance. The analysis here is divided into three sections: the first focuses on social actors' reflections on their engagement with guiding good gaming practices; the second focuses on youths' practices

through the lens of their positive reflections on gaming practices; the third is also focused on youths' practices, but through the lens of how their social and cultural backgrounds could influence gaming practices.

4.1. Social Actors' Guidance for Good Gaming Practices

The social actors working at child welfare services, who were involved in these youths' housing arrangements, explained how they set rules and guided the youths toward good gaming practices. Due to a lack of official routines or guidance, these individuals often reflected on their own familial gaming habits and roles as mothers and fathers when supporting unaccompanied refugee youths. Using phrases such as "I have a son that plays games," "this is what I do at home," and "this is a game that my son used to play," the social actors reflected on their role in guiding good gaming practices. The social actors described the indirect strategies (Smette et al., 2016) they used to regulate gaming habits, such as offering help with homework, which they saw as a key way to help reduce the time youths spend on gaming.

Sara is a social worker at a child welfare service house for unaccompanied refugee youths. She explained that gaming at night is a challenging practice, as it can cause difficulties related to school performance: "How will these youths wake up and concentrate at school if they are going to play all night? It becomes a problem if they have had too little sleep because of playing games."

Indeed, for most interviewees, good gaming practices were measured by how much time the youths spent gaming. Sara explained further: "They play very, very much. If we talk about video games, it's about wanting to set boundaries. Some of these youths want to play all the time. So sometimes we say, 'Oh my God, you need to slow down!'"

Here, Sara gives an example of a direct rule-making strategy for shutting down gaming activities after several hours of gaming. Whether or not these social workers identify a gaming practice as needing to be challenged relates to the type of gaming device used. While the social actors often understood that a situation where several roommates play PlayStation together was good practice, they saw playing on mobiles as open to challenge. The social workers expressed their frustrations and did not know how to guide the youths who played in this way. Using a mobile gives youths the liberty to play anywhere at any time—including in the bedrooms and at night. These gaming practices are likely seen as negative because social workers primarily use indirect and direct strategies of regulation rather than a dialogical approach to setting gaming rules. As Roger, a social worker at the child welfare service, says: "Some time ago, we had huge problems with some guys who used to play all the time. They had their phones with them in the living room, and they used to play in the bedroom at night."

Moreover, child welfare services' gaming practices are not relevant for youths who come to Norway after

the age of 18 or as unaccompanied minor refugees who now live alone. Unlike social actors working in child welfare services, high school teachers and advisors are not usually involved in regulating gaming habits.

Oda is one of the interviewed advisors for minority pupils (*minoritetsrådgiver* in Norwegian) in high schools. Advisors for minority pupils work for the Directorate of Integration and Diversity, and from high schools with a high number of pupils of immigrant background. Such advisors work closely with themes that the Directorate identifies as relevant to ethnic minority pupils—such as “negative social control, forced marriage, and honor-related violence” (Directorate of Integration and Diversity, n.d.). As Oda explained, they also help immigrant youths know their rights and access the Norwegian welfare system, e.g., applications for student grants. Oda admitted that she had not talked about video games with the youth, although she thought many of the pupils likely played extensively:

I know a lot of these youths play a lot. There are many who play FIFA at night, and no one is there to say, “Now you have to go to bed.” It is demanding. There are many students who have a lot of absences.

The advisors did not mention any attempts at indirect strategies for regulating gaming practices, although they believed that poor school attendance and performance could result from poor gaming practices. Here again, time spent gaming is seen as a potential reason for low school performance. Furthermore, Oda conflated questionable gaming practices with what she described as this group of youths’ characteristics:

This group is overrepresented among those who remain in high school for a longer period of time. This is due to language challenges. They take the first year of high school over two years. They follow all the subjects in the first year, but they only get a grade in half the subjects. The next year, they will take exams in the remaining subjects. So, in the second year, they have a lot of downtime.

