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My Momma Shoots Better Than You!

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Who is the Female Gamer?

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a component of a three-year empirical study of gaming moms undertaken with the aim to modulate the conventional constructions of gamer identities and examine the contested status of gaming in everyday life. It presents samples of mothers in gaming discourse – from TV, Music-video, forums, and ads. Mothers have been largely invisible in popular gaming discourse or formulaically portrayed as unsympathetic to/ policing the gaming habits of other family members. Now, gaming companies increasingly target women and families, female gamers exceed 40 % of players (US and Sweden), and console gaming is displacing TV-watching as the core living-room activity. The Boy-nerd-in-the-Bedroom is, at least statistically, being dispelled and complemented by the Girl-into-Gaming. Still, a tenacious nineteenth-century icon lingers: the Angel-in-the-House. Mothers today do more than bring Hot Pockets to gaming kids (South Park *WoW*-Episode) or serve as the implied inferior player populating taunts like "My Momma shoots better than you" (*Q3A*). Mothers game too. The paper uses feminist critical theory (de Lauretis) to illustrate the situation of the female gamer as oscillating between the fixed sign of "Woman" and the dynamic experiences of "women". It acknowledges and elucidates both the power and consequences of representation and personal experience in meaning-making processes, to which the growing cultural discourse and practice of gaming belong.

Introduction

> *You may not know what I mean by the Angel in the House. I will describe her as shortly as I can. She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed daily . . . she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. Above all -I need not say it-she was pure. . . . It was she who used to come between me and my paper when I was writing reviews. It was she who bothered me and wasted my time and so tormented me that at last I killed her.*" (Woolf, 1931)

In 1854, Coventry Patmore published the poem which has come to be a short-hand term in literary and feminist theory for the classical gendered distribution of roles and duties, time and space typical of the Victorian and patriarchal family model: *The Angel in the House* (1854). The ideology is unambiguous; as one of the stanzas dictates: "Man must be pleased; but him to please/Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf/ Of his condoled necessities/She casts her best, she flings herself".

As the epigraph above reveals, Virginia Woolf, modernist writer and one of our time's most famous first-wave feminists, had a bone to pick with this ideology and felt she needed to terminate the demon of the feminine ideal that kept haunting her. 80 years after Woolf's metaphorical butchery, and 150 after Patmore's poem, another woman who presumably has an 'office of her own', Torrie Dorrell, Senior Vice President of Global Sales and Marketing at Sony Online Entertainment, beats down evil spirits of another kind. At a meeting held in conjunction with the recent Game Developers Conference in San Francisco in February 2008 she reportedly stated: "I'm a full-on gamer and my husband hates me". CNN (2008) commented it as follows:

> "more and more husbands and boyfriends are playing second fiddle to computer games and consoles as 38 percent of gamers are female, spending an average of 7.4 hours a week playing, according to the Entertainment Software Association."

Although superficially jocose, the rhetoric employed both by CNN and Dorrell echoes of a tenacious idealism when it comes to the roles of females in society: males are not supposed to come second; females are, as de Beauvoir so aptly put it back in 1949: the second sex. At first, we conclude, a bit downhearted, that notwithstanding years of efforts and accomplishments of the women's movement, the traditional tension between women's right to their own activities - being a subject in her own right - and women's assigned roles as the other - supporting the male, the

house, the family including taking care of the kids - still seems to hold sway. Is it really so that when women take the wheel, grab the gavel, point the gun or lead the raid guild, society still perceives her action as an escape, a run from the hearth? As female gamers we liquidate simulated terrorists, beat bad hands and slay virulent villains, do we also – again - want to, or need to, kill the Angel in the House?

Below, we will first situate ourselves in the general tradition of feminist criticism, after which we dedicate a section to discussing time management in relation to female gamers and family life as we believe time is of the essence in understanding women's gaming or non-gaming behavior in everyday life and the representations of her as such. We then present a few samples of signs and stories of mothers in gaming discourse/popular culture. To conclude we contrast and explain what we find to be complicating the gendering of the gaming discourse namely the differences between "woman" as sign and "women" as experience. Finally, we want to chime in with previous calls for empirical research of actual gaming in everyday contexts and move on to set up actually that - a study of gaming moms and everyday life.

