

Controlling and Anti-Controlling Between Parents and Their Adolescent Children on Gaming Behavior

A Perspective of Resisting in Everyday Life

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Abstract—With the number of adolescent players keeps raising, more and more parents get involved into the video game playing behavior of their adolescent children. While the video games have some positive effects on players such as the training of players' way of thinking, they can also make players addictive, especially for adolescents. The double-edged features of video games result in confrontations against gaming activity between parents and children. Thus the employment of strategy and tactics are taking place everyday in adolescent players' gaming practice. A qualitative method has been used to analyze what are the strategies that parents apply and how the children react. The author interviewed 16 adolescent players aged 13-24 and 6 parents with different professions including stay-at-home moms. The theory of daily life practice proposed by Michel de Certeau was employed as a theoretic framework. It is found that parents get control of gaming time and equipments, while children are good at transferring gaming space. Compromising as well as strengthening of strategies toward tactics will follow when the academic performance or the health of adolescent players make some change. It is also found that most adolescents actually prefer off-line activities other than video games when the activities are attractive enough, which should be considered more by parents as well as schools. Limitation and further research have also been discussed.

Keywords: *adolescent, gaming practice, everyday life, strategy, tactics*

I. INTRODUCTION

In July 2017, to control the excessive game behavior of minors, especially primary school students, Tencent launched the most stringent anti-obsession system in history for its popular mobile game called "King of Honor" which had 200 million registered users at that time. The system included several measures like real-name authentication, limited daily login duration, and growth platform which invited parents to supervise their children's gaming behavior. However, the real-name authentication does not completely solve the problem except severe personal information leakage, and the anti-obsession system was cracked down even on the first day. Tencent's move, while gaining social recognition, has also triggered a lot of questions about its

actual effect. Some national media continuously called on the public to have a full understanding of online games, and called on the government, enterprises as well as the society as a whole to work together in a wide range of areas to build a healthy and sustainable gaming environment. Among them, parent education, especially the parent's management and guidance of their children's playing behavior, was put forward by the People's Daily, Xinhua News Agency and other central media. Then, how do parents manage and control their children's daily gaming behavior and how will their children respond to such controls, and what effect does it have on adolescent player's gaming behavior and game attitude? This research adopts Michel de Certeau's theory of daily life practice and uses in-depth interview method to explore these issues.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Influenced by Foucault and Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau regarded daily life as a field of struggle full of dominance and resistance. In his view, there had a heavy suppression from dominant power in our daily life, but people were not completely passive. Michel de Certeau believed that seemingly trivial, monotonous and repetitive daily life practice contained enormous rebellious energy. Speaking, reading, walking, shopping and even cooking could all be used to carry out continuous, subtle, creative resistance on the micro level. After all, "everyday life is full of value and mystery with many possibilities and creativity"(Huaiyu Liu, 2006).

"Resistance" is the core of Michel de Certeau's theory of daily life practice. Resistance means suppression and rebellion. Michel de Certeau divided the resistance in daily life practice into two opposing parts: strategy and tactics (Michel de Certeau, 1984). Strategy is the calculation of a power relationship. People who use strategy assume there is a "private" place like a factory to establish contact with the outside. People who use tactics lack their own place, and they can only rely on time to wait for opportunity in the other's space.

Michel de Certeau illustrated vividly the game between strategy and tactics with the example of "la perruque".

Employees were asked to do production work in restricted workplaces during the employer's prescribed working hours. However, employees did not always work for employers. They secretly made use of the convenience of workplace and the remaining raw materials to work for themselves. For example, the secretary wrote a love letter during working hours, or a carpenter made a furniture for himself on the employer's lathe. This kind of behavior was called a "wig" by French employees (Michel de Certeau, 1984). The workplace was regarded by employers as a proprietary strategic place to implement discipline and domination to employees with various rules and regulations, while employees used "wig" tactics to "successfully place themselves above the discipline". By resisting flexibly during the interval of strategy, they created an autonomous space of action through the daily life practice.

