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Intersectional perspectives on video gaming among immigrant youth in Norway

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Kort sammendrag

Denne rapporten presenterer det avsluttede prosjektet som undersøkte hvordan ikke-vestlig ungdom i Norge navigerer dataspill, og hvordan dette former deres identitet. Studien har utgangspunkt i en interseksjonell forståelse av sosiale kategorier som kjønn, religion, etnisitet, geografi, og bygger på teorier om transnasjonalisme, kjønn og teknologi. Ved bruk av kvalitative metoder, avdekker studien flere og komplekse identitetsmanifestasjoner som er globalt forbundet, men lokalt forankret. Ungdommene regulerte for det meste premissene for spillingen på egenhånd, uten at det hadde nevneverdige negative konsekvenser for deres øvrige liv.

Andre publikasjonar frå prosjektet

- Dralega A. C. and Corneliussen H. G. (Upcoming 2018) Gaming and identity construction among immigrant youth in Norway: Convergent Glocal Contexts. Fjordantologien 2018

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Acknowledgments

This report: *Intersectional perspectives on video gaming among immigrant youth in Norway*, wraps-up the one-year project undertaken by Vestlandsforsking on gaming among non-Western immigrant youth in Norway. The project received funding from Lotteritilsynet, Medietilsynet and Rådet for Anvendt Medieforskning (RAM) in 2017. We wish to express our gratitude for the financial support that made this exciting project possible. Thanks also to everyone who contributed to its success, including those who helped us recruit our informants and the informants whose experiences on gaming were very insightful.

Sogndal, 22. December 2017.

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Sammendrag

Denne rapporten oppsummerer og presenterer funnene fra dette prosjektet, som hadde som mål å utforske hvordan ikke-vestlig minoritetsungdom bosatt i Norge forhandler med identitet og tilhørighet i og gjennom dataspill. Med utgangspunkt i et interseksjonalitetsperspektiv, studerer vi hvordan identitetskategorier, som kjønn, etnisitet, religiøn og kulturell tilhørighet, påvirker denne ungdomsgruppens forhold til dataspill. Studien tar også for seg hvordan videospilling reguleres, sett fra ungdommenes perspektiv.

Med utgangspunkt i teorier om dataspilling, transnasjonalisme, kjønn og teknologi, og ved bruk av kvalitative metoder (intervju og observasjon), har vi utforsket ungdommenes forhold til dataspill. Et interessant funn er at mange av informantene våre navigerte dataspill gjennom *Multiple frames of reference* (flere referanserammer) i stedet for de forventede *Duo frames of reference* (duale referanserammer), som ofte blir trukket frem i studier av transnasjonal, diasporisk kommunikasjon og mediebruk.

I forhold til kjønn indikerer funnene både endring og stabilitet. Endring illustreres av kvinnelige utøvere (‘girl-gamers’) som utfordrer den dominerende diskursen om maskulinitet og dataspilling gjennom deres spillemønstre, mentalitet og ferdigheter. Stabilitet er også synlig, illustrert ved at jentene fortsatt opplever å bli ekskludert av gutta, samtidig som de også tilbringer mindre tid på videospilling enn det gutter gjør. I forhold til de regulerende mekanismene fant vi at familiesituasjon, venner, skole og selvdisiplin hadde betydning for hvor mye, med hvem, hvor og hva ungdommene spilte.

Summary

The report presents findings of the project that explores how non-Western youth in Norway navigate video games and how this shapes their identity. The study adopts intersectionality perspectives examining how social categories such as gender, location, religion, identity, nationhood etc influence their videogame experiences and identity construction. The study also looks at how video games are regulated, from the perspective of the youth. Drawing from theories of gaming, transnationalism, gender and technology, the study employs qualitative methodologies (interviews and observations) that unravel multiple and complex identity manifestations that are globally connected but locally anchored. The findings are indicative of change and stability. Change, for instance, in the fact of 'girl gamers' who contest the dominant discourse on masculinity and gaming in conventional studies on gaming. Continuities are also evident in the fact that girl-gamers are still excluded but also play less than the boys. The study also uncovers surprising findings, with regards to, religion, ethnicity and social contexts. In all, the informants' identities are constructed through "multiple frames of reference" as opposed to "dual frames of reference" often suggested in transnational, diasporic, communication and media use studies. In regard, to regulation, friends, family situations, school-work and self-discipline were factors that individually and collectively contributed to regulating how much, with whom, where and what they played.

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1. INTRODUCTION: GAMING AS TRANSNATIONAL PRACTICE

Youth today live in highly digital mediatized spaces – flooded with social media and video games. In fact, video games, are making their way out of the 'ghetto' and into the mainstream of cultural products, now, more than ever (Enevold, 2012; Livingstone, 2002). Immigrant youth are no exception when it comes to playing video games (Anguiano, 2011; Fu & Graff, 2009; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco2001). In these concurrent time spaces, the adolescent gamer, like the social media user traversing cross-national communication platforms, may be presenting herself as an immigrant in one country, but when she moves to another online context, say a global community of diasporic youth, this identity might be resignified (Anguiano, 2011) by that of a diasporic Palestinian, Ethiopian, Kenyan or Syrian, which we will show here.