Situating ourselves - feminist theory revisited

Defining, and articulating, women's trajectories, stories, concepts, codes and contexts, is by now a well-known approach within feminism almost running the risk of becoming considered a cliché strategy – much like the word "strategy" itself. Yet, theories become obsolete only when they no longer can problematize and clarify the contexts to which they are applied. In this paper, we will thus return to the critical work of Teresa de Lauretis (1986), to make sense of what appears to be persistent disagreements in the popular gaming discourse between what in simple terms can be called sign and experience. As much post-structuralist theory focused on the unending semiosis of meaning-production and postmodern feminism hailed the instability of the sign as enabling a liberating interpretation of self and identity as fluid and thus contradicting and resisting normative definitions of what it meant to be a female subject, the notion of experience came to ride in the back seat. Experience, previously the most significant buzzword of the women's movement, had to leave the center stage to battles over language, to deconstruction and philosophical treatises on the dissolution of the unified subject. Ironically enough, as among others disenchanted African-American feminists pointed out, as the experience of black women finally came on the agenda, the significance and daily realities of the female subject faded in the background of the debates on unstable selves. Teresa de Lauretis' re-incorporation of the subject into theories of language is one of the sharp early contributions to the scholarship that came to the rescue of the female

subject. We will return to her in more detail below. Of course, later theoretical endeavors dealing with identity and experience, such as post-positivist realism including writings by Satya Mohanty and Paula Moya attempted a similar save. However, for the purpose here, analyzing a number of representations of mothers in popular cultural/gaming discourse, de Lauretis seems an appropriate choice since she helps us understand how female gamers simultaneously feature as both figures in the margin – objects even - and highly active and creative subjects, agents, as it were. Although, in our day and age we have learnt to live with, even rejoice in, paradoxes, we still find ourselves flabbergasted at times by their conservative nature. What then may seem old and stale feminism and business-as-usual to some, to us never ceases to be an object of utmost significance to shed light on, repetitively turn over and inspect anew. Understanding society and cultures and moving them towards a state of equality will always be our ultimate rationale.

Having thus located ourselves in the history of feminism, and refraining from continuing this crash-course 'lecture' on feminist theoretical history, we merely need to add one more reason for our venture. The significance of the work done by the women's movement, its proponents – barricade activists, writers, theorists alike - the past century and a half cannot be underscored enough. Yet, to quote Ruth Rosen, regardless of the proportions of the work accomplished, whether first wave-feminists' fight for citizenship or the second-wave's battle for abortion rights and expansion of the idea of democracy to include the everyday social realities of women, "each generation of women activists leaves an unfinished agenda for the next" (2000, 314). Fearlessly, we tack gaming onto this agenda.

Women, Gaming, and Time

Adult female gamers have been included in research on MUDs and MMOGs (Mortensen 2003; Taylor 2006; Copier 2007), but received very sparse focused attention (Yates & Littleton 2001; Kerr 2003; Royse et al 2007). Still, most of the player research has focused on young people – girls and boys – (e.g. Cassell & Jenkins 1998; Linderoth & Bennerstedt 2007; Jenson & de Castell 2008) and we have yet to account in detail and with nuance of the gaming practices of particularly attached women over 25, who often also have children.

Why do we need to study women and gaming specifically? In other quarters than game conferences, gaming may seem a frivolous and privileged area of investigation to pin on our agenda. Obviously, the current impact games have - socially, culturally and economically – makes them vital study objects that must not be overlooked. Apart from modulating conventional constructions of gamer identities, which may be an asset for the industry, and in addition to

examining the contested status of gaming in everyday life we believe that investigating mothers through the lens of gaming enables us to take a measure of the status of contemporary equality. One way to get at this issue is to look at women's access and organization of their own time.

