

Examining the Relationship between Parenting Perceptions and Online Gaming

Behaviors

By

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**A Doctoral Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Psychology
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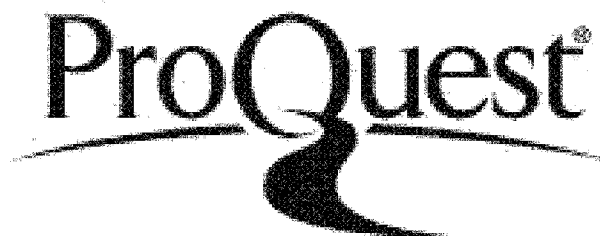


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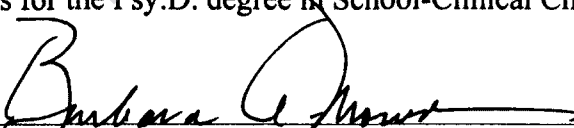
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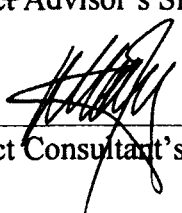
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PREVIEW

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	x
ABSTRACT.....	xii
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
Research Questions & Hypotheses.....	5
Exploratory Questions	7
II LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
Parenting.....	8
Early History of Parenting	9
Parenting Theoretical Background	11
The Development of the Parenting Behavior Importance	13
Questionnaire – Revised (PBIQ-R)	
Parenting and Gaming	15
Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPGs)	19
The users of MMORPGs	21
Motivation for playing MMORPGs	23
Positive effects of MMORPGs.....	27
Negative effects of MMORPGs	28
Internet/Gaming Addiction.....	33
The Development of the Game Addiction Scale (GAS)	35
III METHOD.....	39

Participants	39
Measures	41
Online Gaming Use Questionnaire (OGUQ).....	41
Game Addiction Scale (GAS)	43
Parenting Behavior Importance Questionnaire - Revised (PBIQ-R).....	44
Procedure	46
IV RESULTS	49
Descriptive Characteristics of the Sample.....	50
Data Analysis – Research Question 1	53
Supplemental analysis	56
Data Analysis – Research Question 2	58
Supplemental analysis	59
Data Analysis – Research Question 3	61
Exploratory Analyses	64
Supplemental analysis	66
V DISCUSSION	68
Summary of Findings	68
Limitations of the Present Study and Areas of Future Research	80
Implications for School-Clinical Child Psychology	82
REFERENCES	84
APPENDICES	97
A. Informed Consent	97
B. Recruitment Email/Flyer	99

C. Online Gaming Use Questionnaire (OGUQ)	100
D. Game Addiction Scale (GAS)	105
E. Parenting Behavior Importance Questionnaire - Revised (PBIQ-R)	106

PREVIEW

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	Demographic Characteristics of the Participants based on.....	109
	the Online Gaming Use Questionnaire (OGUQ)	
Table 2.	Background Variables of the Participants based on the.....	110
	Parenting Behavior Importance Questionnaire – Revised	
	(PBIQ – R)	
Table 3.	Descriptive Statistics of the Online Gaming Behavior.....	111
	Variables (Items #9 - #13) of the Participants based on the Online	
	Gaming Use Questionnaire (OGUQ)	
Table 4.	Percent Frequency of Gaming Technology Use and Online.....	112
	Gaming Genre of the Participants based on the Online Gaming Use	
	Questionnaire (OGUQ)	
Table 5.	Patterns of Online Gaming Use of the Participants based.....	113
	on the Online Gaming Use Questionnaire (OGUQ)	
Table 6.	Social Characteristics of the Participants based on the Online.....	114
	Gaming Use Questionnaire (OGUQ)	
Table 7.	Inter-correlations for Items #9 – 13 on the Online Gaming Use.....	115
	Questionnaire (OGUQ) and Game Addiction Scale (GAS) subscales	
Table 8.	Inter-correlations for Items #9 – 13 on the Online Gaming Use.....	116
	Questionnaire (OGUQ) and Parenting Behavior Importance Questionnaire	
	- Revised (PBIQ-R) subscales	
Table 9.	Supplemental Analysis: Inter-correlations for Items #17,	117
	18, 20, 21, & 22 on the Online Gaming Use Questionnaire (OGUQ)	