Based on a comprehensive thinking of the power relations in the political, economic, social and cultural fields, Michel de Certeau's theory of daily life practice emphasizes ordinary people's resistance against hegemony. Although his research was ambitious in its meaning, he focused on the subtle aspects of our daily life. This also allows us to employ his theory in a wider range of fields to examine all aspects of social life including the daily gaming practice of young players.

III. METHODS

In order to obtain more detailed attitudes and opinions, as well as more personal feelings, this research adopts

qualitative in-depth interviews as research method. Researches have shown that with the advent of adolescence, adolescents' autonomy, independence, and their feeling of being an adult are further enhanced. They are more likely to resist authority, pursue equality and autonomy, and do not want to simply obey the will of their parents. Therefore, adolescent players and their parents are targeted interviewees of this research.

The interviewees are divided into two parts: the player and the player's parents. The young players are limited to the students aged 13-24, ranging from the first year of middle school to the fourth year of college, and the parents sample come from parents of adolescents interviewed. From May 2017 to October 2017, the researcher recruited 16 young players and 6 parents to participate in the interview. At first, the researcher recruited several participants through a personal network and then the participants introduced more adolescents to take part in the research. All participants have experience of online gaming of at least one year, and they all engage in different kinds of anti-controlling activities against their parents' daily controls. Most interviews were done face-to-face and some interviews were taken place online due to distance between interviewer and interviewees. Face-to-face interviews used live recordings and then converted them into texts. Online interviews kept text records. Each interview took 45 minutes and 2 hours. Some participants were interviewed twice or more. The information of interviewees can be seen in "Table I".

TABLE I. INFORMATION OF INTERVIEWEES

No.	Gender	Age	Grade	Gaming experience	Way of interview	Parents interviewed	Age of parents	Profession of parents
M1	male	21	junior	6 years	face to face			
M2	male	16	11th grader	5 years	face to face	mother	40	peasant
M3	male	20	freshman	10 years	face to face			
M4	male	19	freshman	3 years	face to face/ QQ			
M5	male	17	11th grader	12 years	QQ			
M6	male	22	junior	16 years	face to face/ WeChat			
M7	male	18	12th grader	13 years	WeChat	mother	44	bank clerk
M8	male	18	12th grader	7 years	WeChat			
M9	male	21	sophomore	7 years	face to face			
M10	male	17	10th grader	8 years	face to face	mother	42	media person
M11	male	13	7th grader	5 years	face to face			
M12	male	14	8th grader	6 years	face to face	father	43	college teacher
M13	male	13	7th grader	5 years	QQ	mother	44	translator
F1	female	21	junior	14 years	face to face/ WeChat			
F2	female	16	10th grader	12 years	face to face			
F3	female	18	12th grader	6 years	WeChat	mother	46	housewife

IV. SAMPLE

Among 16 interviewed, there are 13 male players and 3 female players. Three of them are students of junior middle school, seven are students of senior middle school and six are college students. Taking the influence of players' individual differences on their gaming behavior into consideration, the players interviewed come from different

areas and different kinds of schools. Among parents interviewed, there are 5 mothers and 1 father, which is consistent with conclusions of Nikken (2007) and Kousari (2017) that mother shoulders more responsibilities in supervising their children's daily gaming activity.

V. RESULTS

Based on the results of the in-depth interviews, young players and their parents do have a back and forth relationship between control strategy and resistance tactics in playing games. Both parties adopt different strategies and tactics in different situations to maintain balance among health, academic performance and parent-children relationship.

VI. CONTROLLER'S STRATEGY

As the primary controller of adolescent players' gaming behavior, parents don't adopt the blockade strategy blindly. They adopt a strategic approach to control their children's gaming equipment and time, or to set exclusive locations for their strategy.

Some parents do not allow their children to have mobile phones or computers, or let their children use these game devices under their supervision. Player M11's parents are college teachers. M11 once had his own mobile phone, but his parents confiscated it because he spent too much time playing games on it. Player M13's mother also doesn't allow her son to use his mobile phone alone. She will let him use the phone when necessary.

Parents who allow their children to own a mobile phone or a computer may set a power-on password to prevent children from secretly playing games while they are away. However, more often than not, the parents' management strategy is to set rules to control the gaming time.