As a rule, women in affluent Western society do not struggle to put food on the table, but they still seem to go home, as Arlie Russell Hochschild once put it, to a second shift (1989). One of the hard currencies in today's society is time, and gaming takes time from other everyday activities, which, when you have a family include somewhat different tasks and roles than the lives of people without children.

One of these roles is being the domestic guardian. Despite years of battle against gender stereotypes and inequality, despite holding full-time jobs and the same diplomas as men, women, especially as they enter into relationships and have children, still are given (and assume) the main responsibility for the organization of the domestic sphere including upholding routines, cultural traditions, social relations and fostering the kids (Magnusson 2006). Among these 'duties' have been policing the play activities of others; mothers are said to complain, apart from calling the game companies about their no-good games (Cassell & Jenkins 1998), about their children watching too much television or playing too much videogames (Kerr 2003).

Gaming can be a very time-consuming activity, especially online gaming. In the business-as-usual family model, attached adult females (gamers and non-gamers) lead lives that contain responsibilities dissimilar to those of (single) men and women without children. Their relationship to, and conditions for, gaming becomes a different one. Female gamers with families then come to play in situations involving normative gendered ideas of work, roles, and leisure, time and place constraints.

As said above, women traditionally adjust their schedules, work half-time or do the household chores after work in their leisure time, and first then they take time off (Friberg 1990). Supposedly this time-management routine is reflected in women's gaming habits – women reportedly like casual games or short games. Geek Woman, founder of the Australian site game-vixen.com and avid games journalist, calls it the "home chaos factor"; women's playing of more "flash based puzzle, quizzes and games with shorter start-up and duration" could be interpreted as a consequence of female gamers adjusting their playing practices to fulfill their daily duties.

However, research also shows that adult females like to play MMOGs (Yee n.d.) An AOL Games' "Casual Games Report," conducted by Digital Marketing Services (Timcheck 2004) revealed that women over 40 who play online games spend far more time playing than male or teenage gamers. Edward Castronova's blog-post on the matter seems appropriate here:

> "In the heated competition for the prestigious category of 'Most Likely Demographic Group to be Found Playing Games Online,' the consensus favorite, Teenage Boy, was edged out by a newcomer: *His Mom*. (Castronova, 2004, our emphasis)

The AOL study confirms what has already been stated above about time use, and we wonder whether it is not motivated, judging by this study, to complement Hochschild's theory with the concept of a "third shift".

> "Despite busy schedules, female gamers over 40 make time for their preferred hobby. Twenty-eight percent of them play games between midnight and 5:00 a.m., considerably more than men or teenage game-players. /…/ And why do they play online games? 'It relieves stress,' was the answer for 62 percent." (Timcheck 2004)

Balancing work, play and family life is hard work; "women today juggle more responsibilities than ever", stated General Manager of AOL Games, Matthew Bromberg (ibid). This involves managing time. People and activities compete over time. Davies (1996) has concluded that women tend to work in gender-specific ways involving multi-tasking and responsibilities that are not always measurable. Typical women's 'duties', such as nurturing and care-giving do not start and stop at certain times and do overlap with other activities. She thus argued that time be seen as relational rather than linear. Although we believe that it is important not to essentialize gender differences in time-experience and use, we find it useful to think of the juggling of everyday activities in terms of gender-specific time management, because as Schott & Horrell discovered "gaming slots into the existing nexus of domestic power" (2000:49); in their study adult female gamers thought their male partners had more time for play because they did not feel they had to do household chores – "tasks which women felt took precedence over leisure activities" (qtd. in Royse et al., 559). In everyday practice, time is of the essence. One of the questions the larger study (of which this paper is a small subproject) seeks to answer is how mothers work gaming into their lives, for example, how do they handle potential conflicts surrounding their game time? The only way to find that out is to study mothers who game. And we will. But first we went on the lookout for mothers in popular cultural gaming discourses, to sound out her present status. This took the form of a survey of signs and experiences, which we now move on to present.