With periods of extreme growth in immigration from non-Western countries to Western Europe, Norway included, the emphasis on cultural integration has also increased. Politically, this has been emphasised by the appointment of a Minister of Immigration and Integration (December 2015) and the establishment of a national program aimed at facilitating the integration of immigrants into the labour market and society[i]. Thus, non-Western youth are met with a discourse loaded with expectations that they should be picking up local culture, finding friends and leisure practices in their local environment. Simultaneously, multiplayer online games and social media platforms provide easy accessible channels for long distance and transnational communication.

It has been suggested that internet-based communication shapes experiences pertaining to both local and global communities (Wellman, 2004). Research on the transnational practices of immigrant youth might contribute to our understanding of identity and cultural production in multiple ways. Transnational practices may involve maintaining and/or building anew transnational relationships that reconnect them to the land of their ancestors and establishing social relationships that make them participants in more than one state (Dralega & Mainsah, 2014; Schiller, 2009). Online video games as well as other online communication platforms might serve to build transnational social networks and identities, and to open up transnational spaces that centre on the flow of ideas, and cultural and material productions (Dralega & Mainsah, 2014; McGinnis et al., 2007, Turkle 1996) in addition to self-expression (Shaw,

2014). Drawing on notions of transnationalism and diasporic identities, this chapter will examine how identities are manifested and reflected through video games.

Theories on transnationalism, diaspora and migration studies (Levitt & Schiller 2004), along with studies on gaming culture (Anguiano, 2011; Shaw, 2014) and feminist and technology perspectives (Cheryan et al., 2013; Corneliussen, 2011) provide frameworks for considering the relational aspects of youth identities, gender and transnational practices. Together these areas provide a framework for examining the intersection of geographical, gendered, social - cultural, diasporic and even religious contexts. This framework recognizes that the intersection of local and global contexts has effects on identity formation practices. These perspectives also emphasize that youth identities should not be seen as isolated practices, but as linked with the local and global social contexts in which they are embedded and which they help to shape. This study therefore aims to gain insights into the following research questions:

- What are the patterns of gaming among non-western youth?
- How do these youth interpret their own experiences of gaming in relation to identity, socialization and belonging?

These research questions have been analysed with a focus on intersectional social categories such as gender, location, ethnicity, national belonging, religion etc. in their gaming situations.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVES TO GAMING

Youth, gaming, identity and diaspora

"Youth" and "diaspora" are terms that both invoke the metaphor of a journey of constant transformation: issues of border crossing, dislocations, time-space passages, growing-up, and reorientations. When youth and diaspora occur in tandem identity formation becomes a complex process (Braidotti, 2011; Durham, 2004; Suarez-Orozco& Suarez-Orozco, 2001). These nomadic identities, as Rosi Braidotti suggests, render immigrant youth experiences fragmented, complex and multiple (2011).

In Durham's (2004) explanation, the psychological transition between adolescence and adulthood already charged in terms of gender and sexuality, is then imbricated with the conundrums of the other transition, the diaspora identity that demands delicate negotiations of face/ethnicity, nation, class, language, culture and history (p. 141). Understanding the experience of immigrant youth calls for a sophisticated grasp of cross-cultural dialectics and the dimensions of Otherness that marks their lives (also see Ahmed 2000). Stuart Hall reminds us of the necessity of rethinking the concept of cultural identity and diaspora away from the essentialized subject:

The diaspora experience as I intend it here, is defined not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite difference. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference (Hall, 1990, p. 235).

Hall's perspective is significant because it historicizes ethnic, diasporic and cultural identity. It recognizes the fact that diasporic identities, as all other cultural identities are never fixed but always in the process of production – something we will return to later. According to Durham, for diaspora youth, the interior and psychological dimensions of gender, ethnicity, religion and class are intimately connected with issues of transnational identity. Here, the modes of identification emerge within a "mediascape" of popular images and texts, including video games that are increasingly accessible to contemporary teenagers (Durham, 2004). As Shaw (2014) and Appadurai (1996) have noted, gamers use games to imagine their lives in

complex ways; most games offer “strips of reality” that are deeply implicated in the ways we understand ourselves and others.

The need to rethink societal engagement beyond the bounded framework of the nation has been taken up in the international migration research. Research on international migration and immigrant incorporation has successfully highlighted the need to understand immigrant’s experiences in host societies beyond a straightforward notion of assimilation and integration. Research on immigrant incorporation into multicultural societies has increasingly turned to notions such as *transnationalism* and *third space* to understand the various kinds of global or cross-border connections that are sustained or created among diasporic individuals living in multicultural societies, and how these individuals negotiate their identities within social worlds that span more than one place (Levitt & Schiller, 2004; Orellana, 2007). Others have adopted notions such as *bifocality* (Vertovec, 2004:974) or *dual frame of reference* (Guarnizo, 1997:311; Suárez-Orozco, 2001:114) in analysing the cultural practices and relationships across countries. *Biofocality* refers to the ways in which transnational forms of exchanges, communication and activities impact upon the cognitive, social and cultural orientation of diasporic populations. *Dual frame of reference* refers to the ways in which diasporic populations compare life experiences, events and situations from the dual points of view of their native societies and their adopted society. This study proposes a third strand: *multiple frames of reference*, which is a more accurate interpretation of findings in this study.