	and Game Addiction Scale (GAS) subscales	
Table 10.	Supplemental Analysis: Inter-correlations for Items #17,118 18, 20, 21, & 22 on the Online Gaming Use Questionnaire (OGUQ) and Parenting Behavior Importance Questionnaire - Revised (PBIQ-R) subscales	
Table 11.	Descriptive Statistics of the Parenting Behavior Importance.....119 Questionnaire – Revised (PBIQ-R) and the Game Addiction Scale (GAS)	
Table 12.	Results of the Independent-samples <i>t</i> -test for Non-excessive and.....120 Excessive Online Gaming scores, as measured by the Game Addiction Scale (GAS) on the Perceptions of Parenting, as measured by the Parenting Behavior Importance Questionnaire - Revised (PBIQ-R)	
Table 13.	Supplemental Analysis: Results of the Independent-samples <i>t</i> -test.....121 for Non-excessive and Excessive Online Gaming scores, as measured by the Game Addiction Scale (GAS) on the Perceptions of Parenting, as measured by the Parenting Behavior Importance Questionnaire - Revised (PBIQ-R)	
Table 14.	Means, Standard deviations, and Inter-correlations for the Parenting....122 Behavior Importance Questionnaire-Revised (PBIQ-R) subscales and the Game Addiction Scale (GAS) subscales	
Table 15.	Standardized Multi-regression Coefficients for the Game Addiction....123 Scale (GAS) Score Predictors of Parenting Behaviors Importance Questionnaire-Revised (PBIQ-R)	
Table 16.	Results of the Independent Samples <i>t</i> -Test: Parenting Behavior.....124	

	Importance Questionnaire-Revised (PBIQ-R) Subscales and Game Addiction Scale (GAS) Subscales by Gender	
Table 17.	Results of the Independent Samples <i>t</i> -Test: Parenting Behavior.....	125
	Importance Questionnaire-Revised (PBIQ-R) Subscales and Game Addiction Scale (GAS) Subscales by Ethnicity/ Racial Background	
Table 18.	Correlations between Age and Parenting Behavior Importance.....	126
	Questionnaire - Revised (PBIQ-R) Subscales and the Game Addiction Scale (GAS) Subscales	
Table 19.	Supplemental Analysis: Results of the Independent Samples.....	127
	<i>t</i> -Test: Parenting Behavior Importance Questionnaire-Revised (PBIQ-R) Subscales and Game Addiction Scale (GAS) Subscales by Parental Status	

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this current study was to contribute to the existing parenting and online gaming literature by investigating the relationship between the perceptions of parenting (in both parents and non-parents), as outlined by the Parent Development Theory (PDT) and online gaming behaviors, as measured by the Online Gaming Use Questionnaire (OGUQ) and the Game Addiction Scale (GAS). The influences of gender, ethnic/racial background, age, and parental status were also considered to explore the relationship between parenting perceptions and online game behaviors. The final sample consisted of 334 online participants from the United States (83.2%) and other international countries (16.8%). Participants completed three online measures via Qualtrics: the Online Gaming Use Questionnaire (OGUQ), the Game Addiction Scale (GAS), and the Parenting Behavior Importance Questionnaire – Revised (PBIQ-R).

The results indicate that online gaming use is best measured by considering individuals' current level of gaming, dedication to gaming, as well as time spent on games daily and weekly. The results also demonstrate that participants' level of online gaming behaviors, as measured by the GAS, influences their perceptions of parenting, as assessed by the PBIQ-R. For example, the lowered importance of parenting behaviors, such as bonding, education, responsiveness, sensitivity, negativity, and positivity were predicted by the conflict subscale (GASC) of the GAS. The GAS scores were associated with problematic online gaming behaviors such as salience, tolerance, mood modification, relapse, withdrawal, conflict, and problems. Significant group differences in demographic variables such as gender, ethnic/racial background, and parental status were found with regard to online gaming behaviors and parenting perceptions.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Parenting is and has always been important. Parenting affects a multitude of developmental outcomes in children, including their academic achievements, cognitive development, emotional regulation, peer relationships, self-esteem, identity, and social competence (Mowder, 2005; Mowder & Sanders, 2008; Mowder & Shamah, 2011a; Mowder & Shamah, 2011b). Over the past 30 years, research on parenting ranged from the biological and genetic components of parenting to related issues such as children's attachments to parents and parenting dynamics associated with various disciplinary styles (Mowder, 2009). The studies have also exemplified the various parenting perspectives in which parenting could be viewed as either a biological endowment (i.e., nature) or a socialization process with a myriad of cultural effects (i.e., nurture) (Mowder, 2005; Spinath & O'Connor, 2003).