Signs of the Mother in Gaming Discourse

Let us go straight to the image that was the original inspiration for this paper "My Mom's a gamer" (fig.1). Many of our suspicions about the current (symbolic) status of the role of mothers in gaming came together in this happy-go-lucky portrait:

Figure 1. Microsoft ad – write a story about your gaming mother and win an Xbox. © Microsoft Inc.

Initially pleased at finding her, we took another more critical look. It made us think of old times. The picture "My Mom's a Gamer" is not from the 1940s or 1950s, which the semiotics may lead us to believe. It is from 2007. To make the time-traveling even more transparent, let us show you this ad from a Swedish women's magazine *Hemmets Veckotidning* [The weekly Home Journal] issue 12, from 1955.

Figure 2. "For the good of the entire family". Ad for the NKI institute's study-at home-courses.

The aesthetics are basically the same, although the domestic responsibility for the family is not signaled only by the apron, but also by the holding of the child and the supportive position vis-à-vis the husband who is, according to the ad, improving his chances to provide for the family by studying in his "leisure time", so he can get a better job - for the "good of the entire family".

To return to the "My Mom's a gamer" - picture, it was used in conjunction with an ad launched around Mother's Day last year in which Microsoft encouraged children to write and submit stories appreciating their "gaming moms"; the best story would win an Xbox 360 Elite.

Although a laudable initiative, the symbolism involved in the announcement slips a lot of clues about the maternal state of affairs of gaming. The pictorial semiotics invokes, as stated, a discourse of the 1950s nuclear family, which must be seen as a part of Microsoft's known efforts to market the Xbox as a family game. But, in doing so, it rehearses the highly ideologically charged angel-in-the-house image of "woman". And to make the case crystal clear, let us show the reader that not only is the classical picture of woman repeated, "man" is also cast in a very familiar role; Xbox also held a contest for "dad of the year" (see figure 2). Comparing the pictures reinforces the interpretation of the maternal image. The campaigns are of course related. The same "home-based" rhetoric and semiotics are employed, in short: Dad has a voice, he is endowed with a superman (another 1940's reference) chest with a control on it and he stands

Figure 3. Microsoft ad – nominate dad of the year and win an Xbox.

outside the house. The symbolic language is as traditional as it can be. The ad with the female has to tell us that mom is a gamer, the role of the male, dad, as gamer seems less complicated - he is already firmly embedded in playing.

Our next example is collected from the popular TV-series South Park's famous *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*) episode. The South Park kids fight a long protracted battle online in *WoW* against an adult man, Jenkins the griefer, and their only chance of survival is using a super-sword programmed by Blizzard, the producers of *WoW*, who, in the dramatic spirit of the adventure narrative, will manage to get this to them in the nick of time by way of a USB-stick. The battle has before this dragged on and the kids, a team of four boys, grow fatter as they sit playing in the basement of one of the boy's parents' house. Although we do pay homage to the ironic qualities of South Park comedy, hilariously playing around with computer-game and gamer stereotypes,

we are still a bit disappointed in the image of the mothers who, on the one hand is supportive, and on the other disinterested and disapproving. One of the kids fears the battle will last for so long that they may run out of food, to which the group leader responds:

> "Don't worry, I have that covered" He pushes the button on the intercom.
>
> "Mom!"
>
> A female voice answers.
>
> "Yes hun?"
>
> "More hot pockets!"
>
> "Right away hun."

The episode continues in true gross South Park style, with the boy declaring that he -as he has not moved for days and can not because if he does, they will lose the battle – now needs to relieve himself. He thus yells again after Mom, who runs in with the 'potty" and holds it under him. The emission that follows sprays unmentionables all over potty and Mom (see fig 4), a scene not altogether comfortable to laugh at but consistently included in most YouTube and other sites' best- of-the-South Park-Wow-episode-clips posted that we encountered.

Figure 4. "Mom! Bathroom!"