Gender and video gaming

Intersectionality and focus on gender is central in this study, as it tackles the challenges of hegemony, power, inclusion and exclusion when it comes to women and technology (Braidotti, 2011). In Norway and across the globe, technology education and work are strongly male dominated (Charles & Bradley, 2006; Corneliussen, 2011). Gaming is associated with young, white males (Ask et al., 2016; Corneliussen & Mortensen, 2006). These studies indicate that, girls and women’s positive relationship to gaming is often overlooked, because of perceptions that they either are absent or have little interest in playing computer games. Such cultural assumptions give rise to low expectations of girls' interest in computer games, and at the same time the effect that girls can undermine or even hide their interest in computer games (Hommedal, 2014; Håpnes & Rasmussen, 1998). The ways in which games can work positively in identity building will vary according to the identity categories and social contexts that players negotiate with. There are less studies on gender and

gaming habits among immigrant youth in Norway, making this study an important step on the way of building knowledge about this particular group of youth.

Analytical framework

The central theory underlying the analytical framework of this study is discourse theory of Laclu and Mouffe (1985), which interprets the social world as a product of social constructions limited by what we perceive through discourses. Discourse theory will be used to analyse the informants' understanding of themselves and their meaning-making of the social and cultural space they enter when they play games. Several studies have suggested that video games can be a place for positive experiences in which the gamer can escape from real life, or explore different identities (Shaw, 2014; Turkle, 1996). However, video games have also often been framed in a negative cultural discourse about addiction and other negative characteristics of violence, social isolation, etc. (Pallesen et al., 2014). Both discourses have been studied among Norwegian gamers in general (Ask, 2011; Børsum, 2012).

Gaming is, however, an activity that potentially activates different social categories, simultaneously. Thus, the intersectional perspective, where we see how the combination of social categories converge with different discourses, will be central in the analysis. The goal is to establish knowledge about how this group understands and negotiates with identity categories through video games.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

Given that the project focuses on participants' gaming habits, we needed to produce a research design that could permit us to examine all relevant contexts or sites of interaction. Instead of following a specific game as point of departure for the analysis, we decided to make our participants the central point of focus of the study. We took an approach similar to that of Nicola Green (1999), who argues that Internet technologies are best studied through a flexible method where the researcher follows people and the stories about and by them. Therefore, our approach included a selection of 10 youths between 16-19 years of age that fit our constructed category of "youth with non-western immigrant background" that have been gaming in at least one year. To include the gender perspective, we aimed for 5 girls and 5 boys. All participants have been given pseudonyms for the analysis.

Participants were recruited at school through school administration and other after-school meeting places in Oslo and Sogndal. The sample consisted of participants from both urban and rural areas. It must be noted that, recruiting girls was more difficult than boys.

The composition of our sample was not representative of the diverse population of ethnic minorities in Norway. Consequently, the results from this study can be said to be culturally typical, rather than universal. Rather than opting for a statistically representative sample, we selected a 'small' sample that would enable the study to examine the issue of gaming and identity adequately (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

The interviews

To examine the reflections of ethnic minority youth on their gaming habits and what it means to them, we carried out in-depth interviews with all 10 participants. The interviews lasted approximately an hour each. The research methodology was informed by the need to ensure that we adequately "give voice" to the research participants (Kvale et al., 2009). Drawing also from cultural studies approaches, this study operated on the principle that each person's voice and their reflections on the meanings of their actions matter. Interviews provided information and reflections about the participant's game choices, motivations for their choices and experiences on these sites and what these meant to them. Before each interview we gave the participants information about our research, our contact details, and sought their consent in addition to explaining issues of confidentiality and anonymity. Three of the interviews were undertaken on skype and telephone (Two girls in Oslo and one from Stavanger). An

interesting methodological note is that because the girls were generally difficult to recruit, we decided to change our recruitment strategy – by asking if the girls used social media like Facebook (instead of asking them if they gamed) or if they used their mobile phones for games instead of consoles. Agderstein (2009) and Enevold (2016) have stated how often women/girls hide the fact that they game. Our later strategy produced results, rather later than sooner.

Observation

Given that the concern of this study was linked to users' experiences, it was necessary to visit them in their environment to gain understanding of the social contexts surrounding their gaming activities (Spradley, 1980). The immediate methodological outcome of this approach is ability to identify and gain access to the different contexts in which the participants were active. We asked the participants to invite us to their homes in order to observe them gaming. All together we visited 7 homes. With the remaining three, who were girls, we were unable to do so as these were recruited from Oslo (2 girls) and Stavanger (1girl). These, were only interviewed on skype and telephone.