Parenting behaviors are complex in the sense that multiple determinants such as an individual's genetic factors and environmental influences contribute to what constitutes parenting (Paunonen, 2003). Most specifically, the impact of environmental factors on parenting behaviors has generated interest regarding the influence of technology on parenting. Researchers have determined that technology (e.g., televisions, computers, Internet, online games) is a significant determinant of parental behavior (e.g., parental guidance, responsiveness, parental mediation in media use) (Brown, Childers, Bauman, & Koch, 1990; Nikken & Jansz, 2004, 2006). According to the Parent Development Theory (PDT), parenting perceptions are defined as the perceptions or cognitions that parents and non-parents hold with regard to their parenting role (Mowder,

2005). This theory views parenting as a social role performed by individuals who recognize, accept, and perform the role demands. These parenting perceptions are influenced by the individual's personal experience over time, personality traits, education, and environmental factors (Mowder & Sanders, 2008). In particular, environment factors contribute to an individual's experiential background in which cognitions such as parenting perceptions are shaped through the transformation of experience.

There has been a tremendous shift socially in terms of the introduction of technology, and more specifically, entertainment technology. Media researchers have observed that exposure of entertainment technologies create a dramatic shift in which video games and the Internet have increasingly occupied leisure time (Padilla-Walker, Nelson, Carroll, & Jensen, 2010). In recent years, video games have become the primary source of entertainment for hundreds of millions of people throughout the world (Roberts, 2010). In the United States, 68% of the households play computer video games, and 42% own at least one gaming console (Terlecki et al., 2011). One of the rapidly growing video game genres is massive multi-user online role-playing games (MMORPGs). These games are online games (e.g., EverQuest, Maplestory, World of Warcraft) played by large groups of thousands to millions of people at once, which have become increasingly popular with adolescents and adults (Clark & Scott, 2009). Current MMORPGs such as World of Warcraft reported over 11.5 million official subscribers with 48 million players engaging in general online gaming in April 2008 (Blinka & Smahel, 2011).

These MMORPGs serve as a fun, neutral place where individuals can interact with others, while forming new social relationships, but in a virtual world. Some of these players may gravitate toward MMORPGs as a means to alleviate negative emotions such as depressive and anxious feelings by socializing with others in a virtual three-dimensional environment (Hussain & Griffiths, 2009). Broadly, MMORPGs provide individuals with opportunities to escape from their negative thoughts and feelings by providing them with activities or virtual-social interactions that might be distracting or soothing for individuals, who are distressed and/or lonely (Caplan, 2003). However, current research studies also suggest that heavy online gaming use is associated with many negative outcomes, such as elevated levels of anxiety and depression, increased levels of aggressive thoughts, poor academic performance, poor parent-child relationships, and problems with daily routines (Bosche, 2010; Mentzoni et al., 2011; Porter, Starcevic, Berle, & Fenech, 2010; Young, 2009).

More notable, technology has dynamically changed the socialization process for its users. According to *Newswise* (2012), the effect of technology on individuals is “immeasurable” and that to understand how individuals are affected by social and entertainment technology for relationship maintenance and social interaction is imperative. The socialization process has been primarily concentrated on face-to-face interactions in which individuals learn through observing others’ behavior, attitudes, and outcomes of those behaviors, and now these social interactions are shifted online, which leads to weaken face-to-face communication, isolation, and the inability to interpret nonverbal behaviors (Lin, 2008). Thus, technology has a significant role in the shift

because as individuals spend more time with technology, the more they drift away from fundamental social skills.

Since parenting is social in nature as the behaviors are performed within a social context (e.g., the family, community, society), the conception and development of parenting perceptions and behaviors are susceptible to the effects of entertainment technology such as MMORPGs. Thus, those individuals who are parents and others who will become parents often have this technology and online gaming component as part of their current, social-cognitive framework, affecting their interpretations of situations and the surrounding environment. This suggests that the individual's level of awareness and understanding of what being a parent means, as well as how to perform the parental role are likely shaped by entertainment technology. Consequently, the use of online games is a fundamental component for further exploration because what an individual thinks about in terms of parenting is related to their experiential background, which increasingly, for many, includes the use of online gaming.

In summation, there are many areas in the relationship between parenting and online gaming behaviors that have yet to be explored. Current media studies suggest that more than half (53%) of American adults play video games, about 43% of adult gamers play online games, and about one in five adult gamers play everyday (Lenhart, Jones, & Macgill, 2008). A majority of individuals have begun to readjust how they socially interact with others and how they learn new behaviors, attitudes, and outcomes of those behaviors within the new media landscape (Eastin, Greenberg, & Hofschire, 2006; Kipnis, 1997; Lee & LaRose, 2007). More specifically, understanding how these changes affect the perceptions of parenting may help identify and delineate to what extent

individual does or does not recognize, accept, and/or perform the parent role.