There is a basic rule of controlling gaming time that normal life and routines such as eating and sleeping must not be affected. This is the strategic bottom line for most parents.

"If they find I'm still playing the game until 12 o'clock in the midnight, they will get very angry." (M1)

"If I don't addict in the games, my parents will leave me alone. But if I can't control myself, for example if I tell them I will go for lunch after the battle when they ask me to have lunch, they will be very angry." (M3)

Besides that, parents will set different rules to control the gaming time.

"Both my parents are teachers and they are strict to me. We have an agreement that I can play games for two hours each week. And I can get extra hours for playing if I have made an achievement in my study or if I have done a good job in traditional Chinese calligraphy." (F1)

"He can't play games in weekdays. At weekend, he is allowed to play 15 minutes each time and 3-4 times each day." (Father of M12)

For some parents, the gaming space is also a symbol of parental authority. The anthropologist Mary Douglas (1991) regards "home" as an alternative power space. In this space, daily necessities have a specific sense of placement, and human behavior is subject to the discipline and guidance of authority (parents). "Home" is a structural existence, and it

also constitutes what Michel de Certeau called "dedicated location". Within the scope of the home, some parents strictly prohibit their children from playing games, although this prohibition is more of symbolic meaning.

"I am not allowed to play video games at home. If I go back home from school, I will go to the internet cafe to play games. My mother actually knows that I play games in the internet cafe, but that's ok for her only if I don't do it at home. At home, I can do anything, watching TV or waiting for live show until midnight, but I just can't play games." (M9)

VII. RESISTERS' TACTICS

Researches on the control of children's gaming behavior tend to discuss what measures parents take to manage their children's behavior and the effectiveness of these measures. The gamers have been neglected to some extent. In fact, adolescent players use various tactics to resist their parents' control and to protect their own gaming right.

According to the division of game education expert Marc Prensky (2001), adolescents are "digital aborigines" in the information age. They are not only more accustomed to digital culture than their parents, but are also better at mastering and using information technology. The first tactic they adopt is to make use of their parents' inability in new technology to decipher the password so as to obtain a short-term ownership of the gaming equipment.

"I know the password of my computer. I set it by myself and I can decode it if my parents change the password." (M13)

"My daughter set double passwords for her cell phone and I don't know what they are. It seems that they are a kind of special codes. We don't understand the technology. She didn't want to show us." (Mother of F3)

Since parents take control of gaming devices and gaming place, young gamers, especially underage adolescent players, can only look for opportunities to play stealthily in the intermittent absence of parental supervision. The lack of dedicated locations also means flexibility to tactical players so that they can quickly grasp the opportunities (Michel de Certeau, 2015).

"Many of my classmates have their own cell phone. Their parents work in companies and always come home late, so they can have chance to play games at home." (M11)

Other forms of tactics have also begun to be used by adolescent players, such as shifting and conversation. Player M2 dropped out of school for a semester because of a lumbar spine fracture. His parents allowed him to use his father's cell phone to play games for 2 hours each night while he recuperated at home. However, M2 violated the agreement and went to his classmate's home to play games. He then was not allowed to play games any more. But he found another way to satisfy himself in watching the live broadcast of game match. When his parents blamed him for that, he refuted,

"Then what do you mean? I was not allowed to play games before, now I can't even watch live game show? You didn't tell me that watching TV is forbidden." (M2)

M2 made use of his parents' strategic loopholes to satisfy himself and successfully transferred the game space from the phone that was not allowed to the TV that was permitted.

In addition, as a tactical category of daily practice, conversation has begun to be used by some players to persuade their parents to permit their gaming activity. Of the 16 young gamers interviewed, one player had talks with her parents about the positive effects of gaming.

"I have talked about advantages of games with my parents. I was playing a tough game and I explain to them how the mission was completed. But they still thought that nothing else was worthy to me except reading and doing homework." (F2)

When another mother talked about her change of attitude toward her son's game play, she also mentioned that her son had communicated with her about the social function of the game.