Analysis

The analysis was done through the triangulation of the data collected from the interviews and observation. The interview guide started with demographic and background data which is presented in tables. The triangulated data were analysed within a discourse analysis framework, looking for how meaning, categories of self and others, gaming and related everyday activities, were constructed in the youth articulations (Stubbs, 1883).

4.FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographics, background and basic gaming patterns among informants

As table 1 shows, the interviewed youth have Somali, Kenyan, Syrian, Palestinian, Ethiopian, Ugandan, Vietnamese and Chinese backgrounds as their countries of origin. The table also shows the earliest immigration to Norway happened in 2004 while the latest in 2015. In addition to the age group of 16-19 and their sex, the table also shows what platforms they play on. While the boys use gaming consoles, especially the PlayStation, more than the girls. The girls on the other side, use their mobile phones and the laptop for gaming more than the boys. The games they enjoy the most also vary. Most of the boys enjoy Massively Multiplayer Online games (MMOs). It is interesting that two of the girls who use consoles (PS) also play MMOs and these consider themselves 'gamers'.

Table 1: Demographic information and basic gaming patterns

Name	Sex	Family	Country of Origin	Arrival in Norway	Age	Platform	Favourite Games
Adam	Boy	8 siblings, Single mother	Somalia	2014	18	PS4	GTA, Destiny, FIFA17, Call of Duty
Brian	Boy	2 siblings	Kenya	2012	16	PS4, Xbox	FIFA17
Carl	Boy	3 siblings	Syria	2016	16	PS2	FIFA17, Blackopps, Battlefield I, Mortal combat XL
David	Boy	3 siblings	Palestine	2015	16	Laptop	Mortal Combat, Far Cry, Counter Spy
Evan	Boy	3 siblings	Somalia	2012	16	PS4	Fortnite, GTA4
Fatuma	Girl	2 siblings	Ethiopia		16	PS 4	RPF, MMOs
Gloria	Girl	9 siblings	Somalia	2014	16	iPhone, PS3, Laptop	Surfers, Pool, FIFA
Hellen	Girl	2 siblings	Uganda	2004	19	Laptop	None
Iren	Girl	2 siblings	Vietnam	2010	18	PS4, laptop, Wii, Mobile phone	RPF, MMos
Janie	Girl	None (single mother)	China	2015	19	Mobile Phone	Board & card games, quiz

The time spent on video games varies too between the girls and boys. The boys are seen to spend more time both during the week and especially during the weekends and public holidays as shown in Tables 2.

Table 2: Time spent on gaming

		Hours (Weekdays)	**Hours (Weekends/Public holidays**
Boys	Adam	3-4	10-18
	Brian	2-4	10-11
	Carl	1-2	8-18
	David	0	10-18
	Evan	5	6-10
Girls	Fatuma	0-5	5-6
	Gloria	2-3	10-11
	Hellen	10mins-45-mins	10mins – 1 hour
	Iren	1-2	5
	Janie	10-45mins	10 mins – 2 hours

In Table 3, we see who the youth play with and where their playmates are located. Apart from Adam, who plays with his sister, most of the boys play with boys. One girl, Fatuma, plays exclusively with boys while the others play either with mix of girls and boys, alone or with random counterparts – especially in online games.

Table 3: Who they play with and their location

	Local friends (from school) **And their nationalities**	**Friends/Countrymates in diaspora**	**Unknown online**	**Friends living in country of origin**	**Sex**

Adam	6 Ethnic Somalian 5 Ethnic Norwegian 1 Sister	5 live in Oslo, Sogn & Fjordane, USA	0	0	All boys apart from sister
Brian	8 Ethnic Norwegian	0	0	0	All boys
Carl	7 Ethnic Norwegians	5 Saudi Arabia	0	0	All boys
David	0	4	0	0	All boys
Evan	4 (Both Ethnic Norwegians and from other nationalities)	0	Random	0	All boys
Fatuma	5 classmates from Slovakia, Belgium, Iran, Eritrea, Somalia	3 (USA, Ethiopia, Sweden)	Random	0	All boys
Gloria	0	0	Random	0	Random boys
Hellen	0	Siblings (mostly brother)	Random	0	Random/brother's friends
Iren	5 Ethnic Norwegian (1 of them girl)	0	Random	0	Mixed, mostly boys
Janie	1 girlfriend/classmate	0	Random (rarely)	0	Mostly plays alone or with girlfriend

As the tables shows, the boys in this study are "big video gamers" according to Medietilsynet's profiling summarized below (Medietilsynet, 2013) - based on gaming habits of 500 boys in Norway aged between 12-17. That means, most of them play from four up to 18 hours per day.

Table 4: Categories of players adopted from Medietilsynet

	Hours gaming daily	Comments
Small time gamers	Up to 1 hour	2 of 10 boys can be found in this category. Mostly older boys
Average gamers	1-4	6 of 10 boys can be found in this category
Big gamers	4 or more	15 % of gamers are big gamers
Problem gamers	Over 4 hours	1 of 10 say they have experienced problems with gaming. Boys in this category feel that they MUST play. They also have problems with family, school and friends.

