Taking ownership of gaming and disability

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## Topics

## Sample

15 Swedish teenagers and young adults living with disabilities. All except one are male. The ages ranged from 16 to 27, with an average of 19 years.

## Implications For Parents About

Parenting guidance / support

## Implications For Stakeholders About

## Other Stakeholder Implication

Social work professionals (role and use of digital games by young people with disabilities beyond a habilitation frame; digital ‘participatory culture’ among people with disabilities; digital inaccessibility)

# Abstract

Gaming among young people with disabilities is often understood within a habilitation frame, as if video and computer games primarily should help to exercise and ‘improve’. Little is known about how these games are used within a private frame, and how young people with disabilities operate their gaming as concrete persons rather than as treatment-receiving clients. Through the use of stories, descriptions, and demonstrations from Swedish youth and young adults with disabilities (muscle diseases, cerebral palsy, and Asperger’s syndrome), we explore these gamers’ practical maneuvers, verbal accounts, and biographical-narrative concerns in relation to digital games. As they strive to bypass or overcome digital inaccessibility, various challenges find their way into their gaming practices, not only to complicate, distract, or disturb them but also to give them extra meaning. Gamer–game identifications turn multifaceted, with disabilities serving as paths both around and into the games’ ‘magical circles’. We suggest partly new concepts – beyond a habilitation frame – to capture how young people struggle to take ownership of gaming and disability: engrossment maintenance, vicarious gamers and biographical as well as situational refuge.

# Outcome

"In our data, we have found that games may constitute a biographical or situational refuge (displayed and retold), that games can be interpreted metaphorically, and that gaming bodies may turn ‘present’ in certain inaccessibility situations, which then are dealt with in a variety of ways.... Their interpretive practice...accomplishes personal meaning, connectedness, and embeddedness..., not habilitation, assistance, or diagnosed-based identities." (Authors, 1148, 1158)