In contrast to Oda, Janne (another advisor for minority pupils) saw trauma as the source of these youths’ frequent sleep disorders, but still conflated their gaming practices:

Sleep is often a big problem for these youth. This is often due to trauma or nightmares and things they have experienced that are not so good. Many of them say that they spend time on the mobile, whether it’s playing or talking to friends elsewhere who are awake. So, I know that many of these youths play all night, and it quickly becomes a kind of strategy to get rid of the pain that comes at night.

The social actors not working in child welfare services or housing arrangements understood the need to support youths to establish good gaming practices. However, they also saw a limit in their “mandate” in this regard. Frida, a teacher at an adult education center, explained how often she reaches the “limits” of her mandate:

I am a teacher, and I have a different role than a teacher from their home country. There, they have learned to show respect for teachers. Maybe there are many things they would not tell me. Maybe there could have been other support, someone in a different role as a social worker or advisor at the adult education center who could have helped them.

Here, Frida pinpointed how teachers in the youths’ countries of origin are much more authoritative than in Norway. Thus, being accustomed to an authoritative teacher, these youths would likely have difficulties expressing their challenges to their Norwegian teachers, which prevents teachers in adult education centers from actively mediating their gaming. On her part, Frida reflected on this challenge as a limit to her mandate as a teacher.

For Oda, on the other hand, as an advisor for minorities at high schools, the limit to her involvement was not drawn by her mandate. In her work, gaming only becomes a topic of discussion when it creates conflict in the family or private sphere:

I have some pupils who told me that they wanted to move away from home as they are not allowed to do what they want—which is to play games all night. Then, teach the pupils that stopping playing games at half past 10 is completely reasonable for most people. It becomes natural to talk about such things. Then we can invite parents to a meeting.

Oda’s reflection shows that the limit of engagement in mediation and rule-setting is not necessarily related to the limits of one’s mandate, but whether a questionable gaming practice can become a topic of dialogue between youths and advisors in high school. In Oda’s example, parents make questionable gaming practices into a topic of discussion outside the family context.

4.2. Youths’ Perception of Their Own Gaming Practices

Most of the youths interviewed had not played video games before coming to Norway. They learned about gaming either in asylum reception centers or the co-housing arrangements offered by child welfare services. These young men were immediately introduced to the socialization culture of gaming in Norway upon their arrival (Dralega & Corneliussen, 2018b), and David (a 20-year-old from South Sudan who now lives alone) described their need to learn gaming:

I used to play football a lot when I lived in an asylum reception center, but the other boys were on PlayStation a lot. I had no experience with games. I just looked at them. Imagine that there are four people, and three of you are doing something together, but the fourth person cannot. I thought, I must learn to play.

Further, in an attempt to become “good enough,” the youths spend a lot of time gaming with other youths of similar backgrounds. As David explained: “In the beginning, I used to lose the games every time I played. I would just cheer on the boys [he laughs]. Sometimes, the guys let me play PlayStation. But now I’ve gotten better at FIFA.”

The young men want to meet the expectation of being “good enough” so they can mingle with others playing video games. Indeed, both those who learned to play before coming to Norway and those who learned in Norway described the need to socialize with fellow unaccompanied refugees and build relationships through gaming. As Ali (a 21-year-old living alone who played video games before coming to Norway) explained:

We used to play video games [in the asylum reception centers], but not many could play. Many had not seen video games before. I taught them to play. The only video game we played was football. It’s fun to play with others. I needed to play with someone.