		Time-use is not the only indicator of problematic gaming (addiction)

The boys also mostly play combat and violent games with ‘known’ or ‘close’ friends both near and online. The informants clearly fit description of belonging to the ‘global gaming culture’ patterns (Linderoth & Bennerstedt, 2007; Steinkuehler & Williams, 2006They also fit the images of Norwegian youth's consumption of video games (Agdestein, 2009; Ask, 2011; Børsum, 2012), as they admit to gaming as an everyday activity.

In terms of motivation, both boys and girls said they played video games: to pass time, as a hobby, to socialise, to compete, gain skills/to learn – i.e. football, language, competence, ancestral history, do homework; because of lack of extracurricular activities in their neighbourhood for those in rural areas; to escape/fantasy, and because they did not have friends.

Equally, we find gendered patterns of gaming, in choices of games as well as in who the youth game with. Boys mostly play with other boys, but girls usually play alone, with boys because of lack of girl-friends who game or with random gamers in online games. This, we should emphasise, is not hindering two of the girls (Gloria & Iren) claiming the label of "gamers" for themselves. They both have a passionate relationship to games. This is discussed further below.

Gaming as a complex experience: escapism, ancestral connections and social networking

Through this study, we illustrate how gaming provides for a complexity of identities and experiences. We learnt that playing video games can be a way to connect to your origin, history, and social group and at the same time bind minority users to their host countries. Several of our informants, for instance, manifested aspects of longing for and belong to their countries of origin through their characters in the games but also through the games they chose to play.Although a majority of the informants pointed out that the skills and competences of any given character was paramount in their choices regardless of sex, ethnicity etc., often and when possible – perhaps even subliminally – they created characters that looked just like them. Evan from Somalia specifically emphasised this: ‘I like the colour of my skin (dark brown) and whenever I create my character in a game, I make them look like me’.

Usually, these self-generated characters were often superimposed to plush surroundings, owned expensive cars, weapons etc.; things that obviously were out of their reach in real life. We see here, as Shaw (2014) argues, that games are indeed fantasy zones where one is free to express their identities free from judgement but also be who they want to be.

But it is not just a fantasy work. Gaming opens the opportunity to escape. As Brian explains: 'When I play (FIFA), I forget all that is bothering me – It is easy to forget how time goes so fast because you get lost in the game…'

Engagement with ancestral history and language was an aspect that garnered weight for some. For instance, the informant from Palestine exalted the game 'Battlefield' for its invocation of Arabic history: 'I get to learn a lot about Arabic history, experience Arabic architecture, and language through this game – something we do not get enough of from the classroom…'

In addition, he still holds contact with his 'old' friends in the diaspora and is able to speak Arabic while they play online (in real time). This sentiment was shared with David and Adam, for Arabic and Somali.

One of the girls expressed similar sentiments about 'other cultural expressions': 'I like games where you can create your own identity, like especially the possibility to create Indian themes, from clothing, architecture, everything Indian, I really love it…'

Language versatility among the informants was perhaps the most fascinating. All the informants could speak their native languages i.e. Somali, Arabic, Luo, Vietnamese etc. They all also encountered English through the games. In addition, they all spoke fluent Norwegian, with their local friends. Norwegian was the most used language by the informants. The ability to navigate games through multiple languages and identities was not only evidence of improved language competence but also socialization.

Navigating identity through 'Multiple frames of reference'

In this study we suggest that identity among the subjects was constructed and navigated through 'multiple frames of reference' which, it is argued here contests the conventional narratives i.e. bifocality (Levitt & Schiller, 2004) and duo frames of reference (Orellana, 2007) about immigrants' lived experiences within diaspora and transnational studies on gaming and digital media use. A good example is Brian from Kenya. He only plays FIFA17, and through his gaming experience he has multiple identification point, as:

a) **a Kenyan:** He has sought out and played Kenyan national football team on FIFA17. He has also looked-for Luo which, is his native language, however, that option was not available in FIFA17.
b) **an Arsenal football fan:** something we could call a glo-cal identity as he often plays as Arsenal on FIFA17 with his global (online) and local (geographically close) friends.
c) **a 'Sogning',** the regional/local identity: He not only speaks the local dialect proficiently, he also plays in the prestigious local junior football team, something he abides by and tremendously prides in. The latter is not only a source of social capital, as he considers himself one of the 'cool kids', but he also attributes his successful integration in Norwegian culture to football both in real life and through the game.

This is what he has to say about how he acquired the local identity of a 'Sogning':

> 'Football has saved my life, if it wasn't for it, I would never have had friends. I was miserable when I first came to Sogn, I couldn't speak the language, I had no friends, so I thought, okay, let me play football and play well, then I can get friends and can learn the language, and that is what happened…'

He acknowledges that he no longer has friends in native Kenya. But then we see him trying to connect to his ancestral home through the gaming activity he loves, FIFA17, signalling the complexity of the concept of identity and belonging for diasporic youth.