"All the parents are against playing games naturally. But I remembered that my son once told me, 'Mom, we have to play games. If I don't, nobody will be my friends because we have nothing in common. The one who plays best in my class is our monitor.' I think he talks the right thing. In my childhood, those who don't play have few friends. From then on I basically allow him to play games." (Mother of M10)

VIII. COMPROMISES AND STRENGTHENING OF STRATEGY

In the resistance of daily life practice, strategy and tactics are naturally antagonistic. However, in the practice of adolescents' daily gaming behavior, the strategies and tactics between parents and children are not always on the opposite sides. Instead, they are constantly adjusted to each other according to the academic and physical conditions of adolescents.

Academic performance and academic tension are important prerequisites for the strategic changes.

"They actually knew that I had cracked the password, but they didn't tell me, just waited for my scores to drop. But I didn't fall in scores." (M6)

Player M6 studies in a key university now. His parents set a power-on password for the home computer when he began to play games in the elementary school, but he found the note that recorded the password. His parents actually knew that he played games on computer while they were not at home. However, because he could keep good academic record, his parents acquiesced in his gaming behavior. Another player, M5, is a vocational high school student, but his parents have not taken stricter controlling over his playing games.

"They didn't take more restrictive measures over my gaming behavior because it never happened that I played truant for games. My academic performance has been poor

since childhood, no matter whether I played games or not." (M5)

Therefore, we found that under the premise of not affecting normal studying and meanwhile maintaining the original level of performance, adolescents' parents may loosen the control of their children's gaming behavior, which caused their strategic control to exist in name only. This is also confirmed by M10's mother, "As long as his performance in every major test does not show any significant fluctuations, we will give him full freedom."

At the same time, such compromises will also follow after young people going to college. Player M1 is a college student. Going to college is the key point for his parents to change their attitudes and control measures in playing games. Player M8 who has just finished the college entrance examination is also undergoing the same strategic change.

"My parents didn't allow me to play games during high school. After I went to college, they have a more open attitude only if I am not playing all day." (M1)

"My parents used to control my gaming behavior. They don't interfere too much now." (M8)

Changes in the emotions of adolescent players can also lead to certain concessions. After player M2 was forced to promise not to play games anymore, he showed some emotional fluctuation. His parents then agreed to allow him to play for 2 hours a day again.

"His dad found him a bit emotional. He told me last night that we should still allow him to play games. If we don't, he will waste out the 2 hours anyhow. If we do, at least he may be motivated to study after the 2-hour-play." (Mother of M2)

Of course, strategy will not always compromise to tactics, and there are also times for reinforcement of control.

"I am not strongly opposed to children's playing video games, but since some minor symptoms have shown in his eyesight, I have made some rules to protect it." (Mother of M13)

"My parents do allow me to play in some conditions. But if I make a mistake or I don't do well in exams, they will blame me for over gaming. Even if I feel painful in my leg, they can also relate it to games." (M11)

The above example show that when adolescent players have some problems with their physical condition, the controlling of the gaming behavior will be significantly enhanced, even if these problems are not related to the game itself.

IX. CONCLUSION

A. Summaries

Schaan & Melzer (2015) believed that as for new media applications including online games, parents became increasingly involved in the daily practice of their children,

especially during their teen years. Nikken & Jansz (2006) found that parents usually adopted three measures such as restraints, active guidance and playing together to control the children's gaming behavior and restrictive measures was adopted most. Kousari & Mehrabi (2017) also found that the restrictive measures were used by most Iranian parents when they tried to manage their children's gaming behavior.

This research also has the same conclusion. In the daily gaming practice of adolescent players, parents are the strategists who focus on the control of time and tools. They mainly adopt strategies to control the ownership and use of game devices, especially have strict control over the gaming time of their children. Some parents pay special attention to the place where the game behavior takes place. They regard "home" as an exclusive space of family and do not allow their children to play games at home.

At the same time, this research also has some new findings. It found that the controlling strategy will increase with the changes in the physical condition and academic status of adolescent players. Players M4 and M7 started to play online games in the influence of their parents. But after entering junior high school or even the upper grades of the elementary school, their gaming behavior had been controlled by their parents. Playing together turned into a one-way controlling strategy. This may be because that schooling in elementary school is relatively easy, so parents believe that playing games properly will help develop children's intelligence. Once adolescents enter into higher academic stages, the role of game-playing on intelligence will immediately be replaced by lessons in classroom. Meanwhile, parents will make concessions accordingly. If the child is able to guarantee or even exceed the existing level of academic performance, or when the child's schooling is no longer particularly tense, or when the child experiences emotional fluctuations, the parents will make certain concessions and take a more relax controlling strategy than before.