The young men who had lived in Norway for some time explained how gaming is an arena that offers the opportunity to mingle with other youths of similar backgrounds over an extended period, as limited friendship circles and loneliness are prevalent among this group (Andersson et al., 2021). They explained that, due to regulations related to the resettlement of unaccompanied refugee youths, their housing situation often changed, and they frequently had to move quite suddenly. Thus, gaming became important to maintaining friendships despite moving often. Additionally, a few of the youths from Syria kept in touch with family members and acquaintances who had resettled in Europe through gaming. In all these cases, the youths used gaming to stay in touch with other young people who spoke the same mother tongue:

I have extra good contact with friends who speak my mother tongue. The other friends are also good friends, but I do not want to say anything about my weaknesses to them. You can only talk about your weaknesses to those you know well, right? For example, when I’m bored at home or when I’m not feeling well, I can go to them, or they can come to me. And for example, if a friend cannot come to me, I will suggest that we could play online. (David, 20-year-old, living alone)

As this study’s recruitment of unaccompanied refugee youths was carried out through educational institutions and child welfare services, the youths I contacted lived either in co-housing arrangements or alone. Those in co-housing arrangements had regular dinner and leisure activities routines, but for young people living alone, everyday routines were much more flexible. This was best exemplified in David’s interview. As he lived alone, he played video games much more when he was bored and had nothing to do at home. He could play for five hours after school and have dinner while playing. However, such behavior is not unique to gaming. David could also have the same routine with other activities when bored; for example, he described sometimes hanging out at the gym for five hours or watching football for over 10 hours on the weekends.

Several youths mentioned days when it was difficult to sleep at night or get up early in the morning. Although these young men were often silent about their feelings, they did explain that it was difficult to follow daily routines on such days. David, for instance, spoke of difficult days by saying, “no one is always fine.” Hasan (an 18-year-old from Afghanistan living in a child welfare co-housing arrangement) commented ironically, on the other hand, “We are fine. How else could we be?” Here, Hasan hinted at challenges he faced without mentioning them directly, and several other youths explained how exhausting it is to hear of their family’s struggles in their home countries. As post-traumatic stress disorder is widespread among this group (Svendson et al., 2018), it would not be surprising for these youths to play much more on difficult days: “When I play, I don’t have to think about life. Everything is fine as long as I’m playing, especially when I’m playing with friends. You do not have to think about a lot of different things (Ali, 21-year-old, living alone).”

4.3. Cultural and Environmental Gaming Backgrounds

The interviewed youths mainly played using PlayStation gaming consoles or mobile phones. For those who used gaming consoles, FIFA was a popular game, while for those using mobile phones, PlayerUnknown’s Battlegrounds (hereafter PUBG) was very popular. According to the youths, PlayStation and FIFA are often available in child welfare co-housing arrangements and, as such, are free for young people to play, in contrast to many mobile phone games.

Those who played only on PlayStation believed they had better control over the amount of time and money they spent compared to playing on a mobile phone:

I once uploaded a billiard app on my mobile. Then, 1,000 NOK was deducted from my account. I only get 4,000 NOK a month, and losing 1,000 NOK all at once is a lot. I deleted the app right away. Since then, I have not played on my mobile phone. (David, 21-year-old, living alone)

However, the youths who live alone explained that a game console was too expensive for them to purchase after moving out of child welfare co-housing arrangements, and thus these youths often played on mobile phones. While cheaper access to games is a factor for many using mobile phones, the interviews also show a likely link between the youths' cultural background and their device of choice. Youths who played on mobile phones more often than PlayStations tended to come from countries in the Middle East and Central Asia (such as Afghanistan, Palestine, and Syria), while those who more frequently used PlayStation often came from South Sudan.