One of the final scenes involves the two developers from Blizzard and the dad of one of the boys who are trying to locate the players to get the sword to them. The boy's mother, carrying a laundry basket, walks by the room where the three men establish the fact that the boy is not there. The three men ask the mother where he is:

> "He took his computer somewhere to play that stupid on-line game."
>
> "Where to?
>
> "I DON'T KNOW!"
>
> "If we don't get the sword to them in time our son's character is going to die!"
>
> "SO WHAT?!"

The three men leave to find a computer elsewhere, since the Dad now has revealed that he furtively has started an account too, and he can deliver the "The Sword of a Thousand Truths" to his son. And so on and so forth. Dad and son become heroes, the enemy is defeated. The End.

The role of the mom could be analyzed in a variety of ways - obviously she has laundry to do and no time for virtual adventures. On the other hand, she shows no understanding for the battle being fought. Disregarding the fact that this is a simulated battle, gaming as embodied practice, as extending into everyday real life is actually embraced by the changing physique of the gaming kids. Although perhaps not problematized but rather made fun of, the episode brings up interesting conflicts associated with gaming. The Mom is assigned the traditional role of domestic guardian, managing chores and deploring the time wasted on games. She is in the kitchen and laundry room and the kids occupy the game space where they are supported with food.

Another skeptical mother is imaged in the music video "Vi sitter här i venten och spelar litet Dota" [We are sitting here in venten playing a bit of Dota] from 2006 by Swedish DJ Basshunter. The teenagers are locked up in a dark room playing DotA (Defense of the Ancients, a map mod of *Warcraft II*) when the mother appears, saying in Swedish: "It is the only thing you do all day long; you sit there in Ventrilo playing DotA." The girls in the room are not playing; they are hanging out, watching (see Fig 5).

Fig. 5 Mom looking into the game room: "All you do all day long is sit there in Ventrilo and play DotA!"

Although our focus is not specifically on game content, we find it worth mentioning here as the last example of signs of the mother in gaming discourse, the orphanages in Shattrath City and Orgrimmar, two cities in *World of Warcraft*. All the caretakers at these 'shelters' are females and called matrons. Below is a snapshot of Orphan Matron Battlewail in Orgrimmar, who, significantly enough, similarly to the matron in Shattrath, wears a long dress. To these seemingly fixed representations we will now add a small selection of real-life experiences of mothers that complement and modify the traditional significance of the singular sign of "woman" and "mother".

Fig. 6. Orphan Matron Battlewail.

Experiences of Mothers in Gaming Discourse

The supportive mom is, of course, also a reality. The gendering of game space and domestic space as seen in the South Park and Basshunter videos rhyme well with what Bryce and Rutter notice in their study. It is a form of "gendered exclusion, which is experienced, negotiated and reproduced at a routine and everyday level" (2002, 252). As we see it, so is also the reproduction of mothers as non-gamers seen in those examples. The same thing can be noted in the study Bryce and Rutter did of the UK Console championship. They found that "the majority of females who did attend appeared to fit into the acceptable non-gamer roles. They were mothers who brought their sons to the competition /.../ and who sat in the hotel foyers looking bored by offering support, encouragement or sympathy when necessary" (249). But, there are other mothers in the world.

Ismini "Atari" Roby is a female gamer editorial writer for the site WomenGamers.com. We find her motherhood columns published in conjunction with her being pregnant and eventually gaming with a baby to be interesting contrasting representations of mothers that anchor female gaming to everyday life experiences of women. Atari's columns "Gamer Mom to be" (June 8, 2004), "Gaming with a Newborn" (Dec 2 2004) and "Gaming with an 8 month old" (July 6, 2005) and the 161 comments on the forum provide interesting food for thought and bring

out aspects of gaming that shed light on the gaming of mothers who refuse to give up playing, or as the AOL-study showed, use playing to relieve stress, and how they juggle gaming and family.