Preliminary media studies have revealed that one manifestation of excessive gaming is parental neglect and the diminished perception among parents of the importance of such responsibilities as bonding (Associated Press, 2007, 2008; Dini, 2008; Young, 2009).

Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to contribute to the parenting and media literature by discerning some of the relationships between online gaming, as measured by the Online Gaming Use Questionnaire (OGUQ) and the Game Addiction Scale (GAS) (Lemmens, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2009) and the parenting perceptions, as measured by the Parenting Behavior Importance Questionnaire-Revised (PBIQ-R) (Mowder, 2009). The influence of gender, ethnic/racial background, age, and parental status on the relationship between online gaming behaviors and parenting perceptions is also considered.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Based on prior research and the purpose of this study, the following research questions and hypotheses were formulated:

Research Question 1. *Is there a relationship between individuals' online gaming use, as measured by the Online Gaming Use Questionnaire (OGUQ), online gaming behaviors, as assessed by the Game Addiction Scale (GAS), and the perceptions of parenting, as assessed by the Parenting Behavior Importance Questionnaire – Revised (PBIQ-R)?* This study hypothesizes that individuals whose responses on the OGUQ tend to indicate high levels of online video game use (i.e., current level of online video game use, past experience of online video gaming, dedication to playing online video games, past dedication to playing online video games, and level of online video game enjoyment)

will have high levels of online gaming behaviors (i.e., salience, tolerance, mood modification, relapse, withdrawal, conflict, problems, and overall game addiction overall score), as assessed by the GAS. This study also hypothesizes that individuals whose responses on the OGUQ tend to indicate high levels of online gaming use will have low levels of importance for positive parenting perceptions (i.e., bonding, discipline, education, general welfare and protection, responsivity, and sensitivity).

Research Question 2. *Do individuals with different levels of online gaming behaviors respond differently on seven parenting domains (i.e., bonding, discipline, education, general welfare and protection, responsivity, sensitivity, and negativity) as measured by the PBIQ-R?* This study hypothesizes that individuals whose responses on the GAS tend to indicate low levels of online gaming behaviors (i.e., non-excessive online gaming scores) will have high levels of importance for positive parenting perceptions (i.e., bonding, discipline, education, general welfare and protection, responsivity, and sensitivity), and low levels of importance for negative parenting perceptions (i.e., negativity). This study also hypothesizes that individuals whose responses on the GAS tend to indicate a high level of online gaming behaviors (i.e., excessive online gaming scores) will report lower levels of importance for positive parenting perception, and high levels of importance for negative parenting perceptions.

Research Question 3. *Is there a relationship between individuals' responses on the PBIQ-R subscales (i.e., bonding, discipline, education, general welfare and protection, responsivity, sensitivity, and negativity) as measured by the Parent Behavior Importance Questionnaire – Revised (PBIQ-R) and the GAS subscales (i.e., salience, tolerance, mood modification, relapse, withdrawal, conflict, problems, and GAS total*

score) as measured by the GAS? This study hypothesizes that those who indicate high levels of online gaming behaviors (i.e., salience, tolerance, mood modification, relapse, withdrawal, conflict, problems, and overall game addiction score) will report low levels of importance for positive parenting perceptions (i.e., bonding, discipline, education, general welfare and protection, responsivity, and sensitivity). This study also hypothesizes that individuals who indicate high levels of online gaming behaviors will report high levels of importance for negative parenting perceptions (i.e., negativity).

Exploratory Questions

1. *Are there significant group differences between participants' demographic variables (e.g., gender, ethnic/racial background) and online gaming behaviors, as measured by the GAS, and the perceptions of parenting, as measured by the PBIQ-R?*
2. *Is there a relationship between age and online gaming behaviors, as measured by the GAS, and the perceptions of parenting, as measured by the PBIQ-R?*

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews relevant literature and current research studies regarding parenting and online gaming behaviors. First, the literature regarding parenting and the development of the PDT is introduced. Then research studies concerning the relationship between parenting and entertainment technology such as MMORPGs are presented. Additionally, this review presents the research examining the users of MMORPGs regarding their age, ethnic background, and gender. The review discusses the motivation for playing MMORPGs such as achievement, immersion, and social interaction. Also, MMORPGs' beneficial effects, such as increased visual intelligence skills, prosocial behaviors, and friendships, as well as negative outcomes like aggressive behavior, poor academic performance, and social isolation are discussed. Finally, this review examines the literature concerning the effects of excessive use of online games on individuals' social-cognitive frameworks as they are relevant to this study.