From the boy from Kenya, we see the multiple identity dynamic akin to Stuart Hall's (1990). The notions of "bifocality", and "dual frames of reference" are as well challenged here, as it becomes more appropriate to apply terms such as 'multifocality' or even 'multiple frames of reference' here. In line with Somerville (2008) and what other studies of migrant transnationalism, such as Portes (2001) and Rumbaut (2002) show, this informant's experiences remind us that the level of transnational attachments to the homeland, even among the first generation, is relatively limited compared to that of their parents and that transnational activities might be a 'one-generation phenomenon'. In this case, the youth we have interviewed who themselves migrated as children might (also) have different patterns of transnational attachment and networks from their parents. They might not necessarily prioritize connections with the mythical homeland in the same way as their parents – not even in video games, which allows them to create and live fictional identities.

We agree with Hall's (1990) argument that diasporic identities must be understood as dynamic and emerging from tensions across points of cultural difference and experience, as seen with the boy from Kenya for whom the game is part and parcel of his real-life experiences, from surviving to thriving.

The gender paradox – stability and change in gaming

This study's focus on gender is interesting because of the paradox of gender in Norway. Norway ranks high regarding gender equality in almost all areas. However, within technology education and professions, men are still a majority and gaming is associated with young men (Ask et al., 2016; Corneliussen & Mortensen, 2006; Corneliussen, 2011). This representation is evident in this study of young immigrant girls and boys when it comes to gaming in Norway. It is also emphasised by the challenge in recruiting girls for this study, while the boys readily availed themselves as subjects to the study.

As we saw in table 3, all the boys played almost exclusively with fellow boys, and it seemed unnatural for them to play with girls: 'No, I have never gamed with a girl, I think it is because girls do not like gaming' (Adam). However, he also used to play FIFA17 with his sister, though he did not consider this as 'playing with girls'.

Evan expressed the same argument for not playing with girls adding: 'It is not because I choose not to play with them, but I think girls do not play video games'. He had 2 sisters who did not play video games.

Carl had a little experience playing with girls, however, he seems to have been challenged when finding resistance in a girl gamer: 'I do not have problems playing with girls, as long as they do not laugh at me when I loose'.

Interestingly, three of the interviewed girls (Fatuma, Gloria, &1ren) defined themselves within the category of 'gamers', a label strongly associated with boys, and often with unhealthy interest in games (Ask et al., 2016). The girls, however, took this label to mean 'interested in' and 'skilled in playing' video games, and they were proud of associating themselves with this category. They did not have negative associations with the gamer label – they did not play "too much", they explained. All three gamer girls emphasized that they restricted their playing during the week because of school. However, one of them claims she would 'always be a gamer' – e.g., she would always keep her deep interest and love for games. Her biggest frustration, though, was that she was not invited to play with the local gamer boys. In their world, she explained, girls were not gamers: 'The biggest challenge is that it is almost only boys who game, and they do not let me in, they do not think girls can play video games'.

The same girl did, however, defend her girlfriends saying: ‘My girlfriends do not play video games – they are nerds but with other things than video games…’ Thus, she is creating an almost similar category for her girlfriends, even though they do not game, they are described in terms often used for boys as computer nerds (Agdestein, 2009).

Iren also had similar sentiments when it came to questions on whether she played mostly with boys or girls: ‘Boys, in my class usually assume that girls do not play video games. Usually, they are so condescending, that really pisses me off…Of course, we play and we shoot and kill, too’ she adds laughing.

The female informants’ reflections around gender are a confirmation of what Hommedal (2014) and Håpnes and Rasmussen (1998) warned us about – that girls and women’s positive relation to video games is often relegated or excused as absent or uninterested in gaming. Such assumptions not only perpetuate the stereotypes that girls do not game but also hinder interested girls from gaming. As shown earlier, the games played were typically gendered. The boys played typical male games, characterised by fighting, battle, football, and so on (Hommedal, 2014; Medietilsynet, 2013).

Two of the girls who considered themselves ‘gamers’ (Gloria and Iren), played all sorts of MMOs, RPG and indie games, even though they were quite aware of the gender stereotypes in games and the sexualization of female characters, as shown in table 2 above. Both also mentioned that they do not mind the gender of their characters, whether they are women or men – skill sets and ability to win was paramount. Fatuma played less abrasive games like snooker, surfer games and FIFA: In her own admission: ‘I do not like violent games, the kind my brother plays (GTA5, Destiny)’.

Although, two of the girls (Hellen & Janie) do not admit to gaming, they do indeed play video games. However, Hellen plays only when she is together with her younger brother on holidays (she stays with Uncle in Stavanger) and only for limited timeframes, as shown in table 2. Janie from China, played card and board games and quizzes, mostly on her mobile phone on the bus, in between classes and so on. She did not express any particular gaming identity, like the first three girls, saying: ‘It (games) is not an important part of my life’, she emphasises.