> "For months leading up to my son's birth, I heard seasoned parent gamers who play on the upwards of 30+ hours a week say, *"Be prepared for your entire life to change. You'll be lucky if you get any time to game."* Frankly, this scared me. Gaming has always been a great tool for me to wind down and de-stress. With a kid on the way, I couldn't imagine getting rid of one of my most effective relaxation techniques. I knew had to figure out a way to balance out the baby's needs with my own". (Gaming Mom to be).

Gaming is central to Atari who ponders how she will get anything played with a baby on her hands. After she has her son, she is as most mothers exhausted by the task:

> I couldn't even think about games or WomenGamers.Com. All I could think about was how I wanted him to hurry up and grow a couple more pounds so he would start sleeping through the night /…/ I was miserable. I was tired. I was frustrated. I was stressed. ("Gaming with an 8 month old" – G8M)

After a couple of weeks, things start to look up though, and she starts making "plans to make us both happy. *World of Warcraft* was coming and I was determined to play. But how can you play an MMORPG when you have to get up every two hours to attend to your son?"

Atari find a very practical and technical solution, one which solved a number of problems and provided a set of other game-related benefits also:

> make sure you have a good pillow and computer chair with armrests that lift and descend. I found this wonderful pillow that snaps around your waste and is made of a hard foam. By using the armrests of my computer chair, I was able to recline the baby in my lap and easily feed him while on the computer. By tilting the keyboard at a 45 degree angle and sliding part of it on the pillow for support, then positioning my chair so that my right arm is closer to the mouse, I was able to accomplish two-handed computer access. (G8M)

Before she discovered that she could do that, she would wake up in the middle of the night, bored to death. This is of course not a confession that follows the norms of the naturally happy and content mother. She would stare at the clock waiting for time to pass. But now,

> By being able to sit at my computer and play games, the time it now takes to feed him seems to fly by. In fact, on a number of occasions since World of Warcraft came out, he'd fall asleep in my lap while I would keep on playing. As a plus, because I'm playing at 4am on weekdays, I get to play relatively lag-free and without fighting people for overly-camped spawns. (G8M)

And as Atari states "since mom was happy, baby was happy". She encourages gaming moms who feel playing helps them maintain mental and physical wellness to not "deprive" themselves of activities that can "benefit" both mother and child. She concludes about playing with a child that: "Yes, your life will change, but with a little creativity, gaming can still be a part of your life".

The gaming situation of course changes with the age of your children and whether your partner plays and his/her attitude to gaming. Due to the constraints of this paper, it is a topic we will not broach further at the moment. Atari's situation is specific since she is an avid gamer, a writer and engaged in a gaming community. There are many more that do not have such close connections to gaming culture, whose stories remain to be told. We have our own stories, and other stories have been told (e.g. Taylor 2006, Copier 2007) that if specifically singling out the maternal components further would diversify individual subjective and practical experiences of gaming mothers. Relating Atari's version we hope to give a tidbit of such an experience.

Mother vs mothers

Venturing a perchance too simplified stance here, we see reported surveys, stories and forum discussion-board accounts as expressions of *women's* actual experienced lives while being well aware that they are represented second hand, whereas pictures representing mothers used in music, TV and ads are primarily looked upon as signs using the singular symbol *woman*. The difference between the two can be explained using for example, Teresa de Lauretis' feminist critical theory. Teresa de Lauretis is probably best known outside of feminist theory in the area of film studies. Her book *Alice Doesn't* responded to Laura Mulvey's theory of the male gaze (1975) which was based on French linguistic and psychoanalytic theories and conceived the female film spectator as forced to align herself with the male gaze and see woman in terms of a desirable object or a threat of castration to get rid of. Teresa de Lauretis reacts against the inescapability in Mulvey's Lacanian view of the male gaze. She breaks up the model by differentiating between the sign "woman" on the screen and actual "women" who must always be written in the plural, as many, as diverse, as not equal to "woman". Although, we cannot escape discourse, we can posit that "women" *never* are identical to the sign, the image of "woman". To put the acting subject back into Peircean semiotics she rereads Eco's take on Peirce. Both semiotic and psychoanalytic theory, she claims, evade the subject, one by ignoring it, the other by repressing and weakening it. Eco, she writes, finds in Peirce a "missing link" between signification and physical reality which he finds to be human action. At the same time Eco wants to connect everything firmly to material historical realities but at all cost avoid idealism so he