Compared to the strategy of parents, the corresponding tactics of adolescent players mainly include taking advantage of the information technology they have mastered. In the interval of parental supervision, they turn the fragmented time into space for gaming practice. There are also a small number of adolescents who adopt transferring tactics, shifting the game-playing that is not allowed to the TV-watching that is permitted, and satisfying their desire by watching live gaming show. Conversation tactics has also begun to be used. Players try to increase their parents' understanding of the game through dialogue in order to gain freedom of gaming practice.

B. Implication

Rather than simply highlighting its negative effects, most of the parents and young children we have interviewed believe that playing games has a certain positive function. Therefore, the player's self-controlling ability becomes an important factor in determining whether or not the daily

gaming practice can be carried out and how it can be performed.

"If he could stop doing it immediately when I ask him to do so, he is allowed to play games. I am helping him enhance his self-controlling ability. If he can control himself well, it doesn't matter that he plays games a little while." (Mother of M7)

"Anyway, game is a game after all. If you can play anytime you want, you will get bored. For us college students, we have lots of time to play games, then we will choose what to do and will control ourselves. If you are only allowed to play half an hour each day, you may want to skip class to go to internet cafe." (M3)

Just as the player M7's mother said, "Nowadays, young people usually have strong consciousness of their own rights and desires. It is impossible to forbid him not to play games completely." If parents can help their children enhance their self-controlling ability to minimize the negative impact of games, the strategic and tactical play in daily life practice between the two sides will also be reduced a lot. John Huizinga once pointed out that playing is not a normal or real life. In fact, every child knows that he "just pretends to play" or says "it's just funny." Once something more interesting and more meaningful happens in real life, adolescents may stop playing in virtual space.

"I don't want to play games that much when I go back home from college. Because I can chat, play cards, go to Karaoke and go for a hiking with my friends. I spend less time on games during vacations." (M6)

"I think I have a regular life at home. It is kind of boring to go to internet cafe and I stay at home most of the time. So I seldom play online games in summer vocation. Instead, I go to play board games or do bodybuilding with my friends offline." (M9)

Shaohua Huang (2008) believes that what young people seek through online games is mainly satisfaction, release and comfort of emotion. With the help of the game, they will feel transiently a fulfillment of self and a reaching of achievement in the virtual world. If parents can positively affirm their children's performance in daily life and consciously encourage or arrange for children to participate in more activities in real life, adolescent players can resist the temptation of online games to a certain extent, which may reduce the players' dependence on the game.

In addition, people such as Martí (2012) and Shin (2011) have found that parents who understand the game rating system are more powerful in controlling their children's gaming behavior. This shows that it is very necessary to achieve game grading as soon as possible, which will help reduce confrontation between parents and young children in daily gaming practice and protect the healthy growth of adolescents and the sustainable development of the game industry.

C. Limitation

For most parents, playing games is still a less glorious thing, especially for parents of those who are at a critical node for growth, or who have played too much. The researcher once wanted to interview a high school student, but the boy's father showed annoyance and anxiety as soon as he heard the word "game". He told the researcher that he was worrying about the child's addiction to the game. After that, he never mentioned the interview which didn't have chance to happen. Therefore, the sample size of players' parents in this study is not enough. Even if the researcher came to her own friends and classmates, they are still less willing to talk out about their children's gaming behavior. In addition, because the researcher mainly used the snowball method to get to interviewees, some interviewees may not be completely free to express their opinions when they were interviewed.

D. Future Research

From this research we know that parents and their adolescent children are playing games of controlling and anti-controlling everyday. No matter what these strategy and tactics are, the most important thing for adolescent players and their parents is how playing online games will influence adolescents' personal development in terms of health and academic performance. Therefore, the researcher will follow those interviewees to see if online games really matter in their life.

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