Religion and gaming in local social contexts

While gender is one of the identity categories intersecting with gaming and ethnicity, religion is another category that we were prepared to find relevant. Five out of the 10 informants interviewed were Muslims. Although all belonged to a religious denomination, and indeed some were pious, none of them thought religion was and should play an important role within the games. An example is the 18-year-old Muslim boy, Adam, who prays five times a day as the Coran demands, and he does so even when he visits his non-Muslim, ethnic Norwegian friends' homes:

> 'they usually offer me a space to pray, either a room in the house or in the loft or basement…'
> In fact, he adds laughing; 'I have some Norwegian friends who exclaim; 'Allahu Akbar' when they kill an opponent, in a combat game…'
> So, how does that make you feel, as a Muslim? I ask.
> 'Nothing, I know that they are just joking…' he replies.

The dominant rhetoric within the Western media is indicative of polarisation of Muslims, especially after the September 2001 attacks in the US. The negative rhetoric that often problematize Muslims as extremist and a danger to the western way of life[1](Oddbjørn, 2014) was indeed hypothesised in this study to affect religious youth in a negative way.

The results from this study show us the opposite – it is a picture of tolerance and acceptance to a point that religious affiliation is not only de-problematised, it is embraced and demystified with jokes. In this case, close friendships between non-Western and ethnic Norwegian friends wins.

Regulatory mechanisms

Finally, in light of negative discourses about video gaming as a time-consuming activity, we wanted to know more about how and who contributes to regulate the immigrant youth's gaming habits. This section refers to the regulatory challenges in the Norwegian Action plan (Pallassen et al. 2014) and Medietilsynet (2013). The youth were asked about how video

[1] Samfunnsdebatten – NBCnyheter november 11 2017: http://www.islamnet.no/aktuelt/samfunnsdebatten/item/270-vi-ma-skille-mellom-fengsler-og-koranskoler

games are regulated. The findings indicate a combination of mechanisms relating to friends, family and school. They are presented in a summary form below:

Friends

Friends especially in their neighbourhood/school were influential in what games they played and how much they played. Time spent on gaming was much more when they played with friends than when they played alone. Several factors came into play here:

For the rural informants (particularly in SFJ with somewhat poor transport and long distances between settlements), bus schedules played a part in how long one would stay at a friend's home before they had to catch the last bus home. Adam, especially mentions the fact that he often and annoyingly was forced to disrupt gaming sessions in order to rush and catch the bus, otherwise they would be in trouble with their parents for missing the bus and having to sleeping over at friends homes. Adams is the one with 3 games at home he has to share with 8 siblings. The family (Single mother) has no car, something most families in SFJ have. So, SFJ and its public transport system is seen as an unlikely regulatory factor in this case.

Some of the boys who engaged in football as a hobby and played for the local junior club, for instance in Sogndal, which is a football loving town, mentioned that they had to split their time between football and games. This is because they equally loved football. So, extra curricular activities played a big role in limiting the gaming time among several of the boys.

For some, language was a factor. Not being fluent in speaking English, restrained them from widening their gaming experiences internationally. They were all proficient in Norwegian and their mother tongues.

Family

Within the family, the mechanisms for regulating gaming revolved around flexibility of the family economy but also indicated a largely hands-off approach by parents which meant a transfer of regulatory responsibility to the youth themselves as explained below.

Most of the informants indicated that they had the main responsibility for regulating their own gaming. However, if they spent 'too many' hours on the games, a parent usually reminded them to take a break. Most of the informants did acknowledge that their mothers were stricter than their fathers.

Economic limitations were also an impediment, especially among large families, i.e. Adam and his sister girl Fatuma, who came from a refugee family with single mother and 9 siblings.

They had only purchased three games, which they shared amongst themselves as compared to others (their local friends) who had bought more than 20 games.

In many of the families, the youth had to save up money to buy games. They saw this as a limiting factor – limiting the scope of good games that their friends played but they could not afford. As a result and an alternative, several of them sought and played free games. Others, played on their laptop because they could not afford to buy a console, like the popular PlayStation4, which most of their close classmates used, which they also experienced as restrictive.

Schools

Schools only became relevant as a regulating mechanism when it came to the weight parents and students laid on doing homework and attending school. Otherwise, schools did not have any direct influence on how much, where, and with whom the youths played video games in their free time.

Self-discipline

The data also indicates that the youth exercised self-discipline in regulating how much they played. Gaming was seen as an important part of their day-to-day lives (hobby) but they also understood that it should not ruin other facets of their lives especially school. All of the girls interviewed showed very good sense of discipline especially in limiting the time spent on gaming little better than the boys.

In sum, the above mechanisms, individually and collectively, contributed to regulating the amount of playing, what they had access to play, where and with whom they played video games.

5.CONCLUSION: IDENTITY THROUGH MULTIPLE FRAMES OF REFERENCE

The aim of this paper was to establish the gaming patterns of non-Western boys and girls and explore from an intersectional perspective how they navigate issues of identity.