needs to "cut out" the subjective, the psychological, elements from human action. This subjective part (whose definitions then hearken back to the theories of Kristeva and Lacan) de Lauretis reinstalls as the vital component of experience, insight, itself a result of, but not reducible to, semiosis, the processes of meaning-production. There must be a meaning-making subject involved. "The practice of self consciousness," a translation of the Italian *autoscienza*, she emphasizes, quoting Manuela Fraire, "is the way in which women reflect politically on their own condition" (de Lauretis 1984, 185; Fraire 1977, 195) This is one of the ways Teresa de Lauretis holds up one of her most important tenets: the politics of self-representation.

We realize that female gamer clans like Pandora's Mighty Soldiers and the Ubisoft team the Frag Dolls seem much more glamorous than un-sponsored breastfeeding gaming moms, but we do not believe this fact makes them less important. By denying certain experiences, we deny the power of the personal as political. What we believe de Lauretis' classic feminist theory does well is illustrate the situation of the female gamer as oscillating between the fixed sign of "woman" and the diverse, productive experiences of "women". It both acknowledges and helps us understand, the power and consequences that representations and personal experience carry in the never-ending work to move socio-cultural meaning-making processes in the direction of equality.

Self-awareness is one of the oldest tactics in the book. To paraphrase de Lauretis, that mothers become Mother through discourse is neither an illusion nor a paradox. It is a 'real' contradiction, and only in re-presenting it do we change things. The Angel in the House does not need to be killed, possibly she needs to book a seat at DreamHack and get a console of her own.

Concluding

There are obviously gaming mothers out there. One has to look for them though. As researchers repeat, women do not primarily identify themselves as gamers, since that title to them means something which they do not necessarily identify themselves with, for example casual games, that statistically are said to be a favorite genre among women. We do not even need to go to the tables and graphs to establish this, but can take examples from our professional and personal lives.

As one of us gave a talk recently at a high school, almost all of the students raised their hands when asked if they played games, but only half of them - mainly the boys - raised their hands when asked if they considered themselves to be gamers. A similar phenomenon was just confirmed in an article by Jenson and de Castell (2008). A girlfriend whose three sons and husband play a lot of games said over lunch one day, talking about their gaming habits, that she did not play games at all. Then she stopped mid-sentence and surprised at her own realization,

cried out "but I do, but only, well actually, I love to play Karaoke singstar a lot and I like puzzles and quizzes!" We mean, who needs big surveys?

All jests aside, we believe with e.g. Bryce and Rutter (2002) that gaming is indeed becoming regendered; there is "evidence of female gaming" (243) but it needs to be made visible, and taken out of the dark that Bryce and Rutter claim is cast on this group by "male-dominated gaming communities, the games industry and academic research." (244). To this we dare add the dreaded F-word, which we boldly articulate as a necessary ingredient in game studies where it in no way is absent or unknown but often very cautiously formulated in terms of e.g. gendering. We take the call for empirical studies seriously, and that is one reason why we are undertaking a three-year empirical study of gaming moms and everyday life, another is that we *know* that some mommas shoot better than you.

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Fig. 2 För hela familjens bästa. Hemmets Veckotidning 1955, issue 12.

Fig. 3 Dad of the Year. Retrieved April 7, 2008 from http://www.xbox.com/en-US/community/events/dadoftheyear/default.htm

Fig 4. Our own screenshots of Southpark WoW. Retrieved April 7, 2008, from http://www.hvideos.com/videos/TV/South_park_WOW

Fig 5 Our own screenshots of Basshunter: "Vi sitter i her i venten och spelar lite DotA". Retrieved April 7, 2008, from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9Shor9Bq_g