Parenting

Psychoanalytic, developmental, and cognitive-behavioral theoretical frameworks have conceptualized parenting to describe the multitude of behaviors that parents engage in with their children. According to Lundberg, Perris, and Adolfsson (2000), a variety of internal and external factors influence parenting as a complex, multi-determined set of behaviors. Parenting is a process that begins before the child is born and the manner in which parenting occurs can contribute to the later general well-being and psychological adjustment of children (Abelman & Pettey, 1989; Bornstein & Bradley, 2003). For most psychologists, parenting is a critical component in children's physical and psychological

growth and development (Mowder & Sanders, 2008). For example, parenting relates to children's academic achievement, cognitive development, emotional regulation, and social-emotional adjustment (Mowder & Shamah, 2011b).

Early history of parenting. As researchers begin to study the ways in which children are raised, views regarding the nature of the child should be taken into consideration, because these views usually reflect the nature of society. For example, at the beginning of the 20th century, the autocratic parenting approach was the dominating belief that guided early American childrearing. Within this parenting frame, children were told what to do and they were expected to respond accordingly without expressing their thoughts and feelings regarding parental demands. According to Heath (2009), two primary perspectives influenced the autocratic approach to child socialization: the Hobbesian perspective of childrearing and the Calvinist doctrine that influenced the childrearing beliefs of the early Puritans in the United States.

Thomas Hobbes (1651) expressed that children needed discipline and he proposed that parental authority, when strictly applied, upholds both a religious mandate and a cultural tradition. In comparison, the Calvinist doctrine emphasized the inherent sinfulness of children; adherents of this point of view thought that firm discipline rather than parental affection was necessary for children's development (McKee, 2001). Not surprisingly, the autocratic approach to childrearing became questioned by parents and potential parents.

The concept of discipline dominated parenting research for many decades (Heath, 2009). Diana Baumrind (1971, 1978, 1989, 1991) is a prominent developmental psychologist who conducted studies on parental authority and discipline within the frame

of parental responsiveness and demandingness. Parental responsiveness refers to parental warmth and supportiveness (Baumrind, 1991). Parental responsiveness is “the extent to which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation, and self assertion by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to children’s special needs and demands” (Baumrind, 1991, p. 62). Parental demandingness refers to behavioral control and involves the parent’s desire for “children to become integrated into the family whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys” (Baumrind, 1991, pp. 61-62). According to Eastin et al. (2006), parenting styles can be categorized by evaluating parents as high or low on the dimensions of both parental demandingness and responsiveness.

Based on these two dimensions, Baumrind (1989) identified four distinct parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and uninvolved/neglectful. Authoritarian parenting displays low levels of warmth and psychological autonomy with high levels of demand (Eastin et al., 2006). According to Baumrind (1991), authoritarian parents are not especially responsive; they are demanding and directive. These parents generally require obedience and expect their orders to be followed without any explanation. They also favor punitive measures to control their children’s willfulness (Cole, Cole, & Lightfoot, 2005). Meanwhile, authoritative parents are not intrusive or restrictive, but they are assertive. They establish clear standards for their children’s conduct, while providing constructive feedback. These parents attempt to control their children by explaining their rules and decisions and by reasoning with them (Cole et al., 2005).

Eastin et al. (2006) characterizes authoritative parenting as having high levels of demand, warmth, and psychological autonomy. As for permissive or nondirective parents, they are more responsive in relation to their levels of demand than authoritative parents. Neglectful parents are neither demanding nor responsive (Baumrind, 1991). Permissive parents exercise less explicit control over their children's behavior because they believe children must learn how to behave through their own experience. By comparison, neglectful parents do not take the time to discipline their children (Cole et al., 2005). Overall, each of these parenting styles reflects various parental values, practices, and behaviors. How these factors manifest themselves may determine parenting and child developmental outcomes.

Parenting theoretical background. Like parenting disciplinary styles, parenting perceptions (i.e., bonding, discipline, education, general welfare and protection, responsivity, and sensitivity) are affected by many variables, including the age, ethnic/racial background, gender, socioeconomic background of the parent (Mowder, 2005), and technology usage (Nikken & Janzs, 2004; 2006). According to Galinsky (1987), parenting develops through a series of stages and the process of the parental role development begins with the anticipation of the arrival of children. Galinsky interviewed parents from a variety of backgrounds, including married parents, divorced parents, stepparents, foster parents, and adoptive parents. She defined six stages of changes in parenthood: imaging making, nurturing, authority, interpretive, interdependent, and departure (Galinsky, 1987). Each of these stages represents how parents invest their emotional and intellectual energy on a particular childrearing task. From Galinsky's perspective, the experience of parenthood is complex and diverse. However, within the