The gaming patterns indicated from the study are that the immigrant youth use video games as normal extracurricular activities; the boys in our sample spend more time playing games than the girls, and they also play typical boy (male) games; girls play with boys or on their own, mainly because their girlfriends do not play video games. Time spent varied between 0-5 hours during school days and up to 18 hours during weekends and public holidays. The youth mainly played with their local friends, mostly classmates. They even connected to an international gaming arena. While some of them played with their friends in the diaspora, none played with friends residing in their country of origin. The common explanation was lack of internet, access to video games, displacement because of war, etc.

It became clear that local anchorages, like close friends, classmates, sports, fluency in Norwegian language, was significant factors for the youth in their identity formation processes. Identity and belonging was a more complex dynamic if we look at their relationship with the avatars. To several of the gamers, identity aspects such as 'face'/ethnicity, language and gender attributes were less important in character choices than the competences of the selected characters. In short, the performance attributes of a character were a decisive factor in choice of characters rather than gender or ethnicity, etc. as several of the informants mentioned. This does not mean that they were not aware of the race and identity, and some of them often expressed their identities through the characters they created.

As opposed to *'dual frames of reference'* conjectured in transnational studies, *'Multiple frames of reference'* is considered here as a more accurate way of describing the construction of complex identities within this study. The youth were able to navigate multiple identities in and through gaming. An example being through their multi-lingual capabilities. For instance, they displayed ability to speak: Norwegian, English, Arabic, Somali Luo, Chinese and so on – to socialize and connect not just with the local (friends from class), with fellow countrymen in the diaspora but also international gamers through the knowledge of English.

There are two aspects that were made visible by this study and that we suggest should be explored further in future studies of this group of youth. First, the major challenges we had in recruiting non-western immigrant girls to talk about their relationship with video games is worth taking another look at. Considering statistics showing a very high consume of computer

games among both boys and girls,[2] we suggest a more holistic approach to explore young female immigrants use of digital media, including games.

Second, this study showed us a glimpse of the context around the video gaming of the youth, however, we suggest a wider approach to also include voices from parents and siblings of the video gamers, to learn more about how the gaming habits are perceived in the families of the immigrant youth.

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[2] https://snakkomspill.no/hvor-mye-spiller-barn-og-deres-spillvaner/

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Legal and important frameworks

Handlingsplan mot spilleproblemer 2016-2018

På nett med innvandrerne. Regjeringens digitaliseringsprogram (2012)

St. meld. Nr. 17 (2007-2008) Eit informasjonssamfunn for alle

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Researchers biographies

Carol Azungi Dralega (1972) er opprinnelig fra Uganda og har en doktorgrad i media og kommunikasjon fra Universitetet i Oslo. Hun jobber for tiden som seniorforsker ved Vestlandsforsking (Sogndal) og som forsteamanuensis ved Gimlekollen Mediehøyskole (Kristiansand). Hennes forsknings- og undervisningsinteresser befinner seg innen to kryssende felt: 1) *ICT for empowerment discourse* og 2) Medier, kjønn og sosial rettferdighet. Dralega sitt hovedfokus er pa kritisk undersøkelse av sammenhenger mellom teori, politikk, prosesser og praksis, med vekt pa deltagende og inkluderende tilnærminger

som viktig strategier for a utforske sosiale og kulturelle skillelinjer. Ihennes funksjon som Forsteamanuensis underviser Dralega MA-kurs i *Media, Gender and Social Justice;* I*CT and Empowerment, Media Representation og Global Journalism.* De første to kursene kursene er en del av NORAD/NORHED sitt prosjekt ved Uganda Christian University og MA-kurs i Global Journalistikk ved Gimlekollen i Kristiansand.

Hilde G. Corneliussen (1969) er Dr. art med doktorgrad i humanistisk informatikk (2003) med avhandlingen *Diskursens makt - individets frihet: Kjønnede posisjoner i diskursen om data*, og cand.polit. med hovedfag i historie (1996), begge fra Universitetet i Bergen (UiB). Hun har vært postdoc og førsteamanuensis i humanistisk informatikk, senere digital kultur, ved Institutt for lingvistiske, litterære og estetiske studier ved UiB. I tillegg til forskning på området har Hilde lang erfaring fra veiledning og undervisning på bachelor og masternivånivå, veiledning av PhD- stipendiater, samt fra undervisningsledelse ved Digital kultur og Institutt for lingvistiske, litterære og estetiske studier. Hildes forskningsinteresse og publikasjoner er konsentrert omkring teknologi, IKT, datahistorie og dataspill knyttet til problemstillinger omkring kjønn, identitet og meningskonstruksjon. I 2011 publiserte hun monografien *Gender-Technology Relations: Exploring Stability and Change* (Palgrave Macmillan), og sammen med Jill Walker Rettberg var hun redaktør for antologien *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity: A World of Warcraft® Reader* (MIT Press, 2008). Ved Vestlandsforsking arbeider Hilde med prosjekter som handler om teknologiske reformer i helsevesenet, velferdsteknologi og teknologi, kjønn og likestilling i arbeidsliv og utdanning.

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[i] The Introduction Program Act No. 13 was put in force from 1 September 2005 pursuant to the Decree of 11 March 2005 No. 228) (Samfunnskunnskap.no).