As gaming becomes an important arena for these youths to socialize with others of similar backgrounds, their mother tongue plays an important role in navigating the game landscape and device of choice. Several youths from Afghanistan explained that they had been introduced to new games through friends who also spoke Dari or Pashtu. This was most visible when talking about PUBG, which was popular among young interviewees from Afghanistan, Palestine, and Syria. Additionally, however, these youths also play PUBG online with players from Turkey, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and several countries with Arabic as their official language. For some, these countries remind them of their journey from their home country to Norway, where they learned different languages and met people from different countries. As Irfan said, he does not know the other players on PUBG, but he can catch up with what is happening in Turkey or Pakistan while playing with players from those countries and refresh the languages he learned as a refugee.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Active mediation—i.e., when parents use a dialogical approach to give youths the opportunity to make decisions concerning their media use—is seen as an idealized and normalized parenting practice in the Global North (Clark, 2013). This has highlighted a democratization of family life critical to youths' civic engagement (Clark & Brites, 2018; Seddighi et al., 2022). In line with this, this study sees active mediation centered around a dialogical approach to the regulation of gaming as the ideal guidance for good gaming practice among youths without close caregivers. Although active mediation is normalized in the family context, this research shows that social actors working in child welfare co-housing arrangements often instead use both direct and indirect strategies in their regulation of gaming practices (Smette et al., 2016), such as offering help with homework, planning outdoor activities, or introducing rules shutting off internet access. Because of this practice, the youths' gaming environment, such as a shared gaming console in the living room, influences their gaming practices. In other words, when gaming is a collective activity among roommates in child welfare co-housing arrangements, gam-

ing practices are regulated directly or indirectly by social workers, and it is thus easier for youths to deal with the time and money spent on gaming.

Although teachers and advisors for minority pupils pointed to limitations in their mandate that prevents them from regulating gaming practices, the interviews also highlighted that previous experience with a culture of authoritative teachers might prevent pupils from having a dialogue about gaming. However, while a dialogue about gaming and good practice is seen as irrelevant for teachers and advisors, such a dialogue could, in fact, create an opportunity for both social actors and youths to expand the democratic values of mediation of gaming in a non-family context.

Like siblings in families whose parents are unsure how to guide their children's digital media use (Mascheroni et al., 2016), this research demonstrates that roommates in asylum reception centers or co-housing arrangements assist each other in navigating the gaming landscape. However, the responsibility for media literacy support should not fall solely on the youths themselves (Neag, 2020). Indeed, this study has shown that social actors working with unaccompanied refugee youths in child welfare services employ gaming knowledge gleaned from their own family contexts, but at the same time, there is also a lack of routine or guidance around good gaming practices to direct the social actors working with these youths.

While research on gaming among youths with immigrant backgrounds shows that video gaming can both strengthen social connections to local communities (Karam, 2018) and help in the learning of the Norwegian language (Dralega & Corneliusen, 2018a), the young men interviewed for this study did not necessarily stress the importance of learning Norwegian or meeting Norwegian friends through computer games. Rather, gaming helped them establish social connections with youths with similar experiences who speak the same mother tongue. Unlike Leurs's case study (2019), which found that online communication is used to strengthen family bonds across borders, the youths in this present study played games to establish or strengthen social ties with fellow unaccompanied refugee youths. Similar to the findings of research on game-based socialization, this study found that gaming might reduce feelings of loneliness (Kaye et al., 2017) that many of these youths often face (Andersson et al., 2021).

The challengeable gaming practices described by social actors working in child welfare services referred to the gaming practices of the youths who spend a great deal of time gaming, play late into the night, or make it a solitary activity by playing on a mobile phone or alone in their room. But, the youths need to play games to mitigate trauma and learn gaming as a socialization space. This practice contrasts with what is often understood as good gaming practice. Young people indulging in gaming might be using this as a way to cope with traumatic experiences, but as Pallavicini et al. (2021) explain, the

effects of gaming strongly depend on the game's specific characteristics; not all games are the same. A dialogical approach to providing guidance on good gaming practices could create opportunities for youth and social actors to learn from each other about how gaming can help reduce stress or trauma and how the practice should be handled. A dialogical approach will cultivate the voices of these youths, helping us to both learn what gaming means to them and support their articulation of difficult life situations and feelings, as well as make valuable skills—such as language—visible in their environment. More importantly, by taking a dialogical approach to good gaming support, social actors will learn more about gaming and contribute to expanding this approach's democratization forces beyond the family context.

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Conflict of Interests

The author does not have any conflict of